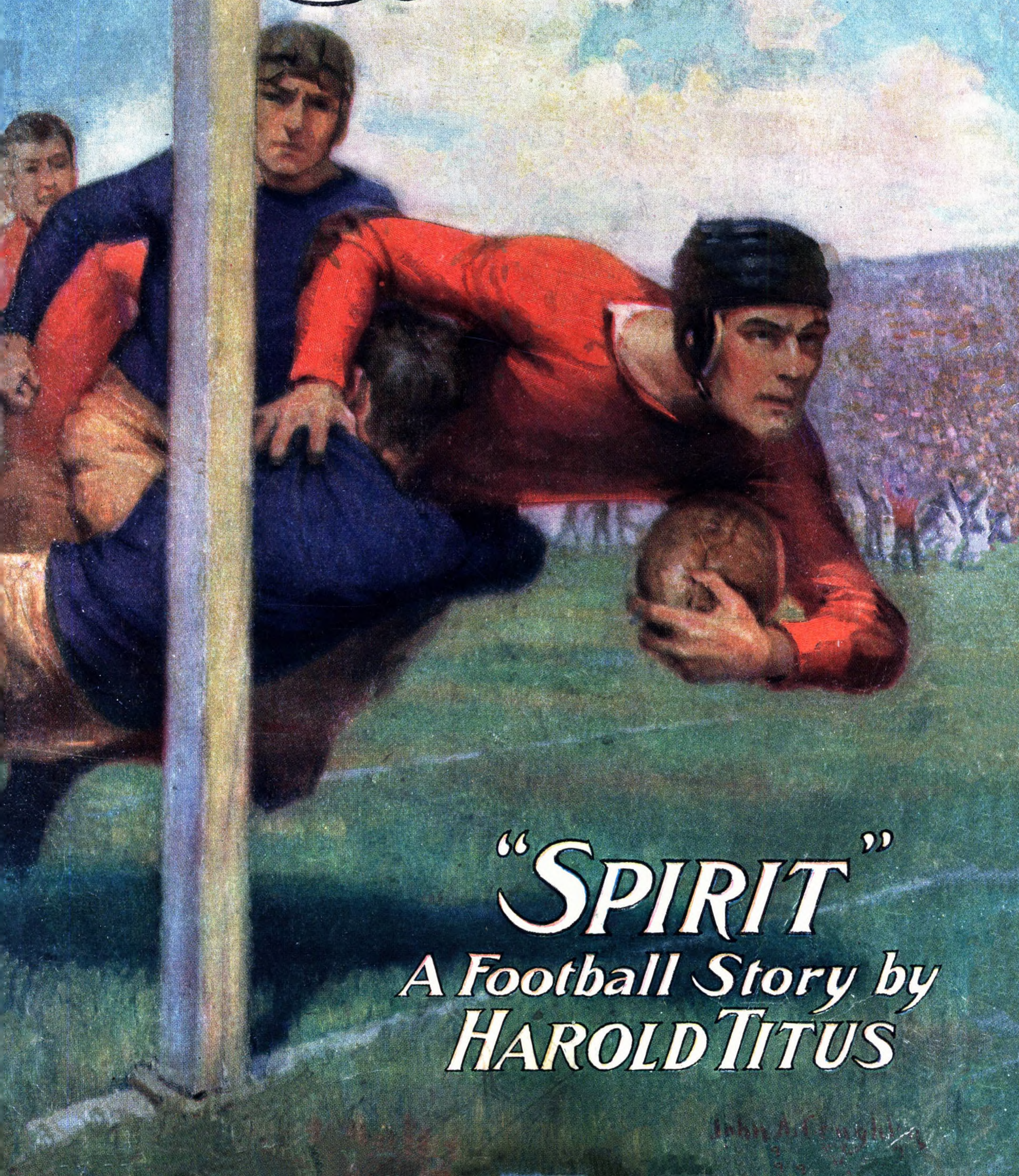
FULL BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL THIS ISSUE

No.5, Vol.34 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

# The Popular Magazine

PUBLISHED NOV. 23, 1914



## "SPIRIT"

A Football Story by HAROLD TITUS

# We Predict—

That the Emperor of Austria, Francis Joseph, is going to hold a serious conference with one Tommy Williams, an old friend of ours and yours, about something that has troubled him for twenty-five years or more. The upshot will be a revolution in his already troubled court.

That an overdose of the sense of humor in a man named Fantail McInnes, and a corresponding lack of that quality in the town of Yellow Horse, will cause such a tumult among the natives that they won't recover their senses for a long time to come.

That a baby born and dedicated to beating the Yale Eleven for the Tigers brings in his train more surprises than his sponsors expected.

That a farm helper, busy with his scythe and reaper in the fertile fields of Canada, is to feel the thrill of the call to arms for his country and, responding, shows he can handle a gun as well as a pruning-hook.

That an amateur professional boxer, known to his circle as "Goldie," will have an extraordinary bout with Pasha Jevdet Ghazali in his palace in old Stamboul over a pretty Circassian slave.

That a hard and mean Hudson's Bay Company factor, who has tyrannized the natives of Heron Lake for many a year, is to lift his merciless hand once too often, with the result long wished for by the simple habitants.

That one of our many aspirants to art—in fact, a young fellow who does many familiar magazine covers—will find himself in a perfect mesh of mystery because he looked over a garden wall and snapshotted the house and grounds.

That Johnny Reeves, cattleman and live seller of livestock, is to take up with a revivalist who is bringing salvation to the Western heathen, and publicly pray for all he is worth.

That two Americans, caught in the toils of war in Belgium, are to witness epoch-making battles, see the struggle from the *inside*, and escape to tell us the thrilling details.

That a youth just out of college will apply the rules and ruses of football play to a business proposition and make good, much to his father's delight and astonishment.

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**The Popular Magazine**

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VOLUME XXXIV NUMBER 5

TWICE-A-MONTH

# The Popular Magazine

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NOVEMBER 23, 1914



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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXIV. NOVEMBER 23, 1914. No. 5.

# At the Moon Trail's End

By William Slavens McNutt

*Author of "Bill Heenan's Tilt with the Japs," "The Settlement," Etc.*

**Men follow the moon trail out to sea in search of something to satisfy their appetite for adventure. It is of these McNutt tells in his novel. It is hardly a story of gentle folks. Struggle is writ large over it. The men you will meet are mostly sea rovers—reckless souls counting life but a glorious chance to fight. Among these is Bob Corrigan, smuggler, gunrunner, wastrel in port and hard man at sea; all that and more, but with high ideals, and ready to count it an honor to die for another's cause; a man of tremendous power—and tenderness. The girl of the story is no simpering parlor miss, but a courageous bit of young womanhood living a danger-filled life in the South Pacific for the sake of her father; facing daily perils, yet the menace of the years finds her unafraid. It is a story of the salvage of treasure from a wrecked ship—at least that is what McNutt set out to tell; but the appeal of the tale lies in the wild, complex heart of Bob Corrigan.**

*(A Complete Novel)*

BIG Bob Corrigan drained off a full tumbler of brandy and glanced across the table of the Café Gloria at Martin Hartman. His gray-green eyes were bloodshot, and his heavy-featured Irish face showed the marks of a long dissipation.

"No use trying to stop me, Hartman," he said, a bit thickly. "This is the history of my life. Any time I stop raising Cain on the high seas I've got to start something ashore. I was born with the devil of destruction in my blood, and if I can't be tearing somebody or something else down, I've got to be wrecking myself. I've got to fight, Hartman, and if I can't fight anything or anybody else, I'll fight myself. I've sat ashore here now for three months because I couldn't get a legitimate charter, and do you think that I'm a better man to-day than I was when we docked here? Do you? I've followed your tip and gone on the straight for that length of time rather than take a half dozen chances that have been offered me since I landed, and what's the answer? Look at me! Look at me! Drifting toward a drunken beach comber! Am I right? Sure I am! Hartman, I've got to do something or degenerate into a drunken bum!"

Martin Hartman, Harvard graduate, young, one time weak-lunged, who had come out from Boston a year before and shipped as supercargo with Captain Bob Corrigan from Valparaiso, Chile, reached a hand across the cloth and touched Corrigan's fevered wrist.

"Maybe I was wrong, Bob," he conceded gently. "Maybe I was. It seemed to me a shame for a man with your attainments to be leading the life you were, but——"

The cry of a boy wending his way among the tables interrupted him. "Telegram for Captain Corrigan," the boy cried in Spanish. "Telegram for Captain Corrigan."

Corrigan straightened in his seat. "Here, boy," he called.

The young fellow in uniform made his way to the table and laid the yellow slip in Corrigan's hand. "Captain Corrigan?" he inquired.

"Right here, son," Corrigan answered.

He took the telegram, opened it, and read it through. When he was done, he grinned at Hartman and repeated: "I've got to do something or degenerate into a drunken bum!"

Hartman took the proffered telegram and read:

> Have bought wreck of the *Alfreda,* which was lost on the south point of the Matafuras with rich cargo. Meet me at one p. m. at the Hotel Ingles.
> (Signed) PETER DAWSON.

When he had finished reading the communication, young Hartman tossed it back to Corrigan.

"Seems fair enough," he appraised it. "He evidently wants you to go on a wrecking expedition, and as long as he's bought the vessel, why shouldn't you? It all seems fair enough to me."

"Fair?" Corrigan echoed. "Fair? With Pete Dawson at the head of it? My son, you don't know this coast as I do, or you'd know that nothing Pete Dawson touches is ever fair! Pete Dawson fair! That's good!"

Corrigan threw back his head and laughed hysterically.

"Pete Dawson! That's good. Martin, when you've had dealings with Pete Dawson as long as I have, you'll laugh as hard at that statement as I do. Pete Dawson? The meanest renegade and blackmailer and gunrunner in the South Seas. Fair? Anything that Pete Dawson touches? A chance!"

Hartman looked at the grim visage of the old captain opposite him, and drew a long breath. "I'm sorry, cap," he confessed. "You've been on the loose for a long while, and I thought it would be better for you to go straight; but I've changed my mind. You're not a lawbreaker, but you're a man of the seas when the seas are wild, and a man of men when men are wild; you're a man to tame the tempest and to tame wild men at their wildest; and when you haven't that to do, you're a drunken old reprobate! Steer your own course from now on, cap, and I'm with you."

Corrigan shuddered and sat straight; he winked his bleared eyes and knotted his broad jaws. "Will you stay with me if I straighten up and pull something off, Hartman?" he inquired. "I've come to like you since you came out to me, a sick kitten, a good heart inside of you, and not much else. You've seen some of my stuff at sea, and you've seen me ashore, living the life that you call 'good'; if I take this game on, will you stay with the 'old man' till it's finished?"

Hartman reached across the table and grasped Corrigan's hand. "I'll stay with you till the finish of this game, no matter what the game is, Corrigan," he promised. "I give you my word on that."

"And your word I'll take," Corrigan agreed. "I'll stroll up to the Hotel Ingles now and see my old pal Pete."

## CHAPTER II.

To see Pete Dawson seated in a chair, his great bulk bulging out around the arms like newly risen bread overflowing the baking pan, was to get the idea that here was a man anchored to inactivity by his excess of fat. He was a trifle less than six feet in height, and weighed a trifle more than three hundred pounds. He walked with an exaggerated sailor's roll, making his way with short steps, wheezing and grunting prodigiously. But those who had seen Pete Dawson in action when action was a necessity, were forevermore blind to his seeming helplessness; for this great elephant of a man could strike with the speed of a striking snake, and the power of a mule's kick. He could move on his stubby, bowed legs with the facility of a dancing master—when movement meant life or money—and, bulky as he was, could scamper up a ship's rigging with the nimblest. When action was not absolutely necessary he waddled and groaned and grunted, and men who knew him not thought him a disgustingly fat fool—as he meant they should.

And a disgustingly fat fool he looked as he squatted on a chair in the lobby of the Hotel Ingles, his fat ankles crossed, and holding an absurdly tiny cigarette between his absurdly stubby, fat fingers. He made no motion to rise as Corrigan entered, but waved him to a near-by chair with the slightest possible movement of his right hand.

"Hot, ain't it?" he wheezed, in the thin, high whine one might expect from a wizened little old dried-up dwarf of a man. To hear Pete Dawson speak for the first time was as startling as to hear a scared mouse roar with the voice of a lion.

Corrigan sat very straight on his chair, and eyed the fat man with frank disfavor.

"I've been on a three months' bat," he stated bluntly, "and I've got to the point where I'm drinking brandy and absinth before breakfast, and then going without my breakfast! I've got a lot less patience than a mad tarantula, so talk business. I know it's hot, and I know that you always have to talk nonsense for two hours before you'll talk business; but not to-day, Pete. The only time I ever care about hearkening to that sweet, girlish voice of yours is when it says 'money,' so talk sense."

Dawson turned his great head ever so slightly and viewed Corrigan from tiny light eyes—eyes the color of a polished silver coin—that glinted out from between slits of freckled fat.

"You're an awful rough man, Bob," he whined aggrievedly. "Awful rough. You hadn't ought to climb me like this. We been friends for years, and now you——"

Corrigan stood up and kicked his chair over behind him. "Stow that," he said savagely. "Talk sense, or I'll make a quick meal off of you for getting me up here."

Dawson shifted his eyes—no other part of him—and squinted steadily up at the big Irishman towering over him.

"I wouldn't do that, Bob," he sing-songed soothingly. "Not if I was you, I wouldn't! No."

The voice was soft and babyish, but the silver-colored slits of eyes that met Corrigan's glance spoke cold anger; anger prepared for deadly action, and Corrigan understood. For a silent half minute the two men measured each other, and simultaneously they grinned. They had been close to trouble; each knew it, and knew the other was ready and capable.

Corrigan held out his hand, and Dawson grasped it. "You get on my nerves like a file, sometimes," said Corrigan.

"And you do aggravate me, Bob," Dawson retorted. "Yes, you do. Your talk'll get you real unpopular some time. You got my message?"

Corrigan nodded. "Well, I've done

bought the wreck of the *Alfreda,*" Dawson went on. "You know about the *Alfreda,* huh?"

"Not a thing. I told you I'd been on a three months' bat."

"Um! Well, she was a full-rigged ship carrying copper ore from Antofogasta to Valparaiso, and she went ashore on the south point of Matafuras. You been to Matafuras? Yeh? Mind that sand beach on the little bight on the south point? Sure! Well, she stuck her nose in there, right by that rock point, and down she goes. It's a good fifty fathom a ship's length off the ebb-tide mark there, but her stern post must 'a' wedged on a pinnacle of rock about twenty fathoms under water; 'cause there she lies to-day with her nose on the beach and her cabin in about fifteen fathom.

"The insurance people went there and looked her over, but I guess they didn't think much of the chance of salving the cargo; 'cause when they got back they put her under the hammer, and I bought her for four thousand dollars, Chile money. I got the idea there's a good chance of getting her cargo out of her."

Corrigan eyed him queerly. "You have?" he questioned. "What is her cargo?"

"Well, there's sixteen hundred ton of copper ore in her, and a little miscellaneous stuff."

"Um! The ore's worth around fifty thousand dollars—if you get it out of her. There can't be much of a chance for that, or the insurance people'd never let her go like that. And now about this little miscellaneous stuff, Pete. How about that?"

The fat man blinked dispiritedly. "Don't amount to nothing much. Just a little jag of this and that. Maybe I've been landed for a sucker, Bob, but I've got the idea she's firm wedged and going to hang where she is a spell, and I took a chance."

"You landed for a sucker!" Corrigan laughed ironically, and hitched his chair closer. "What's the play, Pete? Don't try to tell me that you bought that wreck on spec for what you might get out of the ore in her! Open up!"

"You're so darn' suspicious," Dawson complained. "You hadn't ought to be that way, Bob. I'll leave you look at the manifest, and if you can find anything on there besides the ore that's worth anything, I'll make you a present of it."

"Never mind the manifest. If I'd never carried any cargo except what was on my manifests, I'd never have owned my own vessels. What is it you want of me?"

"Your power schooner, the *Relampago,* is laying here in the harbor?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, Bob, I figured maybe that you and me could make some dicker for you to take me over to Matafuras in her, and look this wreck over; see?"

"Just run you over to look at her?"

"Well, we'd take a wrecking crew along, of course, so if there was anything we could do right off——"

"What could we do right off? You've got to have lighters and a cargo vessel to stand by when yuh start shifting the ore—if you do. Why not just run over there with one diver, say, and a short crew; look the wreck over, and then, if there's a chance to save anything, why, we'll come back and outfit."

Dawson pulled at his pursed under lip with a fat thumb and forefinger, and exerted himself to the extent of a slight negative shake of his great head.

"I'm in a large hurry, Bob," he explained. "We'll take a full wrecking crew and maybe they can be doing something while you run back here for the cargo vessel and the lighters if we need 'em. I'd rather have it my way, Bob."

Corrigan nodded. "I believe you,"

he agreed. "And where do I get rich off all this?"

"Well, Bob, I'll charter your vessel if you like, or else I'll just leave you in on this thing, half and half whatever we get. How that last strike you?"

Corrigan scratched his chin and thoughtfully patted the tile floor with the tip of his shoe. "I'll just go halvers with you on that, old son," he decided. "Copper ore, huh?"

He looked up at Dawson and grinned derisively. The fat man closed his eyes, and his great body shook with silent mirth.

"I'll provide the crew, Bob," he said finally, when his laughter had subsided.

"How nice!" Corrigan mocked. "I'll pick my own crew, my friend. You can rustle the divers and their outfits, but my officers and my vessel's crew I'll find for myself. When do you want to start?"

"Sooner the better."

"To-morrow afternoon?"

"Suits me."

"You know where the *Relampago* lays; get your divers and their outfits aboard and be ready at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon. All the stores and the advance money on the crew charged to you, Pete."

"That goes. Have a drink?"

"When I'm dealing with you? Never a drop, you fat thief."

He thrust out his hand and shook Dawson's limp, elephantine paw.

"Copper ore!" he chuckled.

"Copper ore," the fat man echoed, and his gross body shook with another fit of the silent mirth that was habitual to him. As Corrigan strode from the hotel, Dawson drew a small lace handkerchief from his coat pocket and wiped the tears of laughter from the puckered slits of fat that hid his eyes. "Copper ore," he wheezed to himself. "That's good, that is! Copper ore!"

## CHAPTER III.

As far as Corrigan was able to learn, copper ore was all the wrecked vessel contained. He visited Rockheim, the Valparaiso superintendent of the underwriters, who had visited the ship, and sought information from him.

"I wish I did know why he bought her," Rockheim fretted. "There's nothing in her, as far as any of us know, except the ore and a little jag of miscellaneous stuff that don't amount to anything. She lies in a bad place there, and the first wind'll surely break her up if she hasn't already gone to pieces from the swell. It's almost a dead certainty that she'll never last until the ore can be shifted, and it's an expensive job at best. Everything abaft the foremast is under water, and that means that everything in the hold'll have to be taken out by the divers. Why did he buy her?"

Corrigan shrugged. "That's what I'm asking you," he retorted.

Rockheim frowned perplexedly. "I wish I could tell you. On the face of it, it looks as though we'd landed a welcome sucker when we got Dawson to pay four thousand dollars for the old mess of splinters; but I've known Pete Dawson for too many years to feel easy when he's the fish we've got in our net. He's lost out on some rich jobs, but I never knew him yet to stir that fat carcass of his when there wasn't something mighty well worth while going after. Any time Pete Dawson's ever lost, he's lost trying for something big. I think we've made a mistake, but I'm blest if I know how."

"Who was captain of the *Alfreda?*"

"Old Captain Corkery, poor old soul. I know him well, and it didn't surprise me that he quit the game along with his ship. He was that kind."

Corrigan leaned forward eagerly. "He lost?" he asked. "I didn't know that. That makes it different."

Rockheim raised his eyebrows. "How different?"

"I've been master of ships for a good many years, Rockheim, and I never made big money on the stuff that was on my manifests. I'll bet Captain Corkery had——"

"Forget it," Rockheim interrupted him sharply. "Corkery wasn't your kind, Corrigan. He lived poor, and I'd stake my life on it that he died poor. I knew him well, and I know that he never made a dollar on the side in his life. No, if there's anything in that ship that's not on the manifest, poor old Captain Corkery didn't know it."

"That might be, too. There's lots of things these honest skippers don't know, sometimes. Anybody else lost?"

"Five of the crew, and the mate and two passengers."

"Passengers?" Corrigan questioned sharply. "Who were they?"

"Oh, I've thought the same thing you're thinking, but there's nothing in it," Rockheim laughed. "I had the same vision of a rich passenger with money and diamonds, but it faded when I investigated. The two passengers were an old naturalist—fellow by the name of Van Ameringe—and his daughter. This old professor had been into the interior of Bolivia for five or six years, gathering bugs and things that these botany chaps go after. If he had ready money on him for a first-class passage home, he was fortunate. Not a chance there."

"He and his daughter were lost, eh?"

"Yes. There was a pretty heavy sea running when she struck, and it was pretty rough work aboard when her spars went by the board. She sank by the stern- as I told you, and there's nothing left of her now; she's probably broken up and gone to the bottom by this time. But what did Pete Dawson want to buy her in for?"

Corrigan rose and took up his hat. "That's what I aim to string along and find out," he said.

"The best of luck to you," Rockheim wished him. "If old Pete's done us out of anything, I hope you cheat him out of it."

Corrigan grinned and gripped the underwriter's hand. "I'm going into this thing with Pete share and share, and if he comes back with some of what belongs to me, just say a prayer for Corrigan; 'cause, believe me, Corrigan'll be done for."

"Well, have a drink on that before you go."

Corrigan shrank from the fumes that arose from the opened decanter as though some one had struck him. "Cork that," he said. "No booze till this game's played."

He walked down the Calle San Juan de Dios to the Café del Pacifico, where Hartman awaited him. The young fellow cried out in alarm at sight of the big Irishman's face.

"What is it, Corrigan?" he questioned. "Sick?"

Corrigan sank into a seat and stared at him from bloodshot eyes. "Booze," he explained briefly. "I've been hitting it night and day for three months, and I sawed off short; sawed off just one step short of the gutter, boy, and the amputation's pretty near killed me. That's the fact. I've fought storms at sea, and men as strong as myself; I've been beaten half to death, and stood hunger and thirst to the death line; but there's no agony equal to this, Martin; there's none equal to it!"

"You'd better stop by degrees, captain," Martin advised.

"Degrees nothing!" Corrigan flared. "Anything or anybody I can't lick can kill me any time. That's me! We've got a job on our hands, my boy, a job that'll take all that's in us to carry through; a job that'll stir our blood better than all the rotten booze that was ever distilled; a job that'll bring every nerve in us to life and then make the life worth living! Son, we're going blind against the slickest, deadliest, double-crossing hound south of the equator; and we're going to lick him at his own game—or die trying. The game'll be worth playing, son."

Rapidly he outlined what he knew of the project.

"Pete Dawson's got something worth while, and it's up to us to get our half of whatever it is," he finished. "He's a bad man to go against with blinders on, but I'd rather go out in any kind of a fight with a deck under my feet, and the clean stars laughing down at me, than to stay safe ashore and rot with brandy and inaction. I warn you that this man is bad, and that he's got something up his sleeve I don't know of; on the face of it, he wins; and if he does win, I'll lay the *Relampago* against a cigarette butt that neither you nor I will come back. Do you want to take it on?"

Hartman's face was pale, and there was fear in his eyes; but his jaws were tight set and the hand he reached across the table was steady. "I'm with you," he said.

The hint of moisture filmed Corrigan's gray-green eyes as he grasped the young fellow's hand and wrung it hard. "You're a good pal," he said, a little shakily. "Your knees get weak and your feet turn traitor when trouble starts, but you're the gamest man I know, 'cause you stay with the game in spite of that. I like you!"

## CHAPTER IV.

The stranger who walked down the Calle San Martin in Valparaiso after dark in the early nineties literally carried his life in his own hands. It was the district of the sailors' boarding houses and all the sordid dens of vice that clung about those hovels of brutality like barnacles on a derelict's bottom. It was from these horrible so-called boarding houses—in reality nothing more than slave nets—that crews for outgoing vessels were recruited. The method was simple. A man—any man who happened to be unfortunate enough to be in one of the hells when sailors were wanted—was drugged or slugged into unconsciousness by one of the boarding-house runners, rowed out to the waiting ship, and hoisted aboard. For each one so delivered, from fifty dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars blood money was paid by the captain "on the capstan head," as the phrase ran, to be deducted at the end of the voyage from the pittance due the sailor as wages. It was grim fiction that this money so paid was due the boarding-house keeper for food and lodging; it was further fiction that the unconscious forms dumped on the deck were all A. B.'s, as the runners always grinningly asserted. No matter. They were shipped as able seamen, and able seamen they would be from the time they turned to for their first watch, bewildered and sick, or they would be beaten to death in the making. A ship at sea with sail to be made or taken in is no place for a clerk or a bookkeeper to explain that he has never been out of sight of land before, and doesn't know the royal yard from the jibboom, nor the upper topsail downhaul from a marlinespike. He is a sailor on the articles and a sailor he is in fact—if he lives; a sailor by the toe of the mate's boot, the brutal smash of his knotted knuckles, the bone-cracking tip of a belaying pin, and the stinging, bruising slash of a rope's end!

It was down into the seething pit from whence these slaves of the sea were drawn, that Captain Bob Corrigan, adventure free lance of the South Pacific, and young Martin Hartman, the Harvard graduate, went in search of a suitable crew for the *Relampago*.

The Calle San Martin was then a

street of low buildings; an ill-lit street that echoed from daylight till dawn with ribald laughter, drunken shouts, the shuffle of feet in the low dance halls on either side, the tinkle of piano and mandolin, and often enough the confusion of angry curses, the shot and the death shriek.

"We'll hit Nigger Mike's place first," Corrigan said, as they made their way down the street. "He's generally got the toughest lot of sailormen of anybody in town, and the tougher the better for what I want. The Nigger is a friend of mine, and he won't start anything, but he can't always handle the crowd that's there; so stay at my shoulder; and if anything breaks loose, shoot first and argue afterward."

He led the way into a long, low-ceilinged room, crowded with men and women, and dim with tobacco smoke. On their left, as they entered, was a bar that ran half the length of the place. The rest of the space was taken up by small, round tables. The room was lit by six large, hanging lamps. At the rear, on a small platform, a long-haired Chileno banged frantically on a warped and out-of-tune piano.

A spare-built, hard-featured West India negro, lolling on a high stool behind the bar, waved a welcome at Corrigan as he entered.

"You're mos' stranger fellow roun' this place, captain," he grinned. "You have some drink? Yes?"

Corrigan chuckled. "Seen too many shellbacks coming off jags they collected here in your place, Mike. What kind of poison do you put in your booze, besides strychnine and sulphuric acid?"

"Oh, captain, the sailorman, he is not want the good liquor, heh? To get drunk quick an' stay drunk long, that's all he care. But for the captain I got the bes'. Indeed! You try——"

"I try nothing," Corrigan interrupted him. "Not drinking. Mike, I want a good crew of the toughest, gun-fighting, kniving murderers you can scare up. I want two officers, cabin steward and cook, and eight foremast hands. No riffraff, now, Mike. I need a breed of cats this trip, that can fight with anything from teeth to toenails; and I'll pay you well for them."

"You come in time," Mike said, and beckoned to two men lounging at one of the tables. They swung to the bar and leaned across expectantly.

"Mike Dolan an' Jim Rafferty," Mike introduced them. "This, he's Captain Corrigan. Both these men, he's have mate's ticket, captain, an' good men like you say, you bet!"

Corrigan surveyed each man separately from head to foot. Dolan was thickset, shock-shouldered, ham-fisted, and not above five feet ten in height; he had a broad, forward-thrust jaw, a thin, wide mouth, and a thick, bulbous nose; his eyes, light gray and shaded by heavy black lashes, met Corrigan's combatively, steadily, and yet without insolence. Rafferty stood well over six feet; his neck was long and thin, and his small, tow-haired head, and the big hooked nose looked like the head and beak of some great bird. His shoulders were narrow, his arms and legs long, and his hands and feet of tremendous size. He was slouchy, loose-jointed, and mild looking; so mild looking and slouchy, that it took a keen judge of men to note that here was a man built like a steel cable, a lean man of gigantic strength and endurance, a dare-devil of a man minus nerves of fear. His eyes were a bright blue, very wide open, and always shifting about with a whimsical, childlike curiosity. Corrigan, who knew men, knew how quickly those wide eyes could grow cold and hard as a chip of glacier ice.

"You two'll do," Corrigan nodded. "Want to take a month or two with me aboard the *Relampago* over to Matafuras on a little wrecking deal? One hundred and fifteen shinplasters a month for mate, and ninety-five for second mate."

Both men nodded assent. "I want fighting men," Corrigan said softly. "Men who'll back me with all they've got for anything I go after. It may be hot. Still want to go?"

The two men stared at each other and both chuckled.

"Now, don't you go an' scare us, cap'n," Rafferty drawled. "We need the berth, an' if you talk fight like that, we might get cold feet an' back out—but I'm thinkin' we won't! We both of us holds mate's tickets, you know, cap'n," he continued suggestively.

"Toss for it," Corrigan disposed of this question.

They tossed a coin, and Rafferty won. "Hard luck, Dolan," he sympathized. "I get twenty shinplasters a month more'n you from the toss o' that coin. Tough!"

Corrigan slipped each of them a few silver dollars. "That'll carry you through the night. Be sure and be on board the *Relampago* by eight o'clock in the morning. We sail at three to-morrow afternoon."

While Corrigan talked across the bar with the proprietor, discussing the selection of the foremast hands for the voyage, Hartman strolled across the room, interestedly inspecting the pictures and models of vessels of every description which adorned the walls. He noticed a messenger boy enter and slip a note to a tall fellow with a long black mustache, who sat at one of the rear tables. He took particular notice of the incident for the first time, when he saw the man read the note, and then stare hard at Corrigan. He watched him rise and pass among the tables, stopping here and there to whisper to men who invariably thereafter glanced at Corrigan, rose, and sauntered up to the bar.

Hartman felt a painful tightening about his throat, and his breath came to his lungs hard. One by one the men to whom he of the black mustache had whispered rose and carelessly breasted the bar, until there were at least twelve of the evil-appearing ruffians lined up. The man who had received the telegram passed close to Hartman, with his hand on another man's shoulder, whispering to him excitedly in Spanish. A cold shiver of confirmation of what had been nebulous suspicion vibrated through him when, from the low, rapidly spoken sentences of the man with the black mustache, he distinctly heard the name of Pete Dawson mentioned.

And suddenly all the glamour fell away from Hartman's vision of adventure, and the ugly skull of the situation as it actually was grinned sordid death at him. The filthy room, the hard faces around him, the stench of cheap wine and strong tobacco—all combined to nauseate him.

Forgotten were all his protestations of allegiance to Corrigan, all will to fight, all desire to prove his own courage to himself; gone everything but the instinct to flee from death at the hands of such men in so foul a place.

He took a quick step toward the front door and stopped short. Gathered about the entrance were four Chilenos, their thumbs hooked in their belts near their sheath knives, eying him sullenly from under low-drawn hat brims. The instant of possible escape had passed!

He wanted to shriek aloud, to sink to his knees, and beg for the life that was in him; for a moment every instinct save horrible animal fear was gone from him.

Then, through the swimming haze that dimmed his sight, he caught the look of scorn on the face of one of the Chilenos guarding the door, and understood that the fellow knew his terror. Pride burned his fear-numbed nerves to life as brandy scorches a fainting man into consciousness, and the waking nerves stirred into being his will and his sense of loyalty to Corrigan. His knees were shaking under him, but the sudden knowledge that he would give the best account of himself that his physique would allow, filled him with a warm glow that melted the icy fingers of fear clutching at his heart.

He walked slowly across to Corrigan—still talking with Nigger Mike, and yet unconscious of any menace—and as he leaned on the bar beside him, an involuntary chuckle of satisfaction escaped him. His soul had been close to a shameful desertion of his nerve-cursed, sensitive body at a crucial instant—and he knew that the time of peril to his honor and self-respect was past.

Corrigan glanced at him casually, but his eyes stayed on the boy's face; and while no muscle betrayed him by any sudden movement, the pupils of his gray-green eyes dilated, and Hartman knew that he sensed the danger.

Corrigan spoke a word or two more to Mike, carefully lit a cigar, and, turning with his back to the bar, blew a wreath of smoke at the ceiling and indolently surveyed the room.

He turned his head suddenly, and shot a keen, questioning glance at Hartman. There was a glitter in the boy's eyes, and a firm set to his jaws. A slow, glad, comradely grin creased Corrigan's big face, and he nodded reassuringly.

The tall man with the black mustache walked up in front of Corrigan and surveyed him insolently. No word had been spoken, and yet the place was as quiet as a tomb. Every eye was turned on either Corrigan or the man who confronted him.

"It may be that you seek a crew, eh, captain?" he inquired, with a sneer.

Corrigan inhaled deeply of cigar smoke and blew it slowly in the fellow's face. "Looking for a berth, my man?" he asked coolly in return.

The man scowled and shrugged. "It is, perhaps, best you buy a drink for all—quick," he suggested, in a tone that was a demand.

"One glass of brandy, Mike," Corrigan ordered, without turning his head.

He smoked serenely while Mike poured the liquor; the man with the black mustache watched him with a flicker of bewilderment in his eyes. Mike set out the liquor, and Corrigan reached behind him and picked up the glass.

"Drink alone, beggar," he invited, and dashed the brandy full into the fellow's face.

"At 'em, Martin!" he barked, even as he threw. "Stay close to me, boy."

Before the black-mustached man could open his eyes, two blue-barreled thirty-eights stared from Corrigan's fists. Knives flashed in the dim light of the hanging lamps, as the crowd of ruffians rushed for him.

Hartman was dimly conscious that his gun was in his hand, and that he was pulling the trigger. Then, before his face appeared a brown-skinned apparition of hate, and a gleaming knife swished for his chest. Martin gripped the wrist, felt it give to his wrench, and he rolled to the floor, clenched with the maddened Chileno thug, fighting body to body with him for the possession of the knife. Boots tramped upon his writhing body, his head and limbs, as he fought. Over and over on the floor they rolled, first one and then the other on top.

Nigger Mike leaped across the bar when the attack began, and with a blackjack in one hand and a knife in the other, ranged himself alongside Corrigan. His guns emptied, Corrigan clubbed them and struck out with the butts at the charging crowd. Shoulder to shoulder, backs against the bar, they fought, the Irish captain and the negro boarding-house keeper. A huge French sailor at length smashed his way through Corrigan's weakened guard, gripped him by the hair of the head, and, bending him over with his back against the edge of the bar, rammed his lifted knee into the spent skipper's stomach. Corrigan's breath went from him in a hoarse grunt. Then everything went black, and the next he knew, he was seated in a chair, and Jim Rafferty, the lanky Irishman he had engaged as mate, was forcing brandy between his lips.

"Hartman!" Corrigan gasped. "Is he all——"

"He's right as rain," Rafferty consoled him. "Got his man and escaped with a few little scratches that a stitch or two will take care of. Here he is."

Hartman, weak and swaying on his feet, grasped Corrigan by the arms. "Are you—all right?" he croaked. "All right, Bob?"

"Never finer," Corrigan whispered weakly.

"Me an' Dolan blew back into the joint about the proper time," Rafferty drawled. "There was a frog-eater breakin' you over the bar there, an' just gettin' ready to pet you with a knife, when I pinked him just abaft his two ears an' kindo' disheartened him. All them warlike people, they kindo' got discouraged when me an' Dolan blew in an' mussed around, so they sort o' went away from here. Didn't they, Dolan?"

Dolan, nursing a black eye and a smashed nose, grinned wickedly. "They seemed kindo' put out about somethin' after we happened around," he agreed.

Corrigan clenched his fists and rose unsteadily to his feet. The room was practically emptied. He looked across at Nigger Mike, who leaned against the bar, holding a handkerchief to his cheek.

"Have that crew aboard at eight o'clock," he said coolly. He turned to Rafferty. "Be aboard on time," he said tersely. "Eight o'clock."

Rafferty touched his cap. "Aye, sir," he agreed. "Me an' Dolan'd best walk to the end o' the street with you, sir."

"All right!"

With Hartman on his arm, Corrigan walked to the end of the street guarded by the two mates.

"Be aboard on time," he commanded shortly, as he left them. "Aye, sir," they agreed in unison.

"Good men," Corrigan commented, as he and Hartman walked away.

Back in the gloom of the Calle San Martin, Rafferty and Dolan grinned at each other.

"He's a skipper," Rafferty declared.

"A skipper," Dolan agreed fervently.

## CHAPTER V.

While a physician dressed their wounds at their room in the Café Del Pacifico, Hartman told Corrigan of hearing the black-mustached thug mention Pete Dawson's name.

"I knew he was in it," Corrigan growled. "He framed the whole thing. I suppose he figured I'd found out something and was too wise for him to use. Will he try to lose me now, or bluff it through?"

The physician finished patching them up, and left. Corrigan and Martin sat in their pajamas, discussing the events of the evening and the mystery of Dawsan's purchase of the wreck of the *Alfreda.* Their talk was interrupted by the startling command: "Hands up, both of you!" and Pete Dawson stepped through the low-silled window overlooking the piazza roof, with a revolver in either hand.

Gone was all the indolence and apparent helplessness of the Pete Dawson of the morning. He was alert and active, treading softly on the balls of his feet with all the ease and quickness of a great cat; his tiny, coin-colored eyes were wide open and ablaze with anger; a bandage adorned his head, and red stains marred the whiteness of his coat about the edges of a long slit in the right breast.

"So you tried the job yourselves, did you?" he snarled, in his high voice, noting the two men's wounds. "I didn't know it was you two I was mussing up down there, or I'd have relished the fight more. Sunk to stabbing your pardners in the dark, have you, Corrigan? I'd have thought you'd have left my killing to some hired thug!"

The sincerity of the man's anger was beyond question. Corrigan stared at the disheveled figure in bewilderment for a space.

"Did you frame on us to have us put out down in Nigger Thompson's to-night?" he demanded suddenly.

"Frame on you? Nigger Thompson's?" Dawson echoed blankly.

"I don't believe you did," Corrigan muttered softly. "Hartman and I were jumped by a gang down in Nigger Thompson's to-night, while we were down there digging up a crew, Pete. One of them got a note, and Hartman heard him mention your name. I had it figured that you thought I knew too much and were trying to ditch me. From the look of you, I think I was wrong. I didn't try any job on you, and I didn't hire anybody to jump you; the only scrapping Hartman and I have done to-night was trying to avoid sudden death in Nigger Thompson's when the gang there made for us. That's flat!"

Dawson stared at him hard, and lowered the muzzles of his two guns. "Then who tried to kill me down here in the Calle San Rafael?"

"How do I know?" Corrigan broke out angrily. "You declare me in on a deal, and then put blinders on me, and ask me what I see! You know that I know you lie like a dog when you say that you bought this wreck for the copper ore in her; then I get jumped all over by a gang, one of whom mentions your name in Hartman's hearing after he gets a note, evidently telling him to get me; and then you blow in through the window, with a gat in each fist, and ask me who gave you what was surely coming to you! The way I feel now, I wish it had been me; I'll promise you you'd have worse than a slit coat and a skinned head to show for it!"

Dawson perched on the edge of the bed and plucked thoughtfully at his pursed lip. "Somebody's mouth has leaked," he muttered.

"It wasn't yours," Corrigan retorted. "You might just as well give me the straight of the thing, Pete. I don't fancy being all carved up and not knowing even what it's for, nor who may be liable to handle the knives."

Dawson squinted at him speculatively. "Want to back out?"

"I do not. But I would like to know what kind of a slip I'm in."

"I told you we were going to salvage copper ore from the wreck of the *Alfreda*," Dawson retorted stubbornly. "You agreed to go in it with me, half and half. That's all there is to it."

He rose, and, stepping to the open window, peered out. A yellow flash stabbed the gloom of the street, and with the spang of the gunshot, a bullet zipped through the window and whanged into the plastered wall.

Dawson leaped aside with a comical, mouselike squeak of fright. Corrigan reached for the gas cock and plunged the room into darkness. They heard the patter of running feet outside, the shrill of a policeman's whistle, the babble of excited voices, and then all was quiet again.

"I think I can get into bed without any light," Corrigan chuckled. "You can go the way you come in, any time you like, Pete; don't let us keep you."

"I'm right tired all of a sudden, Bob," Dawson piped. "I often get took that way late at night. If you don't mind, I'll just camp here on the lounge until morning."

"Make your fat self comfortable, you clam-lipped tightwad!" Corrigan invited him. "I don't know who's after you, and if you're bound to keep a tight mouth on the game, we're both in on it. I'll not fret about keeping the grass green on your grave after they get you. Go on; keep on double-crossing me, and get your fool self killed, and see whether I feel bad or not."

Dawson felt his way through the darkness to the lounge and relaxed his huge bulk thereon with a vast sigh. "You're a terrible hard-hearted man, Bob," he whined. "And rough spoken, too. Good night, Bob!"

Corrigan rolled between the sheets and snuggled his head into a pillow.

Hartman followed Corrigan into the bed to lie wide awake and tense, living over the events of the night. What manner of voyage was it that he was to embark on, the following day? What were the cross-purposes of the two strange, hard men, in the room with him? What was the meaning of the deliberately planned attack in the sailors' boarding house, and the assault on Dawson? These and a score of other questions harassed him, and his vivid imagination peopled the room with dread presences. He saw a man's head and shoulders in the window and realized that it was the swirl of the curtain in the breeze, just in time to stop himself from crying aloud. Every sense was strained to catch the slightest sound; and then Corrigan, lying beside him, snored gently, and he realized, with a shock of wonder, that the big Irishman was fast asleep! A moment later, from across the room, a high, thin vibration from Dawson's peculiarly constructed nasal passages spoke the fact that the fat man was also held tight in the embrace of Morpheus.

How could they sleep thus, after such a night, and with such unknown dangers menacing their lives? As he lay wondering, and listening so intently, he heard an unsteady step in the hall, and the knob of the locked door was carefully turned.

Hartman was hardly aware that Corrigan had left the bed, so silently and swiftly did the Irishman writhe to the floor the instant the strange hand touched the door. A grumble of curses came from the hall, and a key rasped unavailingly on the iron of the lock.

"Who's there?" Corrigan called.

"'S me," a thick voice answered. "Tha's who 'tis; Cap'n Holborn, darn ye! An' who are you, to be lockin' me out o' my room, huh? Who are ye?"

"Corrigan, you drunken shellback! Your room's two doors down the hall, cap. Toddle along, now, and don't bother me.".

"That you, Bob? I tryin' to get into your room? 'Scuse me, Bob."

"All right."

"'Scuse me, won't you?'

"Yes."

"An', say, Bob!"

"What?"

"I'm drunker'n a boiled owl, Bob! G' night!"

"Sure you know his voice, Bob?" Dawson whispered; and Hartman sensed from the direction of his voice that he had moved from the lounge to the wall alongside the door.

"I know him," Corrigan assured him, as he slipped back into bed. "He's all right; just drunk."

"I thought you were asleep, Bob," Hartman said wonderingly.

Corrigan laughed. "So I was, son; but I sleep awake. If anybody comes into this room, I'll know it as quick asleep as I would if I sat up and watched. Get your rest, Martin."

Hartman heard Dawson relax on the lounge, and a minute later his high, buzzing snore. Corrigan sighed, and dropped instantly off to sleep. And Hartman, with a feeling of perfect security, closed his eyes and relaxed, knowing that the sensitive, trained companion of danger beside him could keep watch better asleep than he, Hartman, could awake.

The two mates were aboard when he and Corrigan were rowed to the *Relampago* the next morning, a little before eight; and shortly after they went aboard a boat came off with the eight foremast hands Corrigan had ordered. The big Irishman beamed his satisfaction as they tumbled over the rail. They were all white men and all of a type; the roughest, toughest best of the forecastle foes of the sea. An hour later, Dawson came off with his wrecking crew of eight, two divers, and their assistants. Corrigan went ashore, got his papers, and returned, bringing with him a case of arms and some boxes of ammunition.

Dawson, lounging on a deck chair, abaft the pilot house, chuckled as the rifles were hoisted on deck.

"I been watching for them to come, Bob," he wheezed. "Didn't think you'd be putting to sea on this voyage without some little hardware for ballast."

"If this expedition keeps on anythink like it's started, we'll need cannon and armor plate to keep afloat," Corrigan retorted. "Get that anchor up, Mr. Rafferty, and we'll go away from here."

He stood by the taffrail with Hartman, looking back at the high-banked city as the schooner headed for the sea. "There's trouble due, Martin," he said earnestly. "Serious trouble. I can feel it as plain as I could feel the touch of your hand if you gripped me by the arm. You can call it superstition, if you like, but I know that I can feel certain things that are due to happen. Many's the time I've waked out of a sound sleep all of a sudden, and jumped on deck just in time to get canvas off my ship ahead of a haul-around squall—and never look at the barometer or ask my officers a question before I ordered it taken in. I'd just wake up, knowing what to do, and go do it. I don't know what it is, boy, but it's real, and I can feel trouble ahead for this outfit—bad trouble."

They were just off Curilimia Light, standing out to sea on a west-by-south, half-south course, when there came a shriek from the engine room, and a moment later there bounded up on deck the black-mustached man who had led the attack on Corrigan and Hartman in Thompson's, the night before. He glanced wildly about the deck, and then at the lighthouse not three hundred yards away off the starboard quarter. Corrigan sprang for him from the after deck, and Rafferty came leaping aft from the foremast. The man crouched for an instant on the railing, and then dived into the sea.

Shorty Bane, the engineer, popped on deck as he disappeared into the crest of a wave. "Get him!" he yelled. "He's done for Denny! Get him!"

A black head showed above the white water at the edge of the schooner's fan-shaped wake, and Rafferty's revolver cracked.

The head disappeared. Corrigan turned and stretched his mate flat with a blow to the point of the jaw.

"You fool you!" he raged at him. "If you hit him I'll break every bone in your body. Hard astarboard, there! Swing her around and stand by to pick him up."

He glared down at the recumbent form of his mate, and cursed. "If there's any shooting to be done on this ship while I'm on deck, I'll do it. You idiotic dumbhead you. I'm half minded to start shooting, with you for a target."

"I hope he did get him," Shorty cut in. "He did for Denny. He was hidin' there in the engine room under a pile o' waste, an' when Denny found him, the greaser gave him the knife."

The schooner cruised back and forth over the spot where the man had gone down, with all hands on the lookout, but nothing was seen of him.

"There's no use lookin' for that bird any longer, sir," the mate volunteered sulkily. "I been handlin' a gun for a good many years, an' I wouldn't o' missed that mark at twice the distance, dead drunk. I hit him."

"And I'd give you a year's pay if you hadn't. Dead men don't talk; and if we'd got that fellow alive, I'd have found a way to make him open his mouth. I'd like to know what he was on this ship for, and what he did while he was aboard. Is Denny dead, Shorty?"

"He is."

"We'll bury him at sea. I'm not going to put back now. Hartman knows enough of the engine to stand the relief watch. Look those engines of yours over carefully, Shorty; he may have tampered with them somehow. Get below and search her thoroughly, Mr. Rafferty. Overhaul everything; this fellow may have left fire behind him."

The schooner stood out to sea once more, and the body of the assistant engineer was brought on deck and sewed in canvas, while Rafferty, with two of the crew, searched the hold and overhauled all the cargo. They reported nothing amiss, and Shorty declared that the engines were in perfect order.

The sun was sinking, a copper glow above an ominous bank of black clouds low on the western horizon, when Corrigan stood near the rail in the waist, by the still, canvas-wrapped thing on the plank, covered over with the lone-starred Chilean flag—and read the burial service.

"According to the mighty workings whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself," he intoned. "Commit his body to the sea."

The two mates tilted the plank, holding to the corner of the flag as they did so, and the body slid from under the Chilean emblem and splashed into the crest of a swell. As it disappeared, lightning flamed in the low-hung cloud bank on the western horizon; streak lightning, in the form of a rude cross.

"Keep her away on her course, Mr. Rafferty," Corrigan said shortly. "West by south, half south."

He stood for a moment by the after companionway, staring from stormy eyes at the far cloud bank in the west. A faint rumble of thunder vibrated across the dark, heaving water.

"Trouble!" Corrigan muttered. "Trouble coming!"

## CHAPTER VI.

Never were stranger shipmates than those on the *Relampago*. The murder of the assistant engineer had strengthened the feeling of distrust extant between Corrigan and Dawson. The same sentiment was felt by the wreckers and the crew of the vessel. Conversation in the forecastle was carried on in whispers; men lounging on the deck jumped at the slightest unusual sound on the vessel; orders were issued in low tones, and imminent tragedy cast its mantle of gloom over every one on board.

The very elements conspired to add to the strain that was rasping the nerves of all. It fell dead calm early on the first morning after their departure, and the sails were useless. She carried only a ninety-horse-power engine, capable of no more than five knots an hour without the aid of sail, and nothing of life on shipboard is more nerve wrecking than lack of speed. The schooner plugged slowly on her way, rolling and pitching to the great, oily swells that mounted from the southwest; the sky throughout the first day was a hard, light blue, with no cloud to mar it;

everywhere on the horizon was a fine, whitish haze that hurt the eyes when gazed at long; it was unduly hot, intolerably sultry—so much so that men lying idle on deck fairly panted for air, and the world in which they were became a very incubator of trouble.

"She's a weather breeder, all right," Rafferty prophesied to Hartman on the afternoon of the first day out, when the latter, standing the relief watch for Shorty in place of the dead assistant, came up out of the engine room for a breath of air. "Yes, siree! The barometer ain't started to fall none yet, but I know these seas pretty dog-gone well, an' I know there's a swoosher makin' up off there somewhere. We'll get it all right, all righty!"

Hartman wiped his grimy face on his sleeve and leaned wearily on the rail. "I wish it'd do something," he said sulkily. "This weather makes me feel rank."

Rafferty glanced forward, where the wreckers were sprawled out on the gear, silent and moody to a man.

"Makes everybody feel that way," he said uneasily. "This here's mutiny weather, an' no mistake; an' I miss my guess if there ain't the makin's of a dandy aboard this craft right now; she feels just as friendly an' safe as a battlefield to me. I tell you, I'm glad the skipper's who he is, instead of some of the two-legged jellyfish I've been mate with. You bet!"

Hartman eyed him curiously. "He hit you a pretty hard wallop last night," he said tentatively.

"A dandy," Rafferty grinned. "Say, he can hit like a couple o' mules kickin', he can."

"It doesn' seem to have knocked any of your admiration for him out of you."

Rafferty gave him a sharp glance. "You been to sea long? No? I thought you wasn't a seafarin' man. I tell you, skippers like him is the ones a real sailorman likes to ship with. No shenanigan, an' a rope's end or a belayin' pin to tickle your hide if you don't do your work proper—an' I didn't do mine when I potted that fellow, I know that. But I want to tell you that when the spars are goin' by the board, or the flames are lickin' up out o' the hold, or you're fightin' to wear 'round a cranky old tub with the surf on a lee shore, roarin' an' bellerin' nigh under her very counters, then's when you thank God for a hard-fisted, quick-witted bucko like him a-standin' on the poop! Yes, siree, sir! An' me an' Dolan, we're mighty glad there's a skipper like him aboard o' this craft. I feel better in my bones for it."

Hartman thought of the night in the room at the hotel in Valparaiso, when he had gone peacefully to sleep, beside the big Irishman, with unknown dangers menacing, secure in his belief in the captain's wits. He nodded. "I'm not a seafaring man, but I know what you mean. Holy mackerel, but isn't it sultry!"

It continued so throughout the day, and night brought no relief. Those of the crew off watch dozed on the deck forward, forsaking the stuffy forecastle; Corrigan, Hartman, and Dawson lolled on deck chairs aft, smoking without enjoyment, discontented, sullen, and silent.

"Barometer's starting to fall," Corrigan announced, reappearing on deck after an excursion to his cabin. "Down to twenty-nine-seventy now. We'll get weather before morning, or I miss my guess."

The figure of the engineer was a black silhouette in the entrance to the engine room for a moment as he emerged, and then he hurried aft.

"Wish you'd come down with me and have a look, sir," he said anxiously to Corrigan. "I just went for'a'd into the hold to tap another tank o' gas, an'—an', say, cap'n, there's somethin' in there that—that's tickin' like a clock. Cap'n, you don't think that —that——"

"Fetch a lantern, and be quick about it, Mr. Mate," Corrigan roared, springing to his feet. He clutched Shorty by the arm. "First time you've noticed it? Is it? Talk fast."

"I—I—no. I've been hearing it all along, but I thought it was a screw loose in the engine somewhere, an' I've been hunting all over for—— It's in the hold, there, with them tanks, whatever it is, cap'n, an' it ticks like a clock; it ticks like a clock, I tell you, and I can't find it. Do you think—cap'n, do you think that fellow who did—do you think that fellow that did for Denny put——"

"Shut up!" Corrigan snapped, as Rafferty came running aft with two lanterns. "Mr. Rafferty, that devil you shot's got an infernal machine planted in among the tanks in the hold. It's ticking away down in there now, and God knows when it's set for. It may go off any minute, so——"

"I'll go look for it, sir," Rafferty responded.

"We'll both look," Corrigan replied, with a pleased note in his voice. "Shorty, rouse out Mr. Dolan and tell him to stand by down below with the watch, and have all his fire extinguishers ready for use."

He rushed forward to the engine room after his mate, and Shorty ran below to rouse Dolan. Dawson rose from his chair and stretched his fat arms. "I s'pose the sooner this tickin' what-ye-may-call-it down there is found, the better we'll all feel about it," he whined querulously. "An' the more there is lookin' for it, the quicker we're liable to run onto it; I guess I'll go down and have a look-see myself."

He waddled forward, and Hartman, with a sudden warm rush of liking for the huge man, followed him. Many evil things this strange fellow might be, but he did not hesitate to voluntarily venture into that dark hold, stored with the volatile fluid, where a hidden infernal machine was believed to be ticking off the seconds of the lives of any who ventured there; and Hartman would do no less than follow.

Corrigan, searching frantically among the cans in the dark hold, glanced up as Dawson squeezed through the door in the bulkhead from the engine room.

"She's in here, all right," he announced. "Listen a minute, now, and we'll see if we can locate her."

Clearly to their ears came the tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick that had startled the engineer.

"Make out where it is?" Corrigan asked.

"Seems like way for'a'd there, to me," Dawson piped coolly, crawling in over the tiers of cans toward the farther bulkhead that separated the tank room from the cargo hold.

"Sounds to me near the door here," Corrigan said. He looked up and saw Hartman in the entrance. "Look on that side of the door and I'll look on this," he said. Feverishly they worked, shifting the heavy cans one by one, and searching between them.

Dolan appeared in the doorway with two extinguishers in his hands. Several of the crew, similarly equipped, and with fear-whitened faces, crowded into the engine room behind him.

Dawson, crouching on the cans by the forward bulkhead, held up his hand. "Keep still again for a second," he said, in his high, boyish whine. "I think I can hear it right up here somewheres."

The others stopped shifting the cans and waited. Faint but distinct they could hear the tick, tick, tick, tick of the thing they sought.

"It's right here somewheres," Dawson insisted. "Come up here, some of you, and——"

From seemingly directly under him, a great sheet of fire flashed and filled the hold, and the whole ship quivered to the roar of the explosion. Hartman was blown clean through the door by the force of the blast, bowling over Dolan and one of the men behind him like tenpins. Out after him an instant later leaped Rafferty and Corrigan, singed and scorched, but not seriously so. The hold was lit by a pillar of flame rising by the forward bulkhead, and spreading out along the deck planks overhead. From out the entrance hurtled the huge, blackened remnant of what had been Pete Dawson, and rolled on the concrete floor of the engine room. There was no shred of clothing left on his great body, and that he was fatally burned was evident at a glance. Corrigan knelt by the man and called his name. Sight was gone from the tiny, silver-colored eyes forever, but the marred face twisted into a grin at the sound of Corrigan's voice, and the indomitability and unquenchable whimsicality of the strange character found its last expression in his queer, high whine.

"It was there, Bob," he piped faintly. "Where I said. I found it."

Several minor explosions occurred in quick succession. and men spraying the chemicals into the hold from the door of the engine room were forced back by the sheet of flame that swept out. The cans of gasoline were exploding one by one, and the volume of the fire increasing in proportion.

The sailors dropped their extinguishers and started to flee from the fiery pit.

"Let 'em go!" Corrigan shouted, as Rafferty made to stop them. "She's got away from us. Give us a hand to get Dawson on deck, and then man the boats."

They were scarcely clear of the engine room when the flames billowed out of the entrance after them. Already the blaze was shooting up in tiny tongues between the planks of the main hatch amidships, and a moment later a glow, seen through the cabin skylight, told that the fire had spread to the after part of the ship.

"She's gone!" Corrigan shouted. "Get the boats over!"

The two diving boats, lying in the waist on either side of the main hatch, were already being gotten away by the frantic crew. When Dolan and Rafferty attempted to superintend the work, a free-for-all fight ensued, the fear-crazed men battling wildly to be first in the boats. They combined to drive back the two mates, thinking that the officers intended to attempt compelling them to stay and fight the flames.

"Let 'em go!" Corrigan bawled from the after deck. "Come aft, here, and clear away the gig; we'll go in that."

While the two mates swung the gig out on the stern davits, Corrigan stood by the taffrail, his rugged face sharply limned by the glow from the flames that roared in the cabin, and thrust flickering tongues into the night from out the after companionway, watching the destruction of his ship and the wild scramble of the crew, from stormy eyes.

By the time the two diving boats in the waist were lowered away and the last man of the crew was gone from the ship, the planks covering the main hatch were burned through, and a solid column of flame roared unobstructed through the opening, mounting to the height of the masthead. Fire touched the rigging, saturated with tar, and almost in the moment thereafter, every ratline, shroud, and stay was beautifully aglow with the demon of destruction, and the *Relampago* rode the long swells, a schooner of flame with every tiniest rope in her rigging traced in fire on the black background of night.

The flames shooting from the after companionway were scorching their faces, when they tenderly lifted the huge, blackened body of Pete Dawson into the gig and lowered away. The two mates slid down the falls, manned the oars, and rowed clear of the burning vessel.

Corrigan sat in the stern sheets with Dawson's head pillowed on his lap. The fat man had been unconscious from the time he spoke in the engine room, breathing hoarsely and moaning unintelligibly all the while. But when the gig was less than a hundred yards from the vessel he stirred and called faintly for Corrigan.

"Right here, Pete, old boy," Corrigan answered tenderly.

"I'm gone, Bob!" Dawson whined huskily. "The old man's done for this time, Bob. Oh, Bob! Can you hear me, Bob?"

"Yes, Pete."

"Bob, my people—my people, Bob—in Philadelphia they live, fourteen-eighty-seven Chestnut Street; Schuyler is the honest to God name—address Herman D. Schuyler." His voice wheezed away into an unintelligible moan for a time, and then he spoke again, fainter than before. "Lie for me, Bob. I'm supposed to be—honest merchant out here, trader and all that—and doing well. Wife and two girls back there. Haven't seen—eighteen years. Sent 'em my money all the time. Big girls now. Fine people, Bob! I been—proper rascal all my life. In my blood. Rather make one crooked dollar than a thousand honest; rather raise Cain and sweat for it than go straight and be happy. Left eighteen—eighteen years ago, Bob. Both little babies—little babies then—little babies; big girls now—fine big girls. Bob, hear me?"

"Yes, Pete."

"Wife an' girls, Bob—loved 'em! I did! Glad I'm done, Bob. Life been—hell. Loved 'em, but didn't go straight. In the blood. Left 'em alone an'—I took care of 'em—anyhow. Write to 'em. Tell 'em—died good death. Lie for me, Bob. Got address?"

"I've got it, Pete."

"Trust you always—liked you, Bob. Cheat you if I got the chance; my way—in the blood—but liked you, Bob. The *Alfreda*—I'll tell you—she's got—got—— Bob! Bob!"

"Yes, Pete."

"Squint Weatherby—cross-eyed—he knows. Look out, Bob. Cross-eyed—cross-eyed. Him—tried kill me and you—Valparaiso. His gang—got cable from Antofogasta. Him—had this—done. Squint Weatherby. Cross-eyed, Bob. Look out! He knows, Bob, listen: The *Alfreda*—*Alfreda*—she—she she——"

The dying man moaned for a moment and then suddenly sat straight up. "Helen," he called clearly. "Come quick; the little skeezicks said 'Papa.' Yes, she—did. Say it for mamma now—Curly Head; say 'papa.' Louder, honey girl, I—can't hear; I can't—I can't—— Helen, turn on—on the light. It's dark. I can't—— Say 'pa——' "

He sighed deeply and crumpled up in the boat. Corrigan bent over him.

"All through," he pronounced simply. He sat straight in the stern sheets and stared at his burning ship, now fast settling by the stern. "Wife and girls!" he muttered. "Pete Dawson! Aw, Martin, it's hell to live! Make off to port, there, Mr. Rafferty, and we'll get in touch with the other boats."

## CHAPTER VII.

The three boats gathered a quarter of a mile away from the schooner and lay close together, riding the great, smooth swells, while the men sullenly watched her burn. Corrigan had given orders to stand by until the vessel sank, in the hope that some passing craft, attracted by the fire, might come to their assistance.

"It'll be near daylight before she's

burned to the water's edge," he said to Rafferty. "If we're not sighted by then, we'll try for Juan Fernandez Island. We're about a hundred miles due west of there now."

Rafferty shook his head forebodingly. "If we're not picked up before daylight, I make doubt we'll be hard put to it to keep afloat, sir, leave alone steerin' a course for anywhere. This calm's kep' up now about long enough, I'm thinkin', an' it'll likely come hell-roarin' when it breaks."

Corrigan nodded. "I smell weather myself," he agreed. "Norther on the way, mostlike." He rose and stared down at the body of Dawson. "Might as well get rid of this. Reeve a sack of ballast to his feet, Mr. Rafferty, and we'll let him go."

When the two mates had lifted the huge form to the gunwale, Corrigan held up his hand. "He was a crook, God," he said simply. "He was born crooked and crooked he lived; but he was game, and he did the best he could for the way he was built. He loved his wife and kids, and he sweltered in hell for every minute his heart beat. If You've got charge of him now, take the curl out of his soul and give him a white man's chance. Amen! Let him go!"

There was a gurgling splash in the dark water alongside, and Pete Dawson, the queer-souled, gross-bodied, fearless, whimsical misfit of the world into which he was born, was gone forever from the ken of man.

"I'd give a lot to know what it was he wanted to tell me just before he pegged out," Corrigan said to Hartman. "He wanted to come clean at the last and let me know just what it was that he bought the *Alfreda* for, but he was a few breaths late with it. The thing's got on my nerves, Martin, and I'm going to get to Matafuras somehow and have a look-see at that wreck myself. There's something there that I don't know anything about, and there's money to be got out of whatever it is, or poor Pete Dawson would never have taken it on."

"Do you know this Squint Weatherby he warned you of? The man with the crossed eyes?"

"Name sounds familiar, somehow, but I can't place it. Probably some fellow I've heard of, but I don't think I ever met him. It's a snarled-up mess. It's like being locked out in a dark room to fight for your life without knowing what you're going to mix with or where it is. And the last chance of finding out the truth of this game without getting down to Matafuras and finding out for ourselves just went over the side, there. Whatever the game is, there's somebody besides ourselves or Dawson interested in it; somebody that knows us and that we don't know, and somebody who's willing to kill a whole ship's crew to keep us out of it. Out of what? I'm going to get to the bottom of this thing—not for what money there is in it, if there is any—but to get my fingers around the throat of the man who's responsible for Denny's death and poor Pete's, and the burning of the best little auxiliary schooner this side of Frisco, and us laying out here in a small boat helpless, waiting for a gale of wind to come down and wrastle us all over the South Pacific. And I'll get him! I'll get him or he'll get me. I haven't got room enough in this world with that fellow living. I'll get him!" He lapsed into sullen silence, sitting hunched in the stern sheets, with his chin on his palms, watching the fiery wreck of his schooner.

Rafferty was the first to notice that the stars in the northern sky halfway to the zenith were obscured, and he immediately called Corrigan's attention to it. "Cloudin' up, sir," he warned him. "Norther on the way, sure as daybreak!"

"And coming fast," Corrigan agreed.

"You take charge of one of the boats, Mr. Rafferty, and you the other, Mr. Dolan. Show a light, and we'll keep together, if we can. We'll hoist sail and run before it as long as we can; and if it gets too stiff, we'll lay it out to a drogue. Best get into your boats at once, for she's like to start breezing up any minute now."

But when he communicated his plan to the men in the other two boats lying near by, he met with instant opposition.

"You keep off," a man in one of them shouted. "We don't want no more of you nor your officers, neither. This here's been a mighty funny cruise from the start, an' we've had enough o' ye. We count on gettin' ashore quicker without your mates than we would with 'em, we do. You just leave us be, now."

"That's right," some one shouted from the other diver's boat. "We count on gettin' along without one o' your mates. We broke some grub out o' the storeroom 'fore we left the schooner, an' we know you ain't got none much aboard that gig; maybe we ain't got no more'n we'll need, neither; an' your mates ain't goin' to come in our boats to boss us and share what grub we got away with. No, sir! You keep off!"

"Let 'em go," Corrigan said shortly. He raised his voice and called to the crew: "There's a norther coming on, men, and you'd best get ready for it. The island of Juan Fernandez lies about one hundred miles due to the west'ard. You know as much as I do now, you tar-brained wharf rats, so live or die on your own hook."

"Glad I don't have to nurse 'em," Rafferty growled. "She's makin' up fast, sir."

Only a few stars, low on the southern horizon, were visible; these also soon disappeared, and yet there came no hint of wind or any relief from the stifling humidity. It was past midnight, and the schooner was burned close to the water's edge, when Corrigan threw up his head and sniffed the air.

"I smell it," he said. "Get that sail up, Mr. Rafferty, and we'll use every breath o' breeze we can. We might fetch Juan Fernandez before it gets too heavy to keep her on her course. These northers come on slow sometimes."

Hartman sniffed the air experimentally, and could detect nothing to indicate any change in the humidity or the approach of a breeze; but by the time the mate had stepped the mast, rigged the boom, and hoisted the lugsail, a puff of coolish air breathed over the waters, and a few stray drops of rain spattered down. The sail filled; as the breeze steadied, the gig stood slowly over the great, dark swells, with Corrigan in the stern sheets, handling the tiller and steering by the boat's compass, laid alongside him near the lantern.

The rain increased to a steady downpour, and the breeze gradually freshened until the little gig raced over the heaving waters with her lee gunwale awash, and the spray from the curling crests whipped over the little craft, a stinging, wind-driven spume. The lights of the other boats were soon lost sight of through the blur of the rain, and the gig with the four plunged on alone in the vast, dark desert of billowing water.

To Hartman, crouched in the bottom of the boat, with a strip of tarpaulin wrapped about him, it seemed that he was on another planet from the one on which he had hitherto lived. The thrum of the wind on the sail, the surge and swash of the billows, the gurgling rush of the driving boat, all combined in a chaos of sound that deadened the senses and made all seem faint and unreal, like the waking remembrance of a dream.

All about, huge foam-crowned, rushing mountains reared high above the tiny shell of wood. The gig drove up great green slopes, up and up, and yet on up, to tremble for a moment on the rolling summit, and then slither away into the heaving depths.

Aft in the stern sheets Corrigan appeared a weird creature of dreadful fancy, hunched, as he was, with his rugged face half revealed by the light of the ship's lantern alongside him, cheating each succeeding billow that roared down on him from out the dark; watching the compass with somber, weary eyes, as he threw his tiny possession of wood and canvas into the yawning jaws of destruction, only to flip it clear with a twitch of the tiller, as they bellowed shut, and drive it mockingly over the foaming lips of the derided monster.

The wind increased as they ran, and the seas piled higher and higher. When dawn came, a gray, ghostly mockery of daylight, Corrigan was no longer attempting to keep her on her course, but was running dead before the gale, searching the seas behind with anxious eyes.

"Take that sail in and rig a drogue," he bellowed forward to Rafferty, at length. "Get her out while we've still got steerage way."

Working like demons, Rafferty and Dolan lowered the sail, unstepped the mast, lashed it, with the boom and a pair of oars crisscross, and, knotting on a sack of ballast, attached a line to the whole and heaved it overboard. The sail, tangled with the oars and spars, dragged heavy in the water, half sunk as it was by the sack of ballast, and the gig swung round as Rafferty made the line fast, and lay with her head fair into the wind, riding to the hastily improvised sea anchor.

For hours they lay there, often close to being swamped, bailing continually, drenched, half frozen, fighting to hold to life until the fury of the storm had passed. It was shortly after noon when Corrigan gripped Martin's arm and pointed to the crest of a great sea.

"See that spume blowing to wind-'ard?" he shouted into his ear. "If you think you've seen some heavy weather, wait an hour or so, and you'll know you've just been riding around on a mill pond. That means trouble, my boy."

Martin watched, and all about him he saw the spume from the crests spurting off square into the howling wind.

"What is it?" he shouted back.

"Don't know what makes it, but whenever you see that, you know the wind's going to haul around. She'll shift in the next hour or so, and come like a bat out o' hell from another quarter. We've got all we can do to ride this out; and when she kicks up a heavy cross sea—well, son, I'm thinking you and me'll go have a look for Pete Dawson."

Rafferty came scrambling aft, waving excitedly.

"Schooner layin' to, off to the nor'-east, there!" he yelled. "Watch for her."

Eagerly the men in the boat strained their eyes for a sight of the vessel, but it was several minutes before she became visible again. Then, as the boat rose on the crest of a wave, they saw her plainly; a two-topmast schooner laying to under a close-reefed foresail, less than a mile and a half away, on the starboard bow, bearing away to the westward.

Rafferty drew off his dungaree jumper and held it up in the wind. Occasionally, when both the boat and the schooner topped a wave together, they could catch sight of her; but the likelihood of any one aboard the larger vessel catching sight of their tiny signal was small. An hour passed, Dolan and Rafferty taking turns in holding the jumper aloft; and still the schooner continued hove to, making off to the westward at the rate of perhaps three knots an hour.

"There go our lives," Corrigan shouted at Hartman, grinning. "If they sight us, we live a while; and if they don't, we die pretty soon. This is a gambling game for you; and if there was any chance of collecting after we're dead I'd lay you a hundred to one we lose. Poker seem kind of tame after this, won't it?"

"She's seen us!" Rafferty shrieked back. "She's keepin' off for us. Now watch!"

When the boat rose on the next wave, they could see that the schooner had altered her course, and was bearing down on them.

"And the hundred-to-one shot wins," Corrigan yelled. "Glad I didn't bet, Martin."

The schooner drove down on them at a smart pace, and soon they could make out the men on her decks and one at the masthead, evidently directing the course. Not two lengths of herself away from the gig, she rounded with her helm hard down, and a man in the waist hove a grappling iron on a line and hooked the drogue. It was drawn up to the side, the line grappled and cut, and hand over hand the sailors hauled the gig up in the lee of the schooner. A line was thrown to Corrigan, standing in the stern sheets, and he brought the boat broadside on.

"Stand ready to jump!" he yelled. The vessel's rail towered high above them, and it seemed that they must be crushed under her; and then suddenly she rolled far to leeward and the rail rushed down toward them.

"Jump!" Corrigan shrieked, and all together they leaped for and caught the bulwarks, rolling over on the deck as the schooner's channel caught the gig and drove it deep under water.

The captain, a squat, bushy-bearded, hook-nosed Bluenose, led the men aft and down to the forward cabin.

"I vum! We didn't sight ye none too soon," he drawled. "What ship ye from, an' who be ye?"

The answer was on the tip of Corrigan's tongue, when, through the open door of the captain's cabin, he caught sight of the reflection of a man's face in the mirror; a clean-shaven face, with a hawk nose, sharp, protuberant chin, thin, drawn lips, bushy black brows—and eyes horribly crossed!

"I'm Captain Burbank, of the brigantine *Westchester,* out of Valparaiso for Callao, with a cargo of wheat," he answered. "We rammed a derelict last night just after the breeze came up, and opened out our wood ends. We got lost from the other boats soon after, and ran for it till daylight; then we rigged a drogue, and we've been laying to it ever since. Mighty glad to sight you we were, too. Who do I have to thank, captain?"

"Cap'n Jeremiah Foss," the bearded fellow replied importantly. "Cap'n Jeremiah Foss, o' the schooner *Consuelo,* from Antofogasta, bound for ——"

"Introduce me to your friends, cap," a deep, brittle voice drawled from the after cabin; and the man with the cross-eyes stepped out and surveyed the group. He was well over six feet tall, a lean, rawboned fellow, with a stoop to his sloping shoulders that was almost a deformity. To the man who knew riders, his bowed legs and waddling gait marked him as a man who had spent long years in the saddle. The thing most noticeable about him, however, was his crossed eyes, one of which stared at the ceiling on his right, while the other was apparently peering down at his left boot toe.

"I was just a-tellin' of 'em that we——" Captain Foss began.

"I reckon they ain't a lot interested in what you was tellin' 'em, cap," the tall man interrupted again. "I'm right sure they don't care about hearin' it;

s'pose you let me do the tellin', huh? Sure! I reckon I talk right some better'n you do, same's you sail a ship some better'n me; so what dissertatin's done, I reckon I'll do; you savvy that?"

The man had drawled the first part of his speech in an amiably inane tone; but the last three words came from his thin lips, harsh, cold, and commanding. The captain started and stammered: "I—I—yes. You do talk better'n me, an' that's a fack; that's a fack. Yes, you tell 'em about it. You——"

"Well, who do you reckon these here gentlemen may be?" the cross-eyed man put in ironically. "Happen to have any idea o' their identity?"

"I—— Yes, siree! I furgot I hadn't told ye. This here, he's Cap'n Burbank, o' the brigantine *Westchester,* out o' Valparaiso, with a cargo o' wheat——"

"So I heard." Apparently the cross-eyed man was studying the four strangers for the next silent half minute, though none of them could have told it from the slant of his eyes.

"Cap'n Burbank, hey?" he went on. "Lucky for you we pranced along about the time we did. An' who do these other mavericks happen to be?"

"My two mates," Corrigan indicated Rafferty and Dolan. "Jim Flanagan and Mike Burns. And Mr. Terry, of New York, a passenger."

Captain Foss, fidgeting nervously, spoke again. "This here, he's Mr. Weatherby," he said, indicating the tall man. "Mr. Weatherby, he—he——"

His voice trailed away into a frightened silence, as he backed toward the forward companionway before Weatherby's sinister approach.

Weatherby was stepping leisurely toward him, with his right hand in the breast of his coat, and an expression on his lean, hard face as malignant as a starved timber wolf stalking a rabbit.

"I reckon you best tramp right along upstairs an' see if your ship's behavin' herself all lovely, me friend," he said softly. "It's awful close in this here cabin with you here, an' the noise you make talkin' bothers my nerves a lot. You know how I get took when my nerves are bothered? Yes. Well?"

"Yes—yes, sir," Captain Foss stammered affrightedly, and fell over his own feet in his hurry to get up the companionway, and out of the cabin.

Weatherby seated himself, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, and carefully rolled and lit a cigarette.

"Burbank, hey?" he said suddenly, twisting his head so that one of his eyes stared more or less straight at Corrigan. "Burbank! Uhu! Recollect meetin' up with me?"

Corrigan's face was chalk white with the repression of his anger at the man's insolence, but he answered, with assumed humility: "No, sir. Your face seems familiar, but I can't remember ever having met you."

"Been in California?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's my old stamping ground. Met you there, mebbe. Been in Antofogasta in the last three years?"

"No, sir."

"Haven't, hey? Burbank! Ever hear tell o' Cap'n Corrigan?"

"Know him well," Corrigan returned readily. "I saw him in Valparaiso just before I sailed."

"Did, hey? Was he fixin' to go to sea?"

"Not that I know of. His schooner, the *Relampago,* was laying in the stream there near us, and I didn't see anybody aboard but the watchman."

"No?" Weatherby rose and stretched himself. "I'll tell the cap'n to send the steward to ye with some dry duds from the slop chest; an' that brandy there's worth drinkin'—hop to it. You curiosity struck by nature?"

"I think not."

"Well, don't none o' you get the disease while you're with us, 'cause I'm tellin you it's fatal aboard this ship. Savvy that?"

"I think so."

"Good! If you get conversational with any o' the officers or crew, just talk about the high price o' liquor, or the weather, or somethin' common like that; an' I wouldn't worry a lot about where this vessel's bound for."

Corrigan watched him up the companionway, and then turned a livid face to Martin.

"There's the man I've got to down," he said softly. "That's him. I've got him now. He's a mining man from California. He's been mixed up in mining deals in the interior back of Antofogasta for several years; he's got a pull of some sort with the government, and he's pulled off some rotten, dirty deals. He's robbed the rightful owners of their mines and done a lot of promiscuous murdering, if what I've heard is all true. He's terrorized the whole region up in there, and gotten away with it somehow. See all that wrecking outfit on deck? This schooner's after the same thing Pete Dawson was. Mind you remember your new name, and stick to the story I told. Weatherby, huh? Well, he's one I owe the devil, and I'm going to pay him."

## CHAPTER VIII.

The shift in the wind that Corrigan had foretold came within an hour after the rescue. There was a temporary lull in the storm, a streak of white water showed on the southern horizon, and shortly thereafter the gale from the south struck the schooner and soon piled up a chaotic cross sea, in which the little vessel pitched and rolled erratically, threatening to snap her masts out.

For the remainder of the afternoon and all that night, the gale blew from the south, and the vessel lay hove to, making slowly off to the westward. Shortly after dawn it moderated, and she was soon on her course under single-reefed foresail, double-reefed mainsail, forestaysail, and inner jib.

After his initial verbosity, when the rescued men were taken aboard, Captain Foss lapsed into fearsome silence, carefully avoiding any speech whatever with Corrigan or any of his party.

In this attitude toward the shipwrecked men, he was religiously copied by his officers and all the members of the crew; and as Weatherby remained almost constantly in the captain's cabin, they were left altogether to themselves.

Shortly after noon land was sighted dead ahead, and Corrigan identified it to his companions as the island of Juan Fernandez. At eight bells in the afternoon watch, the schooner was hove to about a mile and a half from the surf-fringed beach line.

As she came up into the wind, Weatherby emerged from the after companionway and addressed Corrigan, who, with his companions, was lounging on the trunk.

"We figure that you people ain't real stuck on our company," he drawled. "An' we ain't the brand o' folks to keep hangin' on to anybody that ain't fond of us. That's a right nice little lump o' land over there, an' the only thing I can see wrong with it is that it ain't all speckled up with people. Well, you an' your gang you go and speckle it; savvy?"

"Why, you wouldn't set us ashore here!" Corrigan protested. "You wouldn't——"

"You got wrong information. I would set you ashore here, an' I'm goin' to set you ashore here; an' if I hear any more talk from you I'll plumb well heave you overboard an' make you swim ashore, 'stead o' bein' kind-hearted an' sendin' you off in a boat. Get movin'."

Sailors were swinging out the lee-quarter boat, and without further question Corrigan, Hartman, and the two mates piled in. The boat was empty of either provisions or water.

"Give us a snack of grub and a little water, man," Corrigan begged. "You wouldn't set us ashore without——"

"You're the hardest man to convince!" Weatherby complained. "The only way I can make you believe I can do a thing is to do it!" He slipped a hand into the breast of his coat and withdrew it, holding a blue-barreled forty-five. "I reckon if I told you I could spot you fair through the left eye with this from where I stand, you wouldn't believe me unless I demonstrated, huh?"

"No, no. I—I believe you. I do!" Corrigan protested, with simulated terror.

"Good thing for your health." Weatherby drawled, slipping the gun back into its holster. "Get 'em ashore, there, now, in a hurry, and get back here," he went on to the sailors. "We got no time to waste."

The boat, with four sailors to man the oars, was lowered into the water, and drew away toward the shore.

"There's different ways of dying," Corrigan muttered chokingly to Hartman, when they were out of earshot of the schooner. "And for making a play afraid of him, I'll just pick out the hardest of the lot when we come to pay day!"

The boat raced over the surf, and the four sailors leaped out into white water to their waists, and ran her clear up on the sand beach. Corrigan stepped out, grabbed up one of the oars, and laid two of the fellows flat with two strokes.

"Want any of it?" he demanded, advancing on the other two. "No? Put your hands up over your heads! That's right. Search 'em, Martin!"

Two wicked-looking knives were the only fruit of the search. The two prone men, just beginning to come to, yielded the same. Corrigan yanked the two he had struck to their feet and addressed them all. "See that hill there?" he inquired. "The one with trees and brush and rocks and mud and things like that on it? Well, you start right up that hill and keep on going until you think it's safe to stop. Git!"

Their heels, blessed with the speed of terror, the four raced away. Corrigan picked up a bowlder the size of a nail keg, and, turning the boat bottom side up, smashed it to flinders.

"I'll bother you that much, anyhow!" he grated, shaking his fist at the schooner. "And I'll stand on the deck of a vessel with her forefoot picking a bone out of your wake by the time you fetch Matafuras, or I don't know Juan Fernandez as well as I used to! We've got some traveling to do, boys, so come ahead!"

He swung off up the beach line at a smart pace, and the others followed him wonderingly. They could see a boat full of men being lowered from the schooner. Corrigan chuckled at sight of this.

"That'll hold 'em for an hour or two, anyhow," he said gleefully. "And hours may count from now on. We'll take to the brush till we're around the point, in case they've got high-powered rifles in that last boat."

The island of Juan Fernandez, famous as the abode of Alexander Selkirk, and known as Robinson Crusoe's Island, is some six miles long by three wide. Once the retreat of pirates, later the location of a convict settlement, it is now the home of fishermen and the employees of a cannery, located in Cumberland Bay.

It was on the shore of this bay that Corrigan emerged from the brush, within an hour from the time he was set ashore, panting from his run, and with his clothing torn by the brambles. He gave a wild shout of exultation at sight of a small, two-masted schooner, lying at anchor off the wharf of the little cannery, on the far side of the bay.

"We'll put a deck under our feet now, and get back into the game," he shouted to Hartman, as Martin and the two mates arrived on the beach. "That's Sam Macklin's schooner there, and she's equipped with a full wrecking outfit and diving apparatus. Sam would go the limit for me; so we'll just commandeer that little craft and go have a game with our cross-eyed friend. Maroon me, will he? Well, if he fetches Matafuras before we do, that schooner of his will have to show some sailing qualities I didn't notice while I was aboard of her. Come on!"

On their way around the bight to the cannery, Corrigan explained the presence of the schooner to Martin. "Sam Macklin fitted her up in Valparaiso five years ago, to salvage the wreck of the *Armand* on the island, here; and since then he's just cruised about in her among the islands, picking bones wherever he could find 'em, and doing odd jobs on charter. He makes his home here with the manager of the cannery, and I knew that if he wasn't away on some job, I'd have my chance. As though I had to beg for grub to live on this island! Why, that cross-eyed landlubber set me ashore in the one spot in the South Pacific where I can get an outfit, and get to sea quicker than from any other. Maroon me!"

Captain Macklin himself greeted them on the porch of the manager's house, on the hill above the cannery; and Corrigan hurriedly outlined the situation to him.

"I can get under way in an hour, Bob," he assured him. "Got a crew of five men with me, and plenty of guns and ammunition in case we need them. The *Clarinda's* a smart little sailer, and I'll bet my coin we won't be far astern when these friends o' yours fetch Matafuras. It's only ninety miles from here, and with this breeze we'll make it soon after midnight."

While Corrigan and his party refreshed themselves at the manager's house, Macklin busied himself rounding up his crew and getting the *Clarinda* ready for sea. Within the hour, as he had promised, her hook was up, and Corrigan's boast that he would stand on a vessel with her forefoot picking a bone out of the *Consuelo's* wake when the latter reached Matafuras, bade fair to be made good.

At a council of war held in the cabin immediately after sailing, Corrigan outlined the plan of campaign. The wreck of the *Alfreda* lay on the eastern coast of the southern end of the island, and as they would arrive during the night, it was agreed that they should anchor on the western coast, out of sight of the *Consuelo,* and go overland at dawn to reconnoiter and learn something of Weatherby's purpose and the condition of the wreck.

Between two and three o'clock the next morning, the *Clarinda* dropped her anchor in a little bay on the western shore of Matafuras, near to the southern end of the island.

The hint of dawn was dimming the brilliance of the stars when Corrigan, Hartman, and the two mates and Captain Macklin were rowed ashore, all carrying rifles and wearing belts of ammunition. The high backbone of the island tapers off to a low ridge at the southern end, and it was determined that they should cross directly over, rather than skirt the shore. They were nearing the crest of the steep hill, when they were startled by the sound of a volley of rifle shots coming from the far side.

It was fast growing light when they attained the crest, and the smoothly rolling floor of the South Pacific reflected back dull copper from the rose glow in the eastern sky. Almost directly below them, a trifle to their right, the bow of the ill-fated *Alfreda* showed, thrusting up from out the sea as far as the foremast. A few ships' lengths away, the *Consuelo* rode at anchor; and from along her bulwarks puffs of thin, white smoke spurted up and floated away on the clear morning air to the accompanying crackle of rifle shots. From a thick clump of scrub oak, growing from a small plot of level ground, stepped into the hillside two-thirds of the way down to the beach, answering reports banged angrily; and above the low tops of the stunted trees thin wisps of rifle smoke eddied idly.

Corrigan swore in amazement. "And now somebody else we don't know has bought chips and gone to boosting the ante," he said whimsically. "Everybody loose in the South Pacific seems to be in on this thing, and to know all about it, except me; and here I am, all dressed up like a battleship, just fretting to get my teeth into somebody and chew; and I don't know any more what it's all about than a Cape de Verde nigger knows about Faneuil Hall or the Boston Common!"

He leaned on his rifle and thoughtfully surveyed the scene below him. "Well, we don't any of us love this Weatherby person," he reasoned aloud. "And whoever's down there in that bunch of oaks don't seem friendly to him, either. To a man like me, betting my stack without a chance to look at my cards, it seems real reasonable to get together with these warlike folks ashore here, and sort of pool our chips to boost this Weatherby out of the play. Then, if we want to fight over the pot, we can haul off and have it out, head and head."

"I wonder if they feel the same way about it?" Macklin wondered. "And if they do, how are we going to find it out? And how are we going to let them know that we feel friendlylike? If I was whoever that is, laying down there in that brush, target practicing at somebody in front of me, and somebody else I hadn't been introduced to—somebody carrying a gun like that one you got, Bob—come warwhooping up from behind, why, I'd just turn around, I would, and start shooting the other way for a while. That's what I'd do; and I'd lay a little bet that that's what those people down there will do, if we get noisy and conspicuous up here."

"I won't take your bet," Corrigan retorted dryly. "They'd shoot first, and then come up and bury us, maybe, and spend the rest of the day wondering what it was we'd have said to them if we'd lived long enough."

"Why not drop in on them sort of unexpected, seein' we ain't invited?" Rafferty suggested, shifting to one long leg, and hitching up his trousers in preparation for action. "Split, and cruise down on 'em separate an' silent through the brush from different quarters. The first one of us that gets in good hailin' distance can heave to in the lee of a rock or tree, or something that'll stop hot lead, an' then talk friendly to these folks. The rest of us'll be scattered around handy here an' there, to help out if they act mean."

"You talk a whole fleet of sense," Corrigan approved. "Spread out, now, and each one of us slip down alone. The first one of us that gets a good chance'll hail 'em, an' the rest stand by to mix in if they won't listen to reason. Play it sure, and keep close under cover all the while."

The party spread out along the crest of the hill, and at intervals of about fifty yards started creeping cautiously down the wooded, brush-clad slope, toward the clump of oaks whence the firing came.

Hartman was on the extreme right, and Corrigan was the next man to him on his left. As Martin descended the steep hill, he could catch an occasional glimpse of the captain, worming his way down through the brush and across more open spaces between the scrub oak and cypress trees.

Soon after they started the descent of the hill, the firing ceased, and no sound was audible, save the weird, shrill cries of a flock of Cape Horn pigeons circling about the wreck and the schooner.

Hartman grew tense with excitement as he neared the level of the clump of oaks from which the firing had come. He was some seventy-five yards to the right of the nest of trees. Several times through the brush, he obtained a good view of the little copse, but could descry no one there. Crawling cautiously through a section of dense, high grass, he emerged suddenly on a bare ledge of rock that ringed the hill. His heart leaped when he caught sight of a pair of legs incased in khaki trousers and thick boots, projecting out from between two bowlders not ten feet to the left of him. Some distance away on his left he saw Corrigan's head and shoulders emerge from the shelter of the high grass. The man near him, half hidden between the two bowlders, stirred. Hartman saw the projecting tip of a rifle trained on Corrigan.

"I've got you covered, and if you shoot him I'll kill you," he called softly. "Put your hands up above the rock, and then crawl out here where I can see you."

The muzzle of the rifle dropped, and two hands appeared above the rim of the bowlder that hid the stranger, but he made no move to reveal himself. Corrigan had ducked quickly back into the shelter of the high grass at the sound of Hartman's voice, and now called to ask what he had found.

"Keep still, Bob, and stay under cover," Hartman warned. And then to the stranger behind the rock: "We're not enemies, and you needn't be afraid of us. We're after those men out there in that schooner, too."

The booted, khaki-clad legs stirred, and a moment later the frightened face of a golden-haired, blue-eyed young girl peered up at Hartman. His jaw dropped, and he stared at her in speechless amazement.

"Who are you?" she whispered affrightedly.

"I—er—I beg your pardon," he stammered, lowering his rifle. "I understood that there was—I mean——"

He stopped very suddenly and concentrated his entire attention on the menacing muzzle of the girl's rifle as she whipped the gun around with a bead on his heart.

"If you move, I'll shoot!" she said steadily. "Don't imagine that because I'm a girl I can't shoot straight—or that I won't. Drop that gun, and then tell anybody who's with you that I've got you covered, and that I'll shoot if they try to injure either—any of us."

Hartman dropped his rifle, and called to his comrades to make no offensive move. "That's right," the girl approved, eying him narrowly. "Now, then, who are you? And what did you come sneaking up on me like this for?"

"We're not enemies," Hartman answered earnestly. "You're fighting those men off there in that schooner, and we're just aching to get a chance at them. We saw from the top of the hill that some one was firing from down here and we wanted to get in touch with whoever it was. We knew you'd take us for enemies at first, so we sneaked down here to get in easy-talking distance and keep under cover until we had hailed you. I didn't think you were so near, and when I——"

"Millie, are you all right?" a man's voice came anxiously from a shelter of rocks and trees a hundred yards to the left. "Who are you talking to? Are you——"

"I'm all right, dad," the girl called back. "Keep under cover, and keep quiet."

"I—I didn't know you were a girl, of course," Hartman went on. "If I had, I wouldn't have frightened you so. I'm awfully sorry I——"

"No damage done," she interrupted him, with the hint of a smile quirking her lips. "I've a perfectly sound heart, and my nerves are just as steady as yours—if I am a girl. How did you get here?"

"Our schooner's anchored off the other side of the island. We came up over the hill and saw that some one was firing from down here, and so—— We are after Weatherby and his gang, and we knew that——"

"Weatherby?" she gasped sharply. "Weatherby? So it is him, is it?"

"You know him?"

"I do. And why are you after Weatherby?"

"We knew he was coming to salvage the wreck of the *Alfreda*, and as we had bought it from the underwriters we——"

"So you are after it, too," she interrupted him bitterly. "You are fine friends! Why should we join with you to fight Weatherby only to have you steal it from us in the end?"

"I haven't the faintest idea what 'it' is, but I'll pledge my word that none of our party will steal a thing that belongs to you."

"You bought the wreck of the *Alfreda* and don't know what's in it?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. We started from Valparaiso with the man who really bought it, and who probably knew what it contained, but our schooner was blown up at sea, and he was burned to death. Four of us were picked up at sea by that schooner off there and marooned on Juan Fernandez at Weatherby's order. We discovered a wrecking schooner there, and followed Weatherby, as we were sure he was bound for here, and that there must be something of value in the wreck or he would not be after it. We none of us have the faintest idea what it is. But we are not thieves, and none of our party will take anything that belongs to you."

"It does belong to us," the girl declared passionately. "It does, and whoever steals it will have to kill me first. It belongs to us and to us alone—and I have nothing but the word of a strange man to assure me that if you get the opportunity you won't steal it from us."

"I can only reiterate that I won't—and I'll kill any man of our party who tries it."

The girl stared at him for a long, silent minute, and then a roguish smile dimpled her face. "I think you're a nice boy, and I'm going to trust you," she said frankly. "Shake!" She laid aside her rifle and extended a slim, brown hand, which Hartman very earnestly shook. "Now, how many are there of you?" she inquired crisply.

"Five of us here, but we have more men on the schooner. How many are with you?"

"Only daddy. Crawl back to that ledge above you behind that thick clump of trees where they can't see us from the schooner; gather your men there, and daddy and I'll come up and talk." An expression of great terror came into her eyes as she looked at him, and her mouth drooped pathetically. "Oh, I've just got to trust you," she cried. "I've got to! Please—it's all right, isn't it?"

"You just bet it's all right!"

"It's just got to be," she declared firmly. "Daddy and I'll be right up."

Hartman called to his companions to follow him, and squirmed his way up to the shelter of trees on the ledge. Shortly the girl and her father appeared. He was a small, thin, white-haired man, with an ascetic face, mild blue eyes—with the hint of fanaticism glimmering in them—and the stoop of the man who has bent much above books.

"I'm Millie van Ameringe," the girl announced, without preamble. "This is my father."

Hartman acknowledged the introduction, and presented himself and his companions.

"We've simply got to trust these people, daddy," the girl said. "It may be a mistake, but I don't think so. Anyhow, it's our only chance, and I'm going to take it! Mr. Hartman tells me that he doesn't know what's in the *Alfreda;* I'm going to tell him the whole story."

The old gentleman stroked his cheek hesitantly with a trembling hand and glanced at the newcomers uncertainly. "As you think best, daughter," he answered wearily. "It's a terrible situation, and I'm an old man, old and very tired. As you think best."

"I'll start at the beginning and make it as brief as possible," Miss van Ameringe said. "My father was formerly a professor of natural history at a small college in New England. It was the great ambition of his life to make some investigations in the Andes, and after my mother's death, five years ago, he sold what property we had and with what he realized on that we went to Antofogasta and from there back into the mountains. It was wild and rough in there, and what little of law there was was far worse than none at all, being simply a means for unscrupulous men to plunder the weak it should have protected. We wandered from place to place for four years, going ever farther and farther up into the mountains. We were obliged to pay continual tribute to petty agents of the government—men who were no more than ignorant bandits, but backed by the authority of the law—and by the end of the fourth year our resources were nearly exhausted.

"Daddy was utterly engrossed in his work, and gave without heed of what he had for the privilege of being let alone. When he realized that we had not enough left to even land us penniless back home, he nearly went insane. His worry was all over me, and he reproached himself bitterly because he had been so utterly thoughtless in his absorption in his work. We had a good camping outfit, and food enough to last nearly a year—as game and fish could be had in plenty—and we sought the wildest places, far from any of the villages, in order to escape paying further tribute out of the little capital we had left.

"And then the miracle occurred. Late one evening daddy came running into camp, screaming unintelligibly and dancing about like a madman. And mad I thought him at the time—mad from the worry and terror that I had fought for months to keep from my own brain. He dragged me to the camp fire, and, kneeling in the light of the flames, he held up before my eyes that which I had never before seen, but knew instantly for what it was. It was raw gold! A rough nugget of raw gold larger than a man's thumb, and I——"

A long-drawn, snarling exclamation from Corrigan interrupted her story, and, as the girl looked at him, she shrank away, a great terror widening her eyes. Corrigan was leaning far forward, his shoulders hunched, his square, fistlike chin thrust far out, and a wolfish snarl distorting his wide lips. His broad white teeth showed like fangs and his deep-set eyes were lurid; full of flickering, elusive lights.

"Don't look like that! Don't!" the girl cried out sharply. "Oh, I was a fool to trust you! I was a fool! I won't tell you any more. You'll never find it unless I tell you where it is—and I won't. I won't! Oh, I was a fool! A fool! I might as well offer myself to the teeth of a wild beast as to tell of gold to men. It makes maniacs of you all! But you'll never know. I won't tell! I won't!"

Corrigan straightened himself with

a shudder, and, passing his arm over his face, seemed with the gesture to erase from his features the savage expression that had so frightened the girl. His voice was hoarse when he spoke and it shook a little, but it was reassuring and rang true. "You're no fool, but a wise little girl. Makes maniacs of us all? Maybe; but there's different kinds of crazy people, miss, and I'm not the breed of cat that'll rob an old man and his daughter of what's theirs. I'm no saint, and I've painted many a port red with money I've no better than stole; but I stole it open, stole it with gun and knife and fist from cutthroats and pirates with as heavy a hand as my own—and that'd slug a blind boy for the pennies in his cup; stole it from governments that were nothing but a bunch of thieves that were too cowardly to steal without the cloak of a so-called law around their shoulders. I've stole from thieves all my life for the fun of the theft, and what I stole I threw away in port like the drunken, crazy sailor I am, miss. I don't care a whistling whoop for all the gold that was ever dug, but fighting follows it as sharks follow a sick whale, and fighting I love as a chink loves the poppy! And this makes the fighting good—d'you see? Gold and a woman and a man I hate like a coward hates death! Ain't that a dish for the gods?—or an Irishman with the thirst for a scrimmage parching the skin on his knuckles? Crazy your talk of gold may make me, but it's the smell of the glad, sweet fight for it that's in my brain like the fumes of gin in a Malay's head, and no stench from the rotten heart of a miser.

"That's Bob Corrigan, miss; a thief of the seas, a gunrunner, smuggler, wastrel in port, and hard man at sea. All that—and more—they say of me, and mayhap it's so. But good women know when Bob Corrigan speaks truth, so look me in the eye and tell me if I lie now."

The big Irishman's gray eyes were wide open, steady, and frank, as he looked at the terrified girl. All the savagery had dropped from him, and the other Corrigan—the Corrigan that might have been dominant had destiny set his feet in other paths of life, or destiny's coworker in the sculpture of men's character, the One Woman, been his to have and hold—stood forth a revelation. It was a tender Corrigan, the more compellingly so for the tremendous power of him; a Corrigan of the most intense idealism; a man to gayly toss his life into eternity for an abstract principle or the whim of a woman, and count the privilege of death in a fight for another's cause an honor. It was a glorified Corrigan that set running through Hartman's brain fragmentary bits of the tales of fabled knights, and gave him a glimpse of the tragedy of the man's wild, complex heart, that filled him with a warm rush of pity.

The girl approached him slowly, staring into his eyes like one entranced, laid a small hand hesitantly on his arm, and then suddenly dropped her head in the crook of his elbow and gave way to a storm of sobs. Corrigan laughed gayly, took her chin in the hollow of his big hand, and, raising her face to his, chided her with foolish phrases, like a man comforting a crying child, until she laughed back at him through her tears.

"I—I—I'm a terrible baby," she sniffed, drawing away from Corrigan with a blush of returning self-consciousness. "I'm not in the habit of collapsing like this, but everything seemed so—so hopeless that I—— Oh, I always wanted to be a man and do a man's work in the world, but right now I think I'd rather wash dishes and dust and be comfy in a nice little house dress than anything else."

"And can you trust me?" Corrigan asked, smiling.

"You just bet I can!" she flashed back, and laid her head on her father's shoulder to complete her cry.

Hartman joined in the general laugh of relief from the tension, but his mirth was forced. In his heart was a sharp little pain of resentment because Miss van Ameringe had relied so implicitly on Corrigan. Curiously the resentment was all against Corrigan. He felt the impulse to warn the girl of the Irishman's desperate nature, and not to go too far with him. It was a jealous twinge that went from his heart almost as it came, but the germ was left, and, without his knowledge, his attitude toward Corrigan changed from that moment.

There had been no sign of life from the schooner since the Van Ameringes ceased their fire, but now the crack of a rifle and the sput of a bullet against a near-by rock apprised the party on the hillside that their location had been discovered. The first shot was followed by a volley, and the questing scouts of death whined perilously near. All of the party took shelter back of an upstanding ledge of rock.

At the sound of the first hostile gun Corrigan was on the instant the hard, grim fighting man that the men of sea and land who knew him feared and admired. Peering sharply over the edge of the sheltering rock, he threw his rifle butt to his shoulder.

"Put your long glass on that bulwark just for'a'd the poop, Captain Macklin," he said crisply. "And tell me how good my eyesight is."

"I see him," Captain Macklin said, as he trained the glass, and as he spoke Corrigan fired. Captain Macklin watched intently for a moment and then lowered the glass with a quick intake of breath.

"That's one less to monkey with," he said. "What kind of eyes have you got, Bob? I couldn't even see him without the glass, and yet you stung him square in the head."

"What did he look like?" Corrigan asked tensely.

"Swede, near as I could make out. Light-haired fellow with——"

"I'm glad it wasn't Weatherby," muttered Corrigan, as he leaned his rifle against the rock. "I want to grapple with him man to man." His nails gripped into his palms. His eyes were the eyes of a hungry tiger.

"Corrigan, stop it," Hartman reproved him sharply. "You've frightened Miss van Ameringe enough for one day. Save your ugly talk for other company."

Corrigan flashed him a curious look. "It's ugly work we've ahead of us, I'm thinking."

"It's terrible to feel that way," the girl murmured. "But I understand it, captain. Weatherby has been the cause of all our trouble."

Hartman flushed. "I beg your pardon," he said stiffly. "I only meant to save you from offense."

"We're not at an old lady's tea party, Martin," Corrigan said dryly. "There's hot lead flown close, and more to come."

He looked at Miss van Ameringe, and his grim smile was answered by a sympathetic flash of her blue eyes. Hartman saw the exchange of glances and his face flamed red. "That's no excuse for a man acting like a beast," he snapped.

"My daughter and I have good reason for our mutual ability to understand a great hatred of this man Weatherby," Mr. van Ameringe said defensively. "There is no evil he would not inflict on us if he had the power."

"And now that we've had our morning lesson in etiquette from our Boston friend, let's hear the rest of your story, Miss van Ameringe," Corrigan said. "Be very careful not to shock

Mr. Hartman with violent language, and after you're done we'll present our cards to Mr. Weatherby and try to figure out some perfectly genteel way of convincing him that his further presence as a guest on this earth is not desirable."

"Daddy had found a rich pocket of gold-bearing gravel at the foot of a high waterfall," Millie took up the thread of her narrative. "It was only a pocket, as we soon discovered, but it held wealth enough to insure us independence if we could only get out of the country with it. That was our problem. We knew that if any of the rascally thieves of the government should learn of our find we would have no chance. The only law they needed to take anything from any one was their desire to have it.

"We moved our camp farther away from the mine, and daddy started washing up the gold while I kept watch. Within three months we had washed out more than ninety thousand dollars in nuggets and coarse dust. The pocket was nearly worked out, and we were planning to make our escape to the coast when this man Weatherby found us. When I first saw him I knew that he would make us trouble.

"He arrived with a company of twenty-five soldiers and camped near us. A captain was nominally in command, but Weatherby was the real leader, and his orders were implicitly obeyed, although he had no rank. I learned later that he was hand in glove with some of the high officials at Antofogasta, and divided what loot he could plunder the country of in return for the privilege of robbing without hindrance and the aid of the soldiers. He boasted of this when he attempted to persuade me to marry him."

"I knew we'd come to that," Corrigan chuckled. "When a woman hates a man as you hate him, it's either because he loved her or because he didn't."

The girl nodded. "It was me he wanted at first. He knew nothing about the gold, and daddy didn't work the mine after he came. He was a constant visitor at our camp, and his attentions rapidly became bolder; we were completely in his power there, and I was compelled to pretend to welcome his advances while v e were planning our escape. Finally he became so insistent that I had to agree to go with him to Guinamente, the nearest village, to be married. That same evening daddy found the captain of the soldiers examining the diggings at the foot of the waterfall where he had been mining, and when Weatherby came that night I knew that his suspicions were aroused. He questioned me closely. I denied that daddy had ever found any gold, but I knew that he was not satisfied, and that the next day he would investigate and find out the truth. He was more insistent with his attentions than ever before, and I had to submit to his caresses to keep him placated and lull his supicions.

"Well, no use talking about that. I want to forget it. He left the camp satisfied that I intended to keep my agreement and marry him; I knew that he would not take the precaution of having us guarded, believing, as he did, that I was as eager for the wedding as he.

"There was no time for further preparation for our flight, and so, shortly after midnight, we saddled our mules, taking with us only a short supply of food and the gold, and struck out for the coast over a faint and long-disused trail that daddy had located on one of his exploring trips.

"We traveled only at night, hiding in the daytime in the mountains far from the trail, and avoiding all villages. After three weeks of this we reached Antofogasta and took passage with

Captain Corkery aboard the *Alfreda.* We brought the gold aboard with us in boxes supposed to contain specimens that daddy had collected, but after we got to sea we confided in Captain Corkery—he was one of the finest gentlemen that ever lived—and he stored the treasure in the transom of the ship for us.

"It seems that a whisper of gold is a shout in the ears of thieves! The second mate was on the poop when we were telling Captain Corkery of our treasure and he overheard us through an open skylight. There was a storm that night, and, relying on the shriek of the wind in the rigging and the groaning of the ship's timbers to cover the noise of his operations, he descended into the lazaret with three sailors and attempted to cut his way through into the transom. Captain Corkery discovered them, and captured all four. He was fearful of the news of the treasure spreading to the rest of his crew and after guards, and starting a general mutiny, so he kept the four men imprisoned in his own cabin until the following night, when the storm had subsided. Then, under the cover of darkness and with daddy holding the wheel while the helmsman went forward, he lowered them from the stern in his own gig, all unknown to any of the crew or even the first mate. They thought that the missing men had been washed overboard during the storm the night before.

"A worse man than dear old Captain Corkery would have killed them or set them adrift without food or water. He provided them with plenty of both, in addition to a compass to aid them in making land. Our present plight is probably due to his kindness. Both daddy and I believe that those men reached land safely, communicated with Weatherby at Antofogasta, and may even now be with him out there on that schooner."

"And some friend of Pete Dawson's got wind of it, and tipped him off by cable," Corrigan mused. "But those of the crew that got away reported you and your father lost in the wreck. How was that?"

"They thought we were lost," the girl explained. "Our secret did not go over the side with the second mate and the three sailors as we had hoped. The *Alfreda* was deliberately wrecked by the one man of the crew left aboard who knew of the treasure, and Captain Corkery was murdered by him."

"Murdered!" Corrigan whistled softly. "Well, well! By the time somebody gets this gold safe in a bank vault it will have enough blood on it to be regular money. Murdered, eh?"

"He was. The second mate was a Chileno, and though none of us knew it, his own brother was on the ship before the mast. He had told him of the treasure and of his intent to steal it. When the three sailors and the second mate disappeared, he jumped to the conclusion that we had done away with them, and, as none of the other officers or men on the ship were Chilenos, he planned his revenge alone.

"He was at the wheel the night the *Alfreda* struck, and he deliberately ran her ashore. It was terrible immediately after the ship struck. The great breakers roared all around, and the spars crashed down on deck one after the other until it was a perfect inferno of chaotic destruction. Father and I rushed out of our room just as Captain Corkery came from his cabin and in time to see the murderous Chileno who had wrecked the ship dash down the companionway and reveal himself in his true character. He didn't see daddy or me, and we could have stopped him if we had had the slightest idea of what he intended to do; after telling who he was and boasting that he had wrecked the ship he whipped a knife from his belt without warning and—that was the end of poor Captain Corkery. Daddy shot at and missed him as he lunged with the knife. The fellow sprang away up the steps to the poop and disappeared.

"Daddy thought that he would make an attempt to steal the gold, and that he had confederates among the crew. We had no means of knowing whom we could trust, so we determined to hide. The ship was fast settling by the stern, so we crept on deck, ran forward unobserved, and hid behind some coils of rope far up under the forecastle head. We stayed there until far into the next day, when those of the crew who had escaped the falling spars or being washed overboard, set sail in the one boat that had escaped total destruction. Daddy peeked out at them when they sailed away and found that the Chileno who had wrecked the ship was not with them. So we kept hidden in fear that he was aboard and waiting his chance to shoot us, but on the morning of the second day our fears were allayed; we found the body of the murderer who had willfully wrecked the vessel afloat in the water near the mainmast.

"Then we came ashore and fixed up a tent, hidden among some trees a ways over there on the hillside, and brought a store of food from the vessel. In a few days a small gasoline schooner came and several men on her spent the afternoon inspecting the wreck. We thought they might be agents of Weatherby in search of the gold, so we kept hidden, and watched them."

"Those were the agents of the underwriters from Valparaiso," Corrigan informed her.

"Probably. The night after their arrival we decided that we would make ourselves known, but when daylight came they were gone. Then, this morning, we woke to see that schooner out there drawing near, and daddy and I both thought we recognized Weatherby through the glass. When they came in range we opened fire, and stood them off until you came."

"And none too soon we got here, I'm thinking," Corrigan declared. He rapidly outlined their adventures since leaving Valparaiso, and explained fully how they had become interested in the salvage of the vessel. "And now that we're here, what?" he queried crisply, when he had completed his recital. "You people willing to accept me as a leader in this ruction that's coming up, and stand or fall by what I decide to do?"

"I shall be guided by my daughter, Captain Corrigan," Mr. van Ameringe said wearily. "I know a great deal of the ways of insects, birds, animals, and plant life, but little or nothing of the ways of men. I have not that wonderful gift of even the lower forms of life—instinct—to guide me aright in my dealings with my fellow man. But my daughter, sir, possesses this gift to a degree only achieved by a sensitive woman, and I have never known her to be mistaken in her estimation of a man; she has elected to confide in you, sir, and her further decisions shall be mine."

"Will I do?" Corrigan inquired, smiling whimsically at Millie van Ameringe.

"Indeed you will," she answered heartily, and with an answering smile. "As grand mistress of the mysterious art of instinctive divination—the honor accredited to me by my daddy—I heartily indorse your candidacy for general in chief, high factotum, chief cook, bottle washer, and anything else you may care to be to this expedition. We are yours to command, general."

She stood very straight, with the saucy smile that no strain or danger could banish for long quirking the corners of her mouth upward, and brought her right hand to her forehead with military precision. Corrigan rose and returned the salute gravely, only the lurking twinkle in his gray eyes betraying his appreciation of the mockery.

And to Hartman, watching the by-play between the two, there came with sickening vividness the picture of Corrigan, inflamed with drink and reveling in the streets of Valparaiso; the Corrigan of brothel and dive. Wild stories of the adventurous Irishman in many a port in the South Pacific flashed an alarm to his brain. The captain's offer of service to Miss van Ameringe and his sudden conquest of her confidence seemed to him no longer the actions of an unselfish man, but the diabolical and cunning ruses of a master knave. His heartbeats quickened from the stimulant of mingled fear and hatred of this man who had been his friend.

He was trembling with the desire to protect this girl, so childishly unconscious, it seemed to him, of the menace of this sea rover; and at the same time he was furiously angry with her for allowing herself to be so deceived. And dominant among the jumble of emotions that stirred him was indignant surprise that she should have reposed her trust in Corrigan instead of him. He was a gentleman, of her station in education and culture, and of the life and people of her world; yet she looked to Corrigan—— The discordant medley of emotions wracking him found expression in speech as irritable as it was involuntary.

"I was recently reminded that this was no old lady's tea party," he said hoarsely. "I might add that it's no one-ring circus, and that clowns are out of place. Since you've been so heartily recommended for leader, Corrigan, you might postpone your horseplay until we make some plan of action."

Millie stared at him in amazement as he began his speech, and then, with her head held very high, through narrowed lids—"It is very nice of Mr. Hartman to make Captain Corrigan the scapegoat for his reproof of me," she said icily. "I'm quite sure Captain Corrigan is a big enough man not to mind. However, I should prefer to receive my reprimands direct. Sorry my amateur clowning offended you, Mr. Hartman."

"You—you misunderstood me," Hartman stammered, confused and miserable. "Really, I——"

"Look! They're signaling to us with a white flag," the girl interrupted him, pointing at the schooner.

"Flag of truce, huh?" Corrigan said speculatively, watching the signal waved from the bow of the schooner. "They want to have a little chin-chin; and also they want to find out—if they can—what they're up against. Well, we'll accommodate them with the talk and we'll also see that they go back aboard the schooner with less knowledge than they come ashore with. See, they're putting a boat over. Macklin, you go down and meet them on the beach; they don't know you, and we don't want them to know that any of us they marooned are here nor that we have a schooner. Tell them you're a whaler; tell them your ship burned and that you made this island in the whaleboats with twenty men, plenty of guns, ammunition, and grub. Tell them that one of the sailors on the *Alfreda* that knew about the gold hid ashore after she struck and that you found him. That's how you know about it, savvy? Then see what terms they're willing to come to. When you've found out all, you can tell them that you'll have it all or none, and that we'll fight as long as there's a man of us left. Hustle down there and meet them on the beach, and don't let them come ten foot inland. We'll keep them covered, and shoot at the first sign of a break."

"I'll string 'em along," Captain Macklin agreed briefly, and started down the hill to meet the boat that had already pulled away from the schooner.

He reached the beach almost at the

same time as the boat, which contained four men besides Weatherby. The watchers on the hillside saw Weatherby jump ashore, advance threateningly toward Macklin, and then stop short at the latter's expressive wave of the hand toward the hill. For half an hour the two men argued, Weatherby frequently gesticulating angrily. At last he returned to the boat, and, standing in the stern sheets as it was pulled away, shook both fists at Captain Macklin.

"Seems kind o' displeased about our being around here," Macklin reported dryly, when he rejoined his companions. "Offered to give me fifteen thousand if I'd call it off and let him come in and dive for the gold; I held out for a half of it, and he finally agreed to that. He kind o' lost headway, though, when I stipulated that he should anchor the schooner, come ashore with all his party, deliver up all weapons to us, remain under guard ashore while I searched the schooner, and then dive for the gold under my direction while we kept them all prisoners."

"Unreasonable of him to kick at those terms," Corrigan drawled.

"Wasn't it? He did, though. Didn't seem to think I was right trustworthy, somehow. Suspicioned that I might take advantage of him. So I told him we'd just scrap it out, winner take the whole hog and loser eat his beans without no pork. He seemed a mite put out when he left."

"Say what he aimed to do?" Corrigan inquired.

Captain Macklin glanced dubiously at the girl. "Well—ah—yes, he did," he admitted reluctantly. "Yes, he mentioned his plans. I ain't going to tell all he said nor how he said it, but the gist of it was that he intended to free us from all our earthly cares before he was done."

Corrigan nodded. "I guess some of us will still be here to worry after he's found out what the scenery's like over the Big Horizon," he gave his opinion. "In the meantime, we've the better of him because he doesn't know certainly how many there are of us nor how we're armed; and, what's more, he doesn't know that we've got the schooner around the other side of the island. It sums up like this: He can keep us from salvaging the gold, and we can do the same for him. So we'll just camp and let him make the first move. After he's made it, and both of us have done our worst, we've still got the schooner to fall back on."

"If we could figure out some way to capture that schooner of his or destroy her!" Captain Macklin said tentatively.

Corrigan nodded. "Good idea. And as long as he doesn't know we've got our schooner handy he won't be figuring out some way of capturing or destroying her. That schooner's our hole card, and I'm thinking it's an ace!"

## CHAPTER IX.

Corrigan arranged with the girl and her father that Captain Macklin was to receive five thousand dollars in case the gold was recovered. He—Corrigan—refused to consider any payment. He laughingly insisted that he wanted to play the game out just for the sheer fun of playing. The *Consuelo* continued laying off and on, keeping out of the range of accurate rifle fire, and those aboard gave no evidence of any thought of an immediate hostile move. Corrigan, with Macklin and the two mates, went back over the hill to bring up supplies and canvas to make tents for all, leaving Hartman with the girl and her father to watch the schooner.

Martin was made painfully aware that his irritable censure of Corrigan—and indirectly of Miss van Ameringe—was not to be lightly forgiven. She was very nice to him; nice in a manner that made him thoroughly conscious of her displeasure.

He became more and more angered at her attitude; and yet at the same time he was distressingly anxious to have this strange, boyish, daring girl think well of him. The conviction that she was in danger from Corrigan grew in him, and he tortured his mind with visions of her helpless in the Irishman's power, and himself a prisoner, bound and unable to respond to her frantic appeals to him.

So strong indeed did the conviction become that when Corrigan returned near midday with an augmented party from the schooner, bringing loads of supplies and material for tents, Hartman looked upon him as a definitely known enemy; he was at pains to appear friendly and natural, and all the time the thought burned in his brain that some time soon he would have to match wits with him in a death struggle to protect Millie. It would not do, he thought, to let Corrigan guess that he suspected him, for that might precipitate matters and cause the Irishman to turn on him at once.

Miss van Ameringe greeted Corrigan with a comradely shout of welcome when he appeared, and knelt with him while he undid his pack, laughing, chatting, and clapping her hands in glee when he unwrapped jars of jam, a box of cookies, and some fresh pies that he had brought for her from the schooner. If she could only know what manner of man Corrigan really was, Hartman thought, she might be more discreet in her attitude and the thing he feared might yet be averted. He determined to tell her frankly, thus explain his attitude of the morning, and coöperate with her in warding off an open break with Corrigan.

His first chance to speak with her alone came when the cook, who had been brought from the schooner, asked for some water to make tea.

"I'll get it," Miss van Ameringe offered. "There's a dandy little spring only about three hundred yards around the hill there."

"I'll go with you, if I may," Hartman said quickly, rising and taking the bucket from her. "Please!" he added earnestly, in an undertone as he bent above her.

She looked up quickly, surprised at the sincere entreaty in his voice, and rather hesitantly gave her consent. They walked through the woods in silence until they were well out of earshot of the camp, when she stopped and faced him.

"Well, what is it?" she asked suddenly.

"I—why—I—I wanted to explain my conduct of this morning to you, Miss van Ameringe," Hartman stammered, nonplused by her sudden question. "And I wanted to—to warn you that —that——"

"Warn me?" she asked, with an ironical lift of her eyebrows.

"Just that. It's unpleasant for me to say what I feel I must. I realize that you did not understand what—I mean that when you are with Captain Corrigan you must—must——"

"Will you please stop stammering and beating about the bush, and say plainly what you have to say, Mr. Hartman?" she interrupted him sharply.

"I will," he replied shortly, stung by her tone. "Be careful of Corrigan, and don't be so friendly with him."

The girl stared at him steadily for a silent half minute, and then drew a deep breath. "A strange young man as a self-appointed chaperon is a novelty to me," she admitted. "You seem to have the redeeming element of sincerity as a basis for your apparently unwarranted censure of my behavior, however, and for that reason alone I am willing to listen to whatever explanation you may have for what appears to me to be a piece of caddish insolence—if you care to make it."

"Please don't make it harder for

me than it is," Hartman begged. "Captain Corrigan has been my good friend, and it makes me feel like a traitor to say of him the things I must say. Miss van Ameringe, he is one of the most utterly evil men I have ever known; to men he is likable in many ways—even to men of education and refinement—he has been a consistently good friend of mine ever since I came out here, and I have sailed with him constantly, but I know him for one of the most desperate and utterly unmoral men that ever lived! He recognizes absolutely no law but his own wish, and here, where might is the only right, he is as much to be feared as a wild tiger in the jungle."

"You must have made all these discoveries very recently, Mr. Hartman," she said softly. "It is only a few hours ago that you assured me that I was in the hands of friends, and that if I would trust myself to you I would be protected."

"And you shall be," Hartman cried hotly. "You shall be, if I have to fight both Corrigan and Weatherby—and that's about what it's coming to if we're not careful."

"Then why did you assure me this morning that your friends were mine?"

"I thought they were," Hartman said miserably. "Indeed I did. In spite of what I know Corrigan to be, I have always trusted him, and have been sure that he would never harm me. I have been so close to him and so accustomed to trust him, as far as I personally was concerned, that I became blind to what he really is."

"And now you are convinced that he means to steal the gold himself——"

"Not that. He'd put a million dollars on the turn of a card or give it to a girl in the street, if he had it and the whim seized him; I know that money is no more to him than—as he himself said—a something to fight about. But won't you see what I mean, Miss van Ameringe? You are a young, beautiful girl, and if Corrigan should fall in love with you there are no extremes to which he would not go to gain you. Oh, believe me, if you feared Weatherby you should fear Corrigan far more!"

"You paint a bright picture of the situation," the girl sighed. "If Weatherby wins, I know full well what to expect, and if Corrigan is the victor you assure me that I will be still worse off. Whichever way the tide of victory flows I'm to be left mired in the mud flats!"

"Don't make a jest of it," Hartman begged. "I hope that with your help, now that you know the situation, we can hold Corrigan in check; and if the worst comes to the worst you won't find me wanting at the crucial time."

"Ah! Sir Knight to fair lady in distress as well as chaperon and social instructor to a wayward and hoydenish young girl. How versatile you are, to be sure! I know Weatherby, I've been duly warned of Corrigan, and now for some kind friend to reveal to me your true character, and I suppose I'd be assured of a terrible fate, no matter what happened."

"Miss van Ameringe!" Hartman protested. "You do not realize the gravity of the situation."

"It seems not," she sighed. "What a misfortune that you're not able to drive me into hysterics with your fearful prophecies. It would help such a lot if I could only run mad with terror, and go about shrieking and tearing my hair, wouldn't it? And so you think Captain Corrigan may fall in love with me? How romantic! Desert island, sunken treasure, young girl in distress, shipwreck, dashing sea captain, murderous villain, love at first sight—— My! My! What time is this show out, may I ask? And will I stop for a bite of supper after, or go straight home?"

She sat down on a fallen tree, and with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hand stared speculatively at

Hartman. "Well, Captain Corrigan isn't such a bad-looking man, is he?" she mused pensively.

"You're making fun of me," Hartman said angrily. "If you choose to jest in the face of death——"

"How rude of me!" she mocked. "Pardon the jest, Death; it was made unthinkingly."

Hartman gasped and stepped back, staring down into the steady round eye of a short-barreled revolver held in the girl's right hand. The draw had been so lightninglike that he had not been aware of any movement, and had not the slightest idea where the gun had come from.

"You talk of death as a schoolboy talks," she said coolly. "I'll wager there isn't a man in the South Pacific that can draw as quick as I—and I can drive nails with this little gun at twenty paces. Death isn't such a terrible thing, you know—or probably you don't, judging by the awed way in which you speak of it—and when you've faced it as often as I have during the past five years, back there in the wilds of the Andes, you'll jest in the face of the Supreme Bluff of the universe as I do. There's nothing terrible about death, Mr. Hartman, and I've the means of it always with me; for others, if necessary, and in the contingency that you have been hinting at—for myself. Do you understand?"

Hartman nodded, dumb with amazement at the revelation of this unlooked-for phase of the strange girl's character.

"As to Captain Corrigan, I'll trust my judgment of him before yours, and I tell you frankly that I am not in the least afraid of any such complications as you have intimated might arise. He is a man whom I am willing to trust! You're a nice boy, and I believe that you were sincerely trying to help me when you warned me as you did; otherwise I should consider your action that of a cad. As it is, I forgive you because your intentions were good; so come now, let's get the water and forget all this."

"Just a moment," Hartman said. "You won't—hint of what I've said to Corrigan?"

The girl's eyes flashed scornfully, and she drew herself erect. "Ah! You take a girl aside to poison her mind against a man you are afraid to face?"

Hartman's face went white, but he met her withering look squarely. "I'm not afraid of him nor anybody or thing on earth when your safety's concerned," he said steadily. "I'm asking you to help me in keeping him in ignorance of my suspicions so that if the danger I expect comes to you I'll have a better chance to strike, and strike hard. Laugh at me all you please; I may be only a boy, and foolish, and a fit object for your mirth; and I may have the opportunity to prove that I'm something more. I'm going to protect you, if you need protection, and all your ridicule won't make me a whit the less lax in my vigilance."

The compelling earnestness of his voice brought a flush to the girl's cheeks and made her blue eyes bright. When he had finished she impulsively thrust out her hand. "You're an idiot," she said, with a rippling laugh. "But you're a good idiot, and I like you. Now, stop squeezing my hand, and we'll get that water before they send out a search party for us."

When they returned, the camp was already assuming the aspect of a small tent village. Five tents, consisting of tarpaulins stretched over saplings nailed to trees at about the height of a man's head, and staked to the ground, were being put up in a row some hundred feet from where the two tents occupied by the girl and her father were located. The camp was pitched on a small, level, natural terrace on the hillside; it was grassy, some hundred yards long by twenty wide, a perfect little picnic ground. And a picnic party, it seemed, was busy at play there, rather than an armed force with the prospect of an early death grapple with a dangerous foe for a sunken fortune in raw gold in their minds.

The little plot of level ground was thoroughly screened on the ocean side by a thick growth of trees and small underbrush, so that the danger of a rifle attack from the sea was negligible, even had Weatherby brought the *Consuelo* again within range. This he showed no disposition to do, so the campers were able to work and move about free from the fear of being sniped.

Big Corrigan was as eager and enthusiastic as a city boy on his first day camping in the wilderness. He bobbed about, superintending the erection of the tents, the making of rustic benches and a rude table—which the carpenter from the schooner was hastily constructing out of a framework of poles, with a tarpaulin stretched over the top—and the preparation of the dinner.

He was all boyish enthusiasm over the creation of a comfortable camp, and Hartman, watching, was obliged to call upon his memory to keep alive his distrust, and avoid being swept away by the big Irishman's infectious high spirits. This attitude of Corrigan's was a trick, he assured himself, an excellent piece of acting done to put himself in the good graces of Millie van Ameringe and delude the rest of them; merely a further evidence of his diabolic cunning. Well, then, he also could be tricky. He apparently entered into the spirt of the thing, laughed and joked with Corrigan, and was at pains to appear thoroughly natural and friendly. And as he worked and laughed he was busily laying out a plan of campaign against this man who had been his friend; figuring the best time to strike—for strike he was certain he must, sooner or later—and wondering anxiously how long Corrigan would maintain his present attitude of good comradeship.

At length the tents were all pitched, the tables, chairs, and benches put together, and—luxury of luxuries—a hammock fashioned from a strip of tarpaulin and tough, springy withes, to keep it spread, was slung between two trees in front of the girl's tent.

"To make the fighting taste good a general and his soldiers should have a queen to serve, Miss van Ameringe," Corrigan declared, when the hammock had been swung. "You appointed me high cockalorum of the military, so I'm going to cut fifty-fifty with you and appoint you queen of the island of Matafuras and all its present inhabitants. Queen, mount your throne." He waved grandly toward the hammock, and the girl ran, laughing, and leaped into it.

"Oh, oh, how comfy!" she cried, swinging herself. "There may be thrones in the world more costly than this, but I'm certain that there's none so nice to rest in."

Corrigan made a low obeisance.

After dinner, when all were resting, Corrigan called to Hartman and led him away into the woods. Hartman followed him, his heart beating fast. He felt that Corrigan had guessed his enmity, and was luring him away to have it out. He hooked his thumb in his belt in a seemingly careless manner, but the palm of his hand covered the handle of the thirty-eight thrust in his trousers pocket. At some distance from the camp, Corrigan stopped and seated himself on a rock. He sighed deeply, ran his fingers through his thick hair, and turned a suddenly grave face to Hartman.

"I wish the girl wasn't mixed in this, Martin," he said anxiously. "Weatherby'll never give up until he's dead, and we're pretty evenly matched as to men and guns. It's going to be a long, hard, nasty fight; and my guess is wrong if there ain't the makings of a nice, cozy, well-populated little cemetery on this island before that gold out there's ever hoisted above tide level."

Hartman wet his lips before he was able to speak, and when his voice came it was hoarse and unnatural. "I, too, wish that she was out of this—this mess," he said. "She—she's a nice girl."

"Of the cream of the world," Corrigan agreed solemnly. There was a far-away look in his gray eyes, and Hartman shivered with dread at the vibrant thrill in his deep voice.

"Weatherby'll make some sort of a break to-night," Corrigan went on. "We'll have to put a guard on the beach and another at the camp. We must have no lights to-night, after sundown."

"What do you expect them to do?"

"Haven't an idea. May land a party to hide in the brush until daybreak, and then try to stalk us; may try to work the wreck in the dark. There'll be no moon to-night, and if it's cloudy they might bring a small boat in and send a man down. I'm more afraid of their getting sharpshooters ashore that'll lay low and snipe us off if we show out of cover to-morrow. That's what I'd do if I was Weatherby."

"Wouldn't it be safer for Miss van Ameringe aboard our schooner?" Hartman asked.

Corrigan nodded. "But she wouldn't go. No, I haven't asked her, but she wouldn't. I know pretty well what that girl will and won't do without asking."

"You assume a good deal concerning Miss van Ameringe, Corrigan," Hartman said, in a voice that trembled and was sharp with rebuke in spite of his attempt to dissemble. "You may have a telepathic ability to interpret her every thought—as you seem to think—and then you may not. I think she should at least be consulted where her welfare is so vitally concerned."

Corrigan laced his fingers behind his head, and, leaning far back against the bole of a tree, stared at the horizon through half-closed lids.

"Ever know anybody so intimately that you could tell absolutely what they would do in any circumstance?" he asked dreamily. "Sure you have! Well, that's the way I know this girl. Oh, yes, I do, boy; I never met her until to-day, but I've known her ever since I was old enough to wish that the mother that gave her life to make room for mine had lived. First I knew her as the mother who was taken from me; she lived in my brain, and many's the time I've cried myself to sleep with the agony of knowing that the flesh-and-blood reality of the tender woman my mind's eye knew would never take me in her arms or run her slender fingers through my hair and kiss the lips that were so hungry for hers. Then when I became a man—not the man you know, Hartman, but a young, eager, hot-hearted boy-man, with a something in me that you would probably call a soul, troubling me with strange wild visions, and thrills and hopes—another woman lived in my dream mother's place; she was a young girl, but twin to my mother in her purity and tenderness and courage and love; she was the wife I've never held in my arms, Martin, and the mother of the children I've never had. She lived with me for years in the fo'c'sles of many ships on the seas of the world; on deck during the long night watches in the tropics—she was always closer and dearer then, somehow; on clear nights there in the silence, with the big hot stars and the great yellow moon looking so close that it seemed as though you could climb to the maintruck and pluck them out of the sky with your hands—and she played with me aloft many's the time when I swayed on the footropes and clawed frozen canvas off the Horn.

"One of the sweetest memories of my life is of the month in the Arctic Ocean, off Wrangell Island, after the *Geneva* was crushed in the ice and twenty-eight of the thirty-three men aboard of her either starved to death or were frozen before help came, because there in the blizzard and in the great silence of the still cold I came to believe that she was with me in the flesh. It was absolutely real, Martin. Why, she came to me in a thin white summer dress, walking in a circle of warm sunlight that moved with her wherever she went; it enveloped me when she reached my side, and I was perfectly comfortable—so comfortable, Martin, and so peacefully happy—and we lived together, she and I, in the warm world she brought into that frozen hell with her, for years and years it seemed; lived and loved and were very happy, and she ran her fingers through my hair and kissed me on the lips—all that, of course, was when the cold got into me—the cold and the hunger—and I went mad. Mad? Ah, if I could only have died before they nursed me back to sanity!"

There were tears in Hartman's eyes, and, obeying an irresistible impulse, he stepped forward and laid his hand on Corrigan's shoulder. "Bob, there's a good side to you," he said brokenly. "Let that side see that Miss van Ameringe isn't—— After all you've done, Bob, you couldn't——"

"And then I killed her," Corrigan resumed his narrative suddenly, apparently unaware of the interruption. "I murdered her, Martin. Not all at once, but slowly, year by year, I throttled her to death. In every port, after every voyage; in the brothels and dives the world over, I killed her, little by little, as the whisky and the women drove me on to it. She revived on the long voyages at sea, but each time she was more sorrowful, and her smile was pitiful toward the last, so pitiful that it made me crazy with remorse—for I knew it was I who had hurt her so—and I went clean bad. Clean bad, Martin. I couldn't wait for the reality of the woman of my dreams, so I killed her, and when she was gone I found that I had died with her. Yep! The Corrigan my mother gave up her life to bring here died, and I was born at the death of him. Hell, ain't it?"

He looked up, to meet Hartman's rapt gaze, laughed mockingly, and suddenly grew grave again. "And you ask me how I know what Miss van Ameringe will do? Why, boy, I knew her for years in the wife and mother I never saw. I know her as a man knows himself. I know—— Heigh-ho! That's enough of that. Now I'm going to put you in charge of the guards on the beach to-night, Martin, and I——"

"Bob, give me your promise," Hartman interrupted him suddenly.

"Promise?"

"About Miss van Ameringe, Bob. You say you killed your dream of her; don't kill the reality of the dream, Bob."

Corrigan studied the toe of his boot intently for a moment, and then looked up to meet Hartman's troubled gaze with a puzzled stare. "Say, for the love of Mike, what are you talking about?" he demanded.

"It's no time for pretense, Bob. You must know that, after what you've been, Miss van Ameringe could never—never——"

"Marry me, you mean? You mean that?"

Hartman nodded. "Promise me, Bob, that you won't—won't——"

Corrigan's face flamed with rage. "You dog!" he snarled scornfully. He sprang forward suddenly, and, lashing out with his right hand, slapped Hartman a stinging blow on the face with his open palm that stretched him on his back in the bushes. Hartman snatched his gun from his pocket as he fell, and covered Corrigan as the latter bent above him.

"Make another move and I'll kill you!" he cried, in a voice that was shrill with anger. "I mean that." He got slowly to his feet, holding the gun on Corrigan all the while.

"You can't fool me, Corrigan," he said passionately. "I know you too well. You're in love with Miss van Ameringe, and you never yet stopped at anything to get what you wanted. You can't harm that girl, Corrigan. You make a wrong move and I'll kill you!"

Corrigan drew a deep breath and looked at Hartman with contemptuous curiosity. "Why, you poor little pup, you don't know anything, do you?" he remarked, in a flat voice. "You don't know anything," he repeated.

"Corrigan," Hartman said, his voice hoarse and shaking—"Corrigan, that girl's safety is at stake; I've liked you, Corrigan, but if you live she won't be safe. You'll get me now if you get a chance, and then—Bob, I'm going to shoot you right here and now——"

"Shut up!" Corrigan said wearily. "Stop this bosh, I say! There isn't a man on this island who has a chance with Weatherby; kill me, and he'll clean out the lot of you before he's done. Never knew me to break my word, did you?"

"N-no, Bob."

"Well, then, I'll give you my word that I won't harm or hinder you in any way. I'll leave you free to do all the protecting you want. Take it?"

"Bob, promise me that you won't harm Miss van Ameringe, and I'll——"

"Oh, hell!" Corrigan turned disgustedly and strode away through the woods toward camp.

Hartman tensed his finger on the trigger. The hammer of the gun rose slowly. A tiny bit more pressure—— Suddenly he relaxed, dropped the gun at his side, and sank down, his body wracked with dry sobs.

He was torn by conflicting emotions. He had a shamed sense of treachery to Corrigan, and at the same time felt that he had not done his duty by Millie van Ameringe; he felt that he had misjudged Corrigan and simultaneously that he had made a fatal mistake in not shooting him down as he would have a wild beast. And withal he felt like a man lost in a strange wilderness; sensed all about him the operation of emotions that he did not understand and for that reason feared the more. Corrigan's words: "Why, you don't know anything," burned in his brain. He rose and went back to the camp, shamefaced and bewildered.

The *Consuelo* continued laying off and on during the afternoon under a clear sky, but the sun sank angrily red behind an ominous bank of clouds rising swiftly up from the western horizon, and the sailors were unanimous in their prediction of a storm. Four men were stationed at the camp under Captain Macklin, while eight, led by Hartman, repaired to the beach with their blankets, to guard the wreck throughout the night, holding watch by twos. When it came dusk and the outline of the *Consuelo* was merging into the oblivion of night, Corrigan waded out to the wreck, carrying an armful of oil waste and a lard pail filled with g npowder. He returned shortly, unwinding a line as he came.

"Careful of that," he warned Hartman, as he handed him one end of the line. "I made a tight ball of that waste and filled the core with powder. I put it on the for'a'd house just over the donkey-engine room right by the smokestack; then I bound that forty-four of mine—the one with the hair trigger—to the stack, with the muzzle thrust into the ball of waste and right against the powder. This line's fast to the trigger, and when you pull it you'll strike a light that'll make good targets of anything within fifty feet of it, and that'll burn bright for eight or ten minutes, anyhow. Don't pull it till you're right sure that there's somebody out there that you need to see; then light up and shoot quick and fast. Pick your men carefully, though, and don't pot me if I happen to heave in sight."

"Pot you?"

"I'm going back out and hide on the wreck. If I can get Weatherby the rest'll be easy, and I'm going to lay out there and make a try for it."

"Why not all of us get out on the wreck?"

Corrigan shook his head. "They may be looking for us to do that, and spring some surprise. Can't waste too many men in one scrap. If you hear me whistle, jerk the line and cut loose, whether you hear anything else or not."

"We—can't afford—to lose you, Corrigan," Hartman said jerkily.

"I'm gambling myself against Weatherby," Corrigan answered gruffly. "It's an even break. If I lose, get Miss van Ameringe aboard the schooner if you have to take her by force, and clear out of here. There's none of you any match for Weatherby; he'd get you all if you stayed." He nodded a curt good-by, turned, and splashed back through the water toward the *Alfreda*, now dim in the fast-gathering dark.

Hartman and Rafferty elected to watch for the first two hours. The other six men wrapped themselves in their blankets and lay down, but not to sleep. All felt that the night was pregnant with exciting events. They were on the alert for the slightest sign of the enemy. The sky was overcast, and there being no moon the darkness seemed fairly palpable. Hartman held his hand at arm's length from his face and was unable to distinguish it. Ten o'clock came, the hour for another two to take up the watch, but neither Rafferty nor Hartman lay down. Another hour went by. A light, moist breeze was stirring now, and occasionally a few raindrops fell. Hartman was tingling from head to foot with excitement, and try as he might he could not control the trembling of his legs. He did not feel afraid, but the darkness, the eerie, rhythmic sighing of the sea, the utter silence otherwise, the expectancy—all rasped his nerves. He felt about in the dark until his hand came in contact with Rafferty's arm, which he grasped and pressed. Rafferty's groping fingers found his, and with hands locked the two continued the vigil.

Out on the wreck a thin rapier of bright light, the illumination from an electric search lamp, stabbed the dark. There came a shot, a cry, and then the sounds of a struggle and curses. Hartman cried aloud from the sudden torture of his nerves, and jerked the line. Another report, a flash as the powder in the ball of waste exploded, and then a yellow flame flared high on the forward house, lighting up the wreck and the water immediately about it.

A longboat containing but one man rode the water alongside the port bulwark at the spot where it emerged from the sea. No one else was in sight, but from the deck of the *Alfreda*—seemingly just abaft the forward house and on the starboard side, out of sight of the watchers on shore—came the curses and gruntings of struggling men and the sounds of a struggle.

Hartman threw his gun to his shoulder and fired at the lone man in the boat, now half risen and cowering, with both arms crossed before his face as though to shield him from the menace of the flaring torch. Rafferty's rifle spoke with his. The man in the boat toppled sideways and slid over the edge of the boat into the black water alongside.

"One down," Rafferty grunted, as he worked the lever and held his rifle ready once more.

Then Corrigan sprang into view. He leaped from the deck to the top of the house, and fell flat even as he lit. He swung both hands in front of him as he dropped, a revolver in each, and fired a rattling volley over the edge of the house onto the deck below. From the deck on the port side, at Corrigan's rear, another figure leaped to the top of the house. Before any of the men on shore could fire he had dropped atop of the Irishman. The two rolled in a clinch, toppled from the house on the starboard side, and crashed to the deck, out of sight. A pole in the hands of some one sheltered by the house swept away the flaming mass of waste; a moment later, Hartman heard the hiss of it as it was thrown over the starboard bulwark into the sea. Then all was darkness and silence save for the moaning of the sea and the soft breath of the wind.

"They've done for the cap'n," Rafferty cried, with a break in his voice. "They can't get away with it like that. It's just as dark for them as it is for us, boys; come on an' le's get em!" He leaped into the water and started forging his way toward the wreck, but even as he started they heard the splash of oars, no longer thrust into the water with any care, and knew that the men from the *Consuelo* were in flight.

Rafferty, sobbing and yelling frightful curses, threw his gun to his shoulder and fired repeatedly in the direction of the sounds. The men in the boat responded, firing at the flash of Rafferty's rifle, and their bullets whined close. Hartman reached the maddened mate and wrested the gun from him. "They may have captured Corrigan," he cried. "Stop your shooting; you might hit him."

"Got the cap'n an' made a clean get-away," Rafferty sobbed. "Him that was white from the inside out. Got him an' got away clean with only one ordinary bum done for to pay for the cap'n." He raised his voice and yelled: "Corrigan! Oh, Cap'n Corrigan, sir! Cap'n Corrigan!"

Hartman jumped, and the gooseflesh pricked over him as Corrigan's voice came back from far out on the water: "Stand pat! They've got——"

The sound of a blow, a muffled groan, and then silence.

"Glory be he ain't dead!" Rafferty cried. "They've got him, but he's alive, an' by the holy mackerel, we'll get him back! The like o' him ain't built for such as them to scuttle. We'll get him back!"

"We'll get him back!" Hartman echoed. "If we don't, I'll make them pay till they'll wish they'd never got him."

"You!" Rafferty spat the word contemptuously. "You! You lily-fingered little whippersnapper, what do you think you can do? If we'd had a man to head us to-night we'd not lost him that was worth an army o' the like o' you! You!"

Hartman shrank before the venom of Rafferty's scorn, and then the innate germ of power handed down to him by ancestors who had ruled men in peace and war; the germ that had been nourished without his knowledge by his year of association with Corrigan and daily contact with ship's discipline—burst into sudden flower. He clubbed his rifle and swung the butt through the dark in the direction he judged Rafferty to be. The stock thudded on flesh, and Rafferty cried aloud from the pain of the blow.

"Rafferty!" Hartman called sharply. "Rafferty, answer me."

"Well," the mate growled sullenly. "What do you think you're——"

"Well, what? You wharf rat! Captain Corrigan put me in command here, and you'll mind your manners to me, or I'll shoot you down like the snarling dog you are. Understand that?"

There was a moment of silence.

Then meekly: "Yes, sir. Beggin' your pardon, sir. I felt bad about the cap'n, sir, an' my tongue got loose from me. Yes, sir."

"See it don't get loose again," Hartman said sourly.

He felt better after this. As he alternately watched and dozed between his blankets on the beach his mind was busily at work making plans for the morrow. His enforcement of authority over Rafferty gave him a new feeling of power, and confidence in his ability to carry out his plans.

It was a gloomy and sullen group that gathered at the camp shortly after daybreak and angrily watched the *Consuelo*, still laying off and on a mile from shore. The men at the camp and Miss van Ameringe had spent a sleepless night. They had heard the firing, and remained until dawn in ignorance of the outcome, fearful that the guard on the beach had been captured or wiped out, and that Weatherby's men were ashore lying in wait for them. When they heard the truth—that Corrigan had been carried away—their gloom was not lightened.

When Millie van Ameringe heard this her eyes filled, and she turned, without a word of comment, and went to her tent. Hartman watched her go, filled with bitterness and remorse. "I'm what she called me—a meddling fool!" he thought. "She likes Bob, and I don't blame her for it. Whatever he's done, he's a better man than I, if he'd only straighten up."

She had fallen in love with Corrigan, he told himself. And then for the first time he realized that she had captured his own heart. Coincident with the realization there came to him a great sense of loss. It had been love at first sight with the girl and Corrigan, he assured himself. And had his suspicions of the Irishman been anything more worthy than unconscious jealousy? He shuddered with shame and self-repulsion as the conviction grew upon him that he had been a traitor to his friend, the rough, stanch friend whom he might never again see alive.

He held a consultation with Captain Macklin as to Corrigan's rescue, which, with his change of heart, had become a veritable obsession with him. "Might run down the *Consuelo* with my schooner and fight it out hand to hand," Macklin suggested dubiously. "But if Corrigan's still alive, I've no doubt they'd do away with him the first thing. I think they'll most likely try to make some sort of a dicker with us for him."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," Rafferty put in, addressing himself direct to Hartman, "but when I called to the cap'n last night he yelled back to stand pat. I'm thinkin' he had some reason for orderin' of us to do that same, sir, an' if I might say so, I believe the best thing we can do is as he told us; stand pat, an' wait to see what turns up."

"Best thing," Captain Macklin agreed. "They'll come ashore under a white flag soon and try to drive a bargain with us for his safe return."

"If I could only do something," Hartman groaned. "It's maddening just to sit here idle."

"Best thing," Captain Macklin reiterated.

But the day wore on to noon and still the *Consuelo* continued her monotonous cruise back and forth a mile offshore, and there came no indication that Weatherby desired a parley. Was Corrigan still alive? That was the question that harassed the minds of all. If he still lived why did not Weatherby attempt to trade him for the chance to dive for the gold uninterrupted? Hartman's heart grew heavier as the hours passed; heavy with the belief that Corrigan had been done away with, and that he—Hartman—would never have the opportunity of admitting his jealous folly and asking forgiveness.

Shortly after noon the girl came from

her tent—wan looking and with her eyes red from weeping—and beckoned to Hartman. "Come walk with me," she said wearily, as she led the way from the camp. "I'll go mad sitting still wondering what has happened—to him. Is there nothing to be done?"

Hartman told her of their decision to wait, in the hope that Weatherby would hold Corrigan as a hostage. "Then why haven't they come ashore before this and made an offer?" she asked miserably. "Oh, let's signal them and offer to give up everything and leave at once if they'll return him safe."

"You'd be willing to do that?"

"A thousand times over. All the gold in the world isn't worth the life of a brave man like him. And I'm responsible for the whole miserable business, Mr. Hartman. Oh, let's signal to them and at least end this uncertainty. Why haven't you done it before?"

Hartman told her of Corrigan's last injunction.

"We think he may have had some reason that we know nothing of for advising us to stand pat, as he said. Let's wait at least three hours longer. That will give us plenty of time to arrange a parley with them before dark."

Millie nodded dispiritedly. "I wanted daddy to be free from worry in his old age," she said. "Otherwise I wouldn't have asked the meanest of men to risk his life to get that gold for us—least of all a man like Corrigan."

"I may not have the opportunity to apologize to him," Hartman said sadly. "But I want to tell you how bitterly sorry I am for what I said to you yesterday of him, and——"

"Please don't!" she interrupted him sharply, and they descended the hill to the beach in silence.

They followed the shore line to a rocky headland a quarter of a mile from the wreck, and there the girl threw herself down on the edge of the thirty-foot cliff that rose almost perpendicularly from the water and stared moodily out at the distant *Consuelo*.

Hartman seated himself beside her and began absently throwing stones at a small, weather-beaten wooden crate, such as those used for packing oranges, that floated—inverted—in the water a hundred yards from shore, drifting slowly with the insetting current. The black, triangular fin of a shark clove the surface a stone's throw in the rear of the crate and made a great circle around it. Hartman called the girl's attention to the tiger of the sea, and, standing up, directed his volley of pebbles at the circling fin. Five times it made a complete circle of the crate, and then switched and made straight for it.

When the ominous fin was but a few yards distant the crate was suddenly thrust up out of the water, and from under it the shoulder and head of a man appeared, a man who shouted and thrashed the water wildly with his arms. The fin disappeared from sight for a moment, appeared again a dozen yards away, and swept about the swimmer in a rapidly narrowing circle. The man turned and struck out for the shore, swimming with great, lunging strokes that shot him through the water with incredible speed. Both Hartman and the girl shrieked aloud as they simultaneously recognized Corrigan.

He looked up for a brief instant at their shout, and, far away as he was, they could see recognition flash across his face. Then the threatening fin swished toward him once more, and he turned to face it, yelling and churning the water with his hands and feet. The shark swerved aside, bluffed by the commotion, but the circle it made about its intended victim was now alarmingly small.

Corrigan again glanced up at the two on the cliff. Excited as he was, Hartman was conscious of a thrill of admiration for the steel-nerved Irishman. In Corrigan's face there was no betrayal of any emotion save absorption in his task, the task of saving himself from the teeth of the threatening monster. He exhibitied no more of fear or excitement than he would have displayed on the poop of his vessel, superintending the trimming of the yards. He glanced quickly back at the speeding fin drawing near, and then again at Hartman. "Throw me your knife!" he called steadily. "Quick! Steady, now! Toss it where I can reach it. Quick!"

Hartman jerked his long-bladed knife from its sheath at his belt and drew back his arm to throw. For a second he hesitated, his heart chilled with fear that he would not cast the blade within reach.

It was a long throw, and the steel would sink instantly. If the knife fell two yards away from the swimmer, it would be impossible to recover it, and then——

He felt the blade plucked from his fingers, and gasped to see it sailing out over the water, thrown instantly by Millie van Ameringe, who leaned far forward on the edge of the cliff, lips parted, watching its flight in breathless suspense. She moaned weakly, and, covering her eyes with her arms, reeled backward as the knife slit the water a full yard from Corrigan's outstretched hand and splashed from sight. Even as the knife struck the water the shark ceased its circling and sped straight for its prey. And in that same instant Corrigan dove.

Without any impulse of conscious volition, Hartman, all unarmed as he was, leaped to the edge of the cliff and sprang off into the sea. As he jumped the girl opened her eyes and saw the white belly of the shark, upturned and partially out of the water, flash over the spot where Corrigan had disappeared. A hand flashed up alongside the rushing monster, the fingers locked tight about the dorsal fin, and Corrigan was jerked free of the water for an instant by the impetus of the shark. In that instant he bestrode the great fish as a man, fighting, rides an antagonist on the ground; and in that instant the girl saw the knife she had thrown flash in the sunlight, raised high in Corrigan's left hand. He stabbed with it again and again before the shark righted and dove. Corrigan disappeared with it as it went under water, and for a space only the swirling wake of the great fish gave evidence that living creatures had battled there. Then Corrigan came into view.

He broke water, breathing stertorously, and struck out for shore, only to halt and tread water at sight of Hartman's wild face emerging toward him. Hartman's staring eyes failed to note Corrigan. He plunged fairly onto him, forcing his way through the water blindly and with the look of a somnambulist in his face. When his outstretched hand touched Corrigan's breast he clinched with him, sobbing and cursing, and began to struggle. Corrigan broke from him and slapped him smartly across the eyes with his open hand.

"Martin! Stop it, I tell you! Stop it!" he shouted sharply.

Hartman shook his head, stared at Corrigan, and the light of sanity came back into his eyes. He looked about him wildly. "Where—where is it?" he cried. "Are you—all right, Bob? Where——"

"Where's Mr. Shark?" Corrigan laughed. "I think he went home to his family with a stomachache." He looked up at the girl on the cliff, raised one arm out of water, and waved to her. "All right, little lady," he called gayly. "Guess we're too hot a diet for fish."

The girl raised her hand to wave back, and then crumpled up and sank limp on the rocks. "Come on," Corrigan called, and, followed by Hartman, plunged for shore.

Scrambling hurriedly up over the rocks, they reached the side of the unconscious girl. Corrigan knelt and took her golden head on his knee. "Rub her wrists, Martin," he ordered. "Poor baby, it's a shame. Game as they make 'em, but this is no manner of life for a girl to be mixed in."

Millie slowly opened her eyes, looked at Corrigan vacantly for a moment, and then sat erect. "I fainted," she said accusingly. "What a fool! But, oh, it was terrible! It was like watching a man fight a monster from some other world."

"I'd been on my way to some other world if you hadn't thrown that knife when you did," Corrigan said grimly. "What were you hanging onto it for, Martin?"

"I was afraid I wouldn't throw it true," Hartman confessed.

"Afraid?" Corrigan repeated after him, with a rising inflection. "Afraid? Then why did you jump in and swim for me without as much as a pin to fight with?"

Hartman shook his head. "I don't know. I just jumped without thinking."

Corrigan threw back his head and laughed. "You're a queer card. You're not afraid, Martin. You've got plenty of nerve, but far too many nerves; that's what ails you."

"You are a brave man, Mr. Hartman," the girl supplemented sincerely. "One of the bravest I have ever known."

Hartman flushed. "I'm not," he denied. "I was scared half to death. Yes, I was. I——"

"That's why you are brave," the girl declared. "A brave man is one who does what he is afraid to do."

"And you said a wise thing then," Corrigan agreed heartily. "Anybody get hurt last night, Martin?"

"No. And we got at least one of them. When I first lighted the torch I fired at a man in the longboat and I saw him drop."

"I saw him go over," Corrigan said, with a nod. "Glad we did some damage. They put one across on me, all right." He threw back his head and laughed at the remembrance. "I was squatted there alongside the for'a'd house, listening for all my ears were worth, and the first intimation I had that any one was near me was when some one's hand touched my shoulder. I jumped back square into a whole mess of 'em, and then everything broke loose at once. I got away once and jumped upon the house alongside the torch——"

"We saw you," Martin interrupted. "A fellow tackled you from behind, and——"

"And we rolled off onto the deck together," Corrigan finished for him. "Then they grabbed the torch and heaved it overside, trussed me up, and away they went. Hear me yell back to you?"

"Yes. Rafferty called, and then——"

"I heard him. I wanted to warn you not to bargain with them for me. That was their idea in carrying me off alive and the only reason they didn't do for me at once. When you lit the torch I heard Weatherby yell out not to kill me."

"We'd have got in touch with the *Consuelo*, if you hadn't told us to stand pat. But how did you get away?"

"The Bible says that bread cast on the waters floats back to you on queer tides sometimes," Corrigan answered. "Twenty years back I was whaling in the Sulu Sea and went ashore to get water and fresh meat from a tribe of Malay cannibals. They had a little white boy about fourteen years old—been cabin boy aboard a whaler that was wrecked—and he'd come ashore on a spar. One of the daughters of the big chief had took a fancy to him, so they let him live. The kid had been there a year when we found him, and, of course, he was crazy to get away, so I landed that night with a party and got him. We lost a couple of men doing it, and I got a nasty cut in the thigh with a spear, but we got the boy all right and made a get-away. I left him in Honolulu on our way home, fitting him out with some duds and a little money. That's not much of a story so far, but it gets interesting when I tell you that that same boy is the steward aboard the *Consuelo!* I didn't know him from Adam's off ox—that's twenty years ago I'm speaking of, and he was only a kid then—but he knew me, all right; and I guess if the Bible had told of it it'd say that the bread I throwed away in the Sulu Sea that time had come floating across the world to feed me here when I needed it."

"And he freed you?" Hartman asked.

Corrigan nodded. "And he was foxy, too. Weatherby was peevish when he found he'd captured the same man he set ashore on Juan Fernandez. He didn't wish for to kill me at once—wanting to keep me to bargain for with you—but he didn't relish the idea of my getting a good night's rest. He bound my feet together, tied my wrists in front of me, and then triced me up by the thumbs to the for'a'd port shrouds so that my toes barely touched the deck. I'm here to tell you that the Spanish Inquisition never showed the world any way of torturing a man a lot worse than that. He left one man to guard me. Mr. Man, he don't rightly figure the sense of losing all his beauty sleep to watch a man tied up as tight as I was, and along just before dawn he sneaks back of a coil of rope near the bulwark and treats himself to forty winks.

"It was darker than the inside of a black cat then, and Marshall—that's the cook I told you of—took a chance and sneaked up to me. He put his mouth to my ear and made himself known, and then he cut me down and undid my hands and feet. That old box was his idea; it's an old orange crate he'd used to keep potatoes in, and nobody'd be liable to think anything of such floating on the water. He heaved it overside easy, and, leaving me free to do as I pleased, he sneaked back to his bunk in the for'a'd house just abaft the galley.

"I could hear my good friend—the guard—snoring away peaceable and lovely, so I slipped overside, located the box, and ducked under it. There was a-plenty of air there, so I turned over on my back and swam away easy. I put as much distance between me and the schooner before daylight as I could. I could see through the cracks of the box when it begun to get light, and I didn't dare swim any after that for fear they'd notice that Mr. Box was traveling faster than any honest crate with nothing but the tide under it should.

"From daylight on I just floated and let the tide carry me. I didn't dare duck my head out to see where I was for fear the schooner was near me. I hadn't the faintest idea where I had drifted to when I heard the stones you were throwing falling around me. I thought the *Consuelo* was near, and that some one was throwing at me from her. Finally I let myself sink to the eyes and lifted the edge of the box a wee mite to risk a peek. The first thing I see was that shark's fin slicing the water right behind me. I'd rather risk Weatherby than the shark, so I come out of hiding as it were and begun making noises. The first I knew of you was when you yelled and I turned and see you up here on this nice dry land. I'm a seagoing man, and for the most part land it sets too firm and solid under my feet to suit me, but for the once—when I saw how close it was and how close that shark was—say, I loved it like an angleworm loves mud."

"Captain Corrigan, if you had not escaped I would have felt like a murderess all my life," the girl said solemnly. "Now that you are safe—and that's worth all the gold down there, and more—let's give it all up and get away from this awful place to-night. Yes, please! There's been so much trouble and bloodshed over it already that I'm beginning to loathe the thought of the stuff. Daddy and I will get along somehow. I won't have any of you risk your lives further for my sake. I positively will not. I feel as though that gold carried a blood curse with it."

Corrigan's jaw set till the muscles stood out over the bone in knots and his eyes narrowed to slits. "I'll send you and your father to a place of safety—Juan Fernandez, if you like—and wait here till the schooner returns," he said grimly. "But I won't leave, and I'll not give up the fight as long as there's a breath left in me. I want to get the gold—for you, for one thing, and for another because Weatherby wants it. The world and all the space yon side of the stars ain't big enough for that man and me to live in comfortable, miss—and one of us is going to stop living soon. I wish you and your father would leave—it ain't a fit place for either of you, and there'll be sights here you shouldn't look on—but I'll stick for the finish. I'm going to get Weatherby."

The girl shook her head stubbornly. "I'll not stir until you win or consent to leave with me," she declared.

Corrigan nodded. "I knew you wouldn't," he said, and flashed a meaning smile at Hartman. "Let's go up to the camp and tell them Corrigan's back from the grave."

The party at the camp broke into a babble of congratulation when Corrigan appeared, and he had to recount his experiences for their benefit. Rafferty cried shamelessly when he saw the captain, and continued to sniffle ludicrously, wiping his large nose on the back of his sleeve at regular quarter-minute intervals throughout Corrigan's brief recital.

"Sure thought you was a goner, cap'n," he blubbered, wringing Corrigan's hand when the story was done. "I owe this Weatherby a few for scarin' me like that."

"They're signaling to us. See that man in the bow waving the white flag?" Hartman cried.

Corrigan snatched up Captain Macklin's telescope and looked. His face went white as he saw through the tube—Marshall's body swinging from the jibstay, and Weatherby standing by the rail, shaking his fist at the shore. Corrigan held the telescope to his eye for a moment more. Then he dropped to his knees like a man stricken by a terrible blow, and groaned.

"What is it?" Hartman asked, snatching up the glass.

Corrigan wrenched it from him. "Never you mind," he said.

"What was it, Bob?"

Corrigan rose to his feet, his face convulsed with a terrible fury. "It's another minute added to Weatherby's dying agony," he declared hoarsely. "And if God's in His heaven, it's another eternity of time for his punishment after I've rid the world of him."

## CHAPTER X.

Immediately Corrigan began preparations for an offensive campaign. He called all the men together and asked for volunteers to accompany him on the schooner. "I want men with me who couldn't be hired to keep out of this fight," he said. "If any of you would rather stay ashore with the old man and the girl, I don't want you with me."

Unanimously they signified their desire to go. Corrigan smiled grimly. "Good! But some one will have to stay ashore with the girl and her father. Hartman, you remain, and I'll leave Rafferty and Dolan with you."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I'd rather go with you," Rafferty begged. "Please, cap'n, sir, don't leave me out of it. You know me for a good fightin' man, an' I'll do my part, sir."

"Because you and Dolan are both good fighting men, I want you to stay ashore with Hartman," Corrigan answered. "If things go wrong with us, there'll be need of good men here, see?"

"Yes, sir," Rafferty agreed miserably. "I see, sir."

"What's your plan, Bob?" Captain Macklin asked.

"I've got one," Corrigan said shortly. "You'll see what it is when we get aboard." He called Hartman, Millie, and her father aside. "I've got a plan for wiping out Weatherby and his gang," he told them. "There's danger in it, and we may not come back. If we don't, I can pretty well assure you that none of Weatherby's crowd will be left to bother you. I'll leave you a good whaleboat beached on the shore of the cove where the schooner lies, fitted with a sail, a compass, and plenty of provisions. I'll also leave a complete diving outfit, Martin—you've watched the pearl divers enough to know how to use it—and in case the worst happens to us you'll have the means to get the gold and get away with it. I don't expect the worst to happen. I expect to be back here to-night with the news that Weatherby and his gang are—where we wish they were."

"You won't give it up and leave with us to-night, captain?" pleaded Millie.

"I will not," Corrigan refused stubbornly. He looked at her with hungry eyes and smiled sadly. "Would you—do something for me before I go?" he asked.

The girl nodded. "Anything you ask," she agreed softly.

Corrigan suddenly knelt before her like a boy and bent his head. "Would you just—run your fingers through my hair?" he asked, in a shaky voice.

The girl's eyes filled with quick tears and with impulsive tenderness she twined her small fingers in his thick locks. Corrigan looked up. "Smile," he requested. She laughed down at him through her tears. He looked at her with a solemn and glorified expression on his big face, and then leaped to his feet with a gay laugh.

"A breath from the tomb, Martin," he said mockingly. He bowed and walked away to the group awaiting him. Hartman walked with him to the top of the hill and received the rest of his instructions.

"Keep watch, and if we haven't beaten them before dark, move from the camp for the night," Corrigan advised him. "Take your blankets up on the hill some place, so if they've located the camp with their glasses and should land after nightfall they can't creep up and surprise you. Just because I'm planning for the worst don't think I expect it. We'll get that gang before dark and be back here to-night, or I'm a liar."

"What are you planning to do, Bob?"

Corrigan chuckled. "Keep watch and you'll see a pretty sight," he prophesied. "Go back now and keep the girl chirked up, Martin. Good-by."

Hartman took the proffered hand and wrung it hard. "Bob—will you forget what I said and forgive me?" he begged. "Bob, I think I was just jealous of you, just plain, mean jealous. I think I—I'm——"

"Sure you are," Corrigan said heartily. "You're in love—and you'd be a fool if you weren't. Good luck to you, son."

Hartman shook his head. "It—it's you she likes, Bob," he said miserably. "Yes, it is. She——"

The mocking smile vanished from Corrigan's face and he laid his hand solemnly on Martin's shoulder. "Youngster, I'd give my life on earth and suffer the tortures of hell through all eternity—if there is any—if I had the power to give you cause to be jealous for one single minute. Just for one minute, Martin, and I'd gladly pay with my life at the end of it. Good-by and good luck, son." He slapped Martin heartily on the back and hurried after the rest of the party.

Their first act on reaching the schooner was the beaching of the whaleboat with the diving apparatus, sails, and compass. When that had been done, Corrigan went into the cabin and called Captain Macklin. "Bring me all the dynamite you've got on board," he said. "I'm going to show you how to manufacture your own cannon."

In all Captain Macklin was able to produce one hundred sticks of the explosive. These Corrigan took and strung together, ten in a bunch, much as firecrackers are put up. He used marline to tie them together. On one end of each string he attached a quarter of a pound of lead. To the other end of each he tied a yard of marline, a cap, and two feet of fuse. When he was through he had ten of these sticks, of ten sticks each, any one of them enough to tear a hole clear through a ship if exploded on or near her deck.

"With five husky men to throw these when we get in throwing range, I figure we'e a man o' war worth the name," he chuckled, when he was done. "What say, cap'n?"

Captain Macklin was pale. "It's a dangerous game," he said shakily. "If a bullet hit one of them sticks aboard of us, or we got too close——"

"Want to back out?" Corrigan sneered.

"No, Bob, I'm with you. I've never give you the right to insult me with a question like that."

"You bet you haven't," Corrigan apologized. "I know that you're game and you'll stick for the finish."

"You know it *is* a desperate game, Bob," Macklin went on. "If your scheme works——"

"It's got to work," Corrigan declared. "Get your hook up and let's get out after them."

The anchor was hauled up, sail made, and the *Clarinda* stood away to the eastward to round the island and close with the *Consuelo*. As they shot past the eastern headland, every one on deck to watch for the other schooner, a shout of surprise and consternation went up. Bearing directly down upon them came a swiftly rolling, low-lying blanket of dense white fog. The swirling face of the thick mist wave was not more than three hundred yards distant. The *Consuelo* was as completely lost to sight in this white cloud as in the dark of the night previous.

"Lay her to!" Captain Macklin shouted, and the helmsman brought the *Clarinda* up into the wind.

Corrigan stood at the break of the poop, cursing softly as he watched the swift approach of the dense bank of fog that bade fair to baffle all his plans. "Best put back and anchor," Captain Macklin said. "No use slamming around in that like a blind shark, and most likely fetch up ashore with everything standing."

"Wait!" Corrigan said curtly. "Let her lie so for a bit."

The face of the fog bank was now almost upon them. One minute the sun—now halfway between the zenith and the western horizon—shone full on the *Clarinda*, casting sharp shadows of men and rigging on her deck; the next the vessel was shrouded in the thick, muffling mist. The sun, the island on the port side, the water they rode upon—beyond a radius of seventy-five feet—all was blotted from sight, and the jibsails were barely discernible from the poop.

"Bobbie Burns was a man o' wisdom, and the rhymes he wrote prove him so," Captain Macklin said. "'The best laid plans o' mice and men gang aft agley,' says he, an' I never see it clearer proved. This fog is no friend to us, but it may give them the chance to start some new devilment. Shall we put back and anchor, Bob?"

Corrigan shook his head. "Wait!" he repeated.

He stood by the taffrail, frowning, stroking his chin, staring thoughtfully over the side into the oily-looking water. He cast his eye aloft, peering intently up through the swirling mist around the mainmast. The rigging aloft was vague in outline, and the topmast was a mere blurred line of shadow against the lighter gray of the fog.

Corrigan suddenly sprang into the port main shrouds and went swarming aloft. When he reached the maintop, the deck below was blurred to his vision, but through the fog above him he could see the gilded truck on the topmast agleam with sunlight, and he laughed joyously. At his own height up the topmast his head emerged from the stratum of mist into the clear afternoon sunlight. The top of the mist bank was as sharply defined and as level as the surface of a gently riffled sea.

The fog had eddied perhaps three or four hundred feet up the slope of the island, but save for this it eddied and rolled along at the same height everywhere. Corrigan put the glass to his eyes and searched the roof of the mist intently. A mile away to the northward his gaze caught and concentrated on two slender, black marks thrusting up out of the fog a little higher than ordinary hitching posts, and like to hitching posts in appearance. They were the topmasts of the *Consuelo,* and Corrigan muttered savage satisfaction as he made them out. He hurried alow, and, leaping onto the poop, grabbed Captain Macklin by the waist and shuffled a clumsy jig about him.

"Are you daft, you fool?" Macklin inquired, shoving him away.

"I just got my senses," Corrigan retorted. "Put a man in a sling at that topmast head and we'll give Weatherby a sure-enough surprise party. Mac, the fog don't reach that high, and the *Consuelo's* topmasts stick up out of it fit for lighthouses. This fog's a gift from Heaven to us, I tell you; it's made to our order."

Captain Macklin spanked a clenched right fist into the open palm of his left hand. "Well, I'll be split from truck to keel!" he ejaculated. "Why, if they don't sight our topmasts by chance and good luck we can keep a lookout and slide right onto 'em before ever they know we're at sea. Corrigan, the Lord's with us, an' the devil's gone back on his own. We've got 'em."

At Captain Macklin's order the mate went aloft and rigged a rope sling to the topmast in which he could sit. He took his place in this, called down the course, and the *Clarinda* paid off on the port tack and stood away in pursuit of the *Consuelo.*

The force on the *Clarinda,* including Corrigan and Captain Macklin, totaled ten men. Macklin picked three from the crew in addition to the second mate, to act with Corrigan in throwing the dynamite. He—Macklin—it was agreed, was to take the wheel when they neared the other schooner. Corrigan took the mate and the three sailors aft and carefully instructed them how they were to handle the dynamite. Each man was to kneel behind the bulwark with knife and matches ready; at the moment the *Consuelo* was sighted and he could determine with reasonable accuracy how close they were to pass to her, Corrigan would calculate the time it would take to come abreast, toss the dynamite, and sheer off out of harm's way; he would then figure the length of fuse necessary to insure an explosion before the crew of the *Consuelo* could pinch out the spark on each string, and at the same time give the *Clarinda* a chance to foot it out of the zone of the greatest force of the explosion. He was then to tell the crew how short to cut the fuses, give the order to light, and then to throw.

Each man was told to throw two strings of the explosive at different places on the deck of the *Consuelo,* ranging from the bow to the poop. The main hatch cover of the *Clarinda* was removed so that the two men in the waist nearest it could seek immediate shelter after they had thrown the missiles by diving down into the hold. They could thus escape the rain of fragments from the *Consuelo* after the explosion and also be protected from falling spars should the *Clarinda's* sticks be blown out of her. The two men farthest aft were to seek shelter in the cabin, and the two nearest the bow in the forecastle.

It was arranged that one man should be in the shrouds to take the signaled directions from the mate at the topmast, and transmit them, by signal, to Captain Macklin at the wheel. When the *Clarinda* arrived within two hundred yards of the other schooner, the mate was to establish a course straight for her, and then hurry alow and seek shelter. The sailor sheltered in the shrouds was to do likewise. As soon as the dynamite was thrown and he had put the wheel hard over to head her away from the doomed ship, Captain Macklin was to dive for the aft companion and seek shelter in his cabin.

All these details agreed upon, the *Clarinda*—under the direction of the mate—made a long leg to leeward, came about, and ran down before the wind for the *Consuelo.* The air was light but steady, and the schooner snored along through the oily-looking, smooth water in uncanny silence; she footed along handily at a five-knot gait.

The mate relayed word to the deck that the *Consuelo* was on the same tack as the *Clarinda,* and was not more than a quarter of a mile distant. She was probably loafing along with one jib and the mainsail, he reported, as the *Clarinda* was making at least three feet to her one. Captain Macklin gave the order for absolute silence, and the mate was told to signal his further directions.

The men who were to throw the dynamite took their places along the bulwark, and Captain Macklin took the wheel. Silent, tense with suspense, they waited in the eerie half light of the fog, while the *Clarinda* forged quietly ahead. Twenty nerve-torturing minutes went by before the mate signaled down that they were within two hundred yards of the *Consuelo,* gave the course straight for her, and came hurrying down the rigging. The men along the bulwarks poked their heads up and strained their eyes for the first sight of the other schooner. In the mist ahead a man cleared his throat and spat. The sound, slight as it was, smote the strained nerves of the expectant men on the *Clarinda* like the report of a gunshot.

Then Corrigan, forward in the bow, crouching, squinting intently through narrowed lids, made out a faint blur that was the *Consuelo's* stern. A moment more and he could dimly descry the figure of the helmsman slouching over the wheel. On the course they were keeping, Corrigan saw that they would pass within ten yards of the *Consuelo* on her port side. He had found by experiment that four inches of the fuse he was using would burn for one minute. Five seconds to light and throw them, two for their flight through the air to the deck of the schooner, ten for whoever was in command on deck to recover from the sudden shock of the *Clarinda's* appearance out of the fog, ten for a sailor to receive the order to pinch out the fuses and reach one of them—twenty-seven seconds in al! from the time the fuses were lit before any one sailor could extinguish any one of them.

All this was predicated on the assumption that the officer on deck would be quick to grasp the nature of the attack and that his orders would be instantly obeyed by the crew. There were ten of the bunches of dynamite, and it was improbable that there were more than five men immediately available on the deck of the *Consuelo*. The deadly missiles would be scattered from her stem to stern, and, assuming that each man responded instantly to the immediate order given by the officer and pinched out one fuse within twenty-seven seconds, there would still be five more to be found and extinguished—and but thirty-three seconds in which to accomplish it. A minute was scarcely time enough to allow the *Clarinda* to sheer off and escape total destruction. A minute fuse might, by the wildest chance, permit the crew of the *Consuelo* to extinguish all ten of the sparks, but a shorter was not feasible.

Each one of the men along the bulwark was crouched with ready knife, and eyes fixed on Corrigan. He held up four fingers, widespread, and quickly sliced off his own fuse at the determined length. Each of the men along the bulwark did likewise, and then, holding their matches between thumb and forefinger, awaited the next order, which was to be given verbally.

And now Corrigan could dimly make out objects half the length of the *Consuelo,* and he thrilled with savage satisfaction. The only man in sight so far was the helmsman, and he had not as yet noted the approach of the pursuing vessel. Ten seconds more and the jib boom of the *Clarinda* was less than twenty feet astern of the *Consuelo's* taffrail. The helmsman looked around suddenly, attracted by the creaking of a block, and, throwing up both hands, gave vent to a shrill scream of fright.

"Look out, you blundering idiots! Sheer off, sheer off!" he screamed, as he grasped the wheel again and put it hard over.

But he was too late. The *Consuelo* had little headway, and would not pay off fast enough to make any appreciable difference in the relative position of the two schooners. The *Clarinda* poked her nose abreast of the *Consuelo's* mainmast. The opposing bulwarks of the two schooners were not thirty feet apart. The helmsman on the *Consuelo* held the wheel with one hand, and, shaking his fist at Captain Macklin, screamed curses at him for his carelessness. Corrigan divined that he took the *Clarinda*—not for the schooner of the foe on the island—but some strange craft that had accidentally almost run the *Consuelo* down.

What he could not understand was that the fellow's shouting had so far brought only one other of the crew to light, a stocky chap who popped out of the forecastle and as the *Clarinda* rapidly slipped abreast, leaned over the port bulwark and fervently added his own profane comment to that of his mate at the wheel. Were all the rest drunk, he wondered, that the commotion did not bring them on deck?

And now the two schooners were fairly abreast. Corrigan lit a match and touched it to his fuses, shouting to the others to do the same. Along the length of the *Clarinda* in the lee of the bulwark five points of flame showed, and an instant later the sparks sputtered from ten fuses.

"Give it to 'em!" Corrigan shouted. "Now give it to 'em!"

Five heads showed for a moment above the bulwark, five arms were drawn back, and then five bunches of concentrated death whirled out through the fog and plopped on the deck of the *Consuelo*. Scarcely had they lit when five more followed, and then the men on the *Clarinda* scurried for their allotted places of shelter.

The helmsman on the *Consuelo* recognized Corrigan as the latter rose to throw the dynamite, and for the first time realized that an enemy was at hand. When the first of the dynamite lit on the deck near his feet, he shrieked with terror, and, deserting the wheel, sprang over the taffrail into the sea. An instant later the man in the waist followed him. Still no one else appeared on deck, and as Captain Macklin jammed the wheel hard over and slipped a spoke into the becket and dived for the companion, Corrigan suddenly understood why and screamed incoherent and impotent curses into the white shroud of the fog.

The *Clarinda,* obeying her wheel, sheered sharply to port. The *Consuelo,* her wheel running free, also veered to port as she began to swing around into the wind, and lost nearly all her headway. Her jib stays came near to fouling the *Clarinda's* main boom as the latter vessel shot past her. Corrigan, obsessed with rage through his realization of the reason no one appeared on the deck of the doomed vessel, neglected to seek shelter. He rushed aft as the *Clarinda's* stern cleared the bow of the *Consuelo,* and, leaning over the taffrail, searched the deck of the doomed schooner, noting how far the fuse had burned. A half minute had passed since they were lit and the sputtering sparks seemed fairly into the caps. Thirty seconds more.

Corrigan sprang for the after companion. There came a sudden grinding, crunching jar, and he fetched up in a heap against the skylight, thrown from his feet by the shock, as the *Clarinda* shuddered in every timber of her and came to a full stop. Not a sailor in her needed second thought to tell him what had happened. The *Clarinda* was hard and fast on the supreme terror of uncharted seas, a pinnacle of rock thrusting up from a reef far below!

And out of the fog swung the *Consuelo,* a floating engine of destruction, drifting fair down upon the disabled schooner. Corrigan sprang to his feet and took in the situation at a glance. Twenty-five seconds more for the fuse to burn. In twenty-five seconds the *Consuelo* would be fairly afoul of the *Clarinda.* He turned and sprinted forward, shouting as he ran. From out cabin, main hatch, and forecastle rushed the rest of the crew to give one terrified glance at the death ship astern with her bulwark almost touching the *Clarinda's* taffrail, and follow Corrigan in a mad race for the bow.

Corrigan was first over the rail. When his body cleft the sea, there yet remained fifteen seconds for the fuses to burn before the sparks reached the caps. After him, like stones dropping from a hopper, the rest of the crew rained into the rea and lunged madly off through the fog.

Corrigan was in the lead, face buried, plunging through the water with powerful, overhand strokes. He calculated the probable time of the explosion. About three seconds more—two—one! Now. It must be time. What was the matter? A wild hope that all the caps might prove defective flashed through his brain, and then the world split in fragments and flew through space. Thought ceased. Corrigan's last sensation was that of his body being torn to shreds by giant hands. He was conscious of no sound, but it seemed to him that his flesh was being plucked from him and his naked bones shaken apart. Then oblivion.

Then—for all he could judge of time, it might have been an age after, though in reality it was about twenty seconds—the agony of returning consciousness and the pain of battling to keep life in a body so wracked that it was a concrete prayer for death.

He was immersed in a swirling sea, a sea with a thousand hands that tugged his body in diverse directions; insane hands that whirled him madly about, tossed him back and forth, over and around, the puny sport of a force so great that his own efforts to combat it were as those of a gnat to overpower an elephant. And then the force cast him high on the foaming crest of a great wave and he sucked life back into his tortured lungs in great gasps.

On the surface the suction was not so great, and he could swim. Everywhere was chaos: high-tossed waves without sequence of direction or size; fragments raining down into the swelter from out the shrouded sky. And yet Corrigan battled on in the midst of a great silence. He did not realize this; all he was conscious of was that it all seemed unreal—that something was the matter with him.

Gradually the commotion of the water grew less, the rain of fragments ceased, and Corrigan dragged himself up onto a thirty-foot fragment of mast floating near him. All about him was splintered wreckage from both schooners. Clinging to a plank near by he saw Captain Macklin, his face covered with blood from a jagged wound in his scalp. He attempted to shout at him, but could make no sound. The sense of unreality became deeper. Then, near Captain Macklin, he saw the helmsman of the *Consuelo* swimming weakly. Corrigan slipped from the spar and swam to him. He dragged him up on a big section of the *Clarinda's* deck planking, and attempted to ask him about the rest of the crew of the *Consuelo*. He struggled to speak, but could not. The man's lips moved, but Corrigan heard nothing. And then suddenly he realized that he was deaf from the explosion.

Captain Macklin swam to the irregular raft onto which Corrigan had dragged the sailor, and, drawing himself out of the water, fell flat and lay as if asleep. The second mate appeared and took the same refuge. Four of the sailors from the *Clarinda* gained the raft, one after the other. From time to time a man moved his lips, but none heard. The men squatted or lay on the raft, stupid with bewilderment. The surface of the water was littered with all manner of fish and strange creatures of the sea, floating among the wreckage, temporarily stunned or killed outright by the shock of the explosion. Soon a shark's fin appeared, then another and another, until the water swarmed with the scavengers come to clear the sea of the mess of death that men had scattered. The raft on which the eight men had taken refuge was partially awash, and the feasting monsters nosed inquisitively at the very edge of it.

A half hour went by. Captain Macklin roused from his stupor, raised on one elbow, and called. Corrigan started, for he could dimly hear the sound of the captain's voice. He grasped the helmsman from the *Consuelo,* and, putting his mouth to the man's ear, shouted: "Where was Weatherby and the rest of them? Tell me."

Faintly, as if from a great distance, he heard the answer: "Went ashore to the wreck when the fog shut down on us."

"Take the diving gear?" Corrigan shouted.

The man nodded assent. Corrigan rocked back, clasped both knees, and stared dully off at nothing. He had destroyed both schooners, three of Macklin's men, and one of the *Consuelo's* crew; Weatherby was ashore with his full-armed force and the diving apparatus. Gradually Corrigan descended into an apathetic stupor of utter despair. They were without food or water, and where the wind and tide might take them before they could get their bearings he could not even guess. If the fog would lift they might improvise oars from the wreckage and work the craft to land, he thought, but then came the realization that Weatherby would sight and shoot them down long before they could land.

Well, Hartman, the girl, and the rest of the party ashore might yet take to the whaleboat he had left for them and escape. His brain began a weak effort to plan, and then went blank. It was too much of an effort. Corrigan was very tired. Terrible things had happened with stunning rapidity. Nothing mattered much anyhow. He sighed, nestled down with his head on his arm, and was almost instantly asleep. The raft rose and fell on the low smooth swell in a dim world of mist, destruction, and death, and the sharks partook busily of the feast fate had set for them.

## CHAPTER XI.

Rafferty was the first of those left behind to note the approach of the fog bank and realize the opportunity it might afford Weatherby to spring some surprise. He called Hartman's attention to it while it was as yet a low-lying line far out on the ocean, and counseled moving immediately from the camp. "Better now than wait till dark, sir," he advised. "When that fog reaches here we'll be like blind pigs in a poke."

Hartman agreed, and after hurriedly packing blankets and a day's supply of food, the whole party set off up the hillside. On the very summit they found a small area of clear meadow land, and decided on it as a camping place for the night. By the time they reached the top of the hill the fog was swirling about the foot of the island and the *Consuelo* was blotted from sight. They speculated at length on what effect the fog would have on Corrigan's plans, all but Rafferty being of the opinion that he would give up and return to the camp for the night.

"Cap'n had his dander up, an' he won't be back till he's seen blood spilt," Rafferty prophesied. "He hates Weatherby that bad he'll fair smell his way to him through the fog. He's some jim-dandy, Cap'n Corrigan he is. Say, if I could be anybody I wanted to be, believe me, Jim Rafferty and Cap'n Corrigan they'd walk in the same boots. He's what I call some white man."

"Well, me—I wouldn't care a lot to walk in his boots," Dolan, stretched at ease on the ground with the rim of his old felt hat pulled low over his eyes, disagreed. "No, sir. U-u-m no. Not me. Me—I think too much of my feet, I do. That man Cap'n Corrigan's shoes they hop around too lively for my legs to keep up with. Why, say, he's got them shoes o' his trained so's that toes of 'em they turns toward trouble just the same's the magnetic needle points north. That's a fact."

"They didn't never point toward no trouble I wouldn't be willin' and glad to follow the cap'n into," Rafferty said hotly. "My feet they ain't tender like some people's I know of. No, an' they ain't frostbit in hot weather, either."

"Mentionin' the names o' them people you got in mind?" Dolan drawled lazily.

"I could if I liked," Rafferty declared.

"I should like it if you would," Dolan said.

"Well, the one in particular I was thinkin' of when I remarked as I did was a chicken-livered, splay-footed, lop-jawed, pot-bellied, snub-nosed, bow-legged, bull-jawed, pop-eyed, fish-brained bogtrotter that I was idiot enough to mess in along with once on a time, an' he come nearer to makin' me ashamed o' bein' Irish than anything I ever see. He did for a fact. Yes, sir!"

Dolan shifted to a sitting posture, and stared out into the fog far below. "You say you messed with this fellow some; didn't you learn his name?" he inquired casually.

"I did for a fact. I learned his name sure enough, and sorry enough I was after I come to find out what a low-principled wharf rat he was that that same name was as Irish as my own—or the inside of a spud."

"Then you must o' forgot that name, huh?"

"I ain't forgot a letter in it. I took that much shame to the land I was born in that such as him should wear it."

"Well, now his name it wasn't Dolan by no chance, was it?"

"I didn't say it was."

"I noticed you didn't. You was careful not to."

"I would if I wanted to."

"More like you would if you dared to."

Rafferty sighed, and rose to his feet, hitching up his trousers. "A man can't take no peace whatsoever with you around, you pester so," he complained. "All right, then, his name was Dolan, you dog-gone pesterin' meddler!"

Dolan seemed to spring straight from the small of his back on the ground to Rafferty's neck. His left arm circled it, and he aimed a vicious blow at the jaw with his right that Rafferty blocked with his left elbow.

Rafferty ducked out of the hold and landed a stinging blow on Dolan's left eye with his right as he ducked away. Hartman sprang up from beside the girl and her father, and rushed between the two combatants, commanding them to stop.

"Great Scott! This is no time to go after each other," he admonished. "Wait and do your fighting with Weatherby's crowd."

"Well, he can't go for to tell me that Cap'n Corrigan's no good an' that he ain't fit for a man to fight for," Rafferty declared sullenly.

"I never said no such a thing," Dolan retorted. "You said as how I wasn't a fit man to go along with the cap'n, an' that's what started the whole trouble. You said I didn't think enough o' the cap'n to be willin' to follow him, an' made out that I fair begged for the chance to stay behind an' keep out o' the ruction. That's what you made out."

"I never made out no such a thing. You made out——"

"You did so!"

"I did not. I never made out——"

"You're a liar! You made out——"

"Don't you call me a liar!"

Hartman again rushed between them as they made for each other. "Stop it, I say!" he cried, laughing in spite of his attempt to be stern. "Neither of you know what you're fighting about. Rafferty, tell me exactly what it was Dolan said that made you mad. The exact words, mind."

"I misremember the exact words," Rafferty admitted. "But they was words I wouldn't take from no man."

"No such a thing," Dolan chimed in. "You said first that——"

"Just exactly what did he say, Dolan?" Hartman inquired.

"Why, he said that—that—that—— Ah, you got me all het up now an' I forget just how he put it; but he needn't think I'm goin' to take it from him just 'cause I can't remember what it was. No, siree."

"I see," Hartman said gravely. "I've seen this trouble coming for a long time, boys. You've appeared to be the best of friends, but I knew all along that you were just pretending. I've known from the first, Dolan, that you despised Rafferty, and that you were just pretending to be a friend of his, so——"

"I was not," Dolan protested. "Why, I been a friend to Jim, when——"

"Oh! Then it was you, Jim, who didn't like Dolan?" Hartman interrupted. "You've been pretending friendship for him while all the time——"

"I never!" Rafferty protested earnestly. "I never did. Why, when

Dolan went broke in Valparaiso didn't I lend him my——"

"Then if you're friends what are you fighting about?" Both men shuffled uneasily and forbore to answer. Hartman laughed. "You're both sore because you couldn't go with Corrigan and get in on the scrap, and as it's a little too tame for you lying around here, you're starting a private fight all your own. Isn't that so?"

The two Irishmen looked at each other and grinned sheepishly. "It was a little mite quiet," Rafferty admitted.

"Awful quiet," Dolan agreed. "Makes a man fair nervous, it does."

"Well, hold in a little while longer and you may have enough excitement to last a while without beating each other up. Now shake hands."

"Sure thing!" they agreed simultaneously, and gripped right hands.

"Surprised at you fighting before a lady," Hartman continued gravely. "Don't you think an apology is in order?"

Both men flushed guiltily. Rafferty turned to Millie van Ameringe, and bowed stiffly. "I'm beggin' your pardon, miss," he said humbly. "We didn't neither of us go for—for to do anything we shouldn't. We didn't think how it looked to you, miss, beggin' your pardon. I forgot for a minute, an' Dolan he ain't got much sense about them things, never havin'——"

"Here, that's enough!" Hartman interrupted, laughing. "You'll be starting it all over again."

"And you need not beg my pardon, boys," Miss van Ameringe said. "I know that you would fight for me just as quick as fly at each other."

"That we would, miss," Rafferty agreed.

"But you must not batter each other up for nothing, you know," she smiled. "You won't now, will you?"

"No'm," Rafferty agreed humbly. He turned on Dolan. "Hear what the lady said?" he demanded ferociously. "She says for you to cut this foolishness out an' behave yourself. Hear her?"

"Yes'm," Dolan agreed meekly, and the two walked apart and sat together on the ground in strained silence.

"What children those two great, rough men are," the girl said tenderly. "Just like two schoolboys on a picnic."

"They're sailors," Hartman said. "A sailor never really grows up. Hardship and danger and ill treatment and dissipation—all these things break their bodies down, but to the end of their lives they're boys at heart; just careless boys playing at life as boys ashore play at circus or keeping store."

Miss van Ameringe glanced quickly at her father, and sighed. Hartman understood. The old gentleman was as the sailors were, a boy playing at life; a tired, bewildered boy with the handicap of age on his shoulders; a boy who knew but the game of birds and insects, forced to take part in the rude sport of gold-greedy men. And the girl had borne the brunt of all the burdens that a father should carry.

"And what is the end for such as they?" she asked suddenly.

Hartman shrugged. "A knife in a water-front dive, the surf and the rocks on a black night, a falling spar, a boarding sea that tears loose their grip and sweeps them over the side. Some few get master's tickets and the instinct of thrift at the same time, and if those live they save money, marry, and at length settle ashore on some little farm. I have never yet seen a sailor who considered the future at all that didn't want to stop ashore on a farm."

"Peace after the storm," she said pensively. "Mr. Hartman, why do men go to sea when it offers such small reward for such great risk and hardship?"

"Men don't. Boys follow the moon trail out to sea in search of food to satisfy their appetite for adventure. Disillusionment comes, the attempt to reach home again, hard times in many ports and on many ships, and then——"

"What?"

"They become toughened to hardship. The thing they started out to seek is always just over the horizon. When at home they are tortured by the belief that if they had just kept on they would have found it. They leave again in search——"

"In search of what? What is 'it'?"

"They don't know; neither do I. Hunger for adventure, desire to see new sights, experience new sensations—— Whatever it is the boys who started in search of it out over the moon trail have belted the globe from arctic floes to antarctic bergs, and civilization has followed after on the trails they broke and over the ocean lanes which they first sailed. They never find what they seek, but homes and cities rise, phœnixlike, in their wake; and men and women from the crowded countries enjoy a fresher, freer life in new lands. They are servants of posterity—sometimes, I think, slaves—of the future generations they never think of, these unconscious devotees of the moon trail and the rainbow's end."

The girl nodded. "Poor deluded children!" she said sadly. "And did you follow the moon trail out, Mr. Hartman?"

"With a weak lung and a starved body," he admitted a little bitterly. "And now the one is nourished and the other strong. I have been granted a greater reward than most; I came in search of health and I have found it."

"And you will go back?"

"Yes. To further memorize rules of law formulated by men long dead, and squabble with other quibblers in gloomy courtrooms before stupid juries—that understand no more of our mouthings than geese understand poetry—and bored judges that are mere phonographs for the dead to speak through. Back to clients, either the weak and ignorant who run to us for protection from the strong who prey for a livelihood, or the strong who use us—as the rajahs of the East use cheetahs in their hunting—to bag their quarry without danger to themselves. That's what I'm going back to."

"And that is the treasure at the end of your rainbow?"

Hartman looked at her, noting the charming curve of the firm cheek, the glory of her hair, the frank blue eyes, the expression of power in her face blended with the tender leaven of her womanhood, and was filled with a sudden surge of sadness. He had found the treasure at the end of the rainbow—found it to learn that it was not for him. When he did not answer the girl looked up at him and flushed at the expression she saw in his eyes. Hartman leaned forward impulsively. "The treasure at the end——" he began, when he was interrupted by an excited shout from Rafferty.

The mate was looking through the telescope, shouting and waving his free arm. "I knew the cap'n wouldn't never turn back," he yelled at Hartman. "I can see the topmasts of the *Consuelo* stickin' up out o' the fog, an', by Harry, down there's the *Clarinda* makin' for her with a lookout slung to her main topmast. Tell me the cap'n'll be back 'thout no skins? Why, he'll sneak right atop o' Weatherby 'fore ever they see him. Hooray!"

Hartman snatched up the glass, and located both schooners. Trembling with excitement they watched the progress of the *Clarinda* as she bore down on the enemy, first one and then the other using the glass and reporting the relative positions of the two vessels. Rafferty held the glass when the mate went alow.

"They're goin' to it now," he reported. "Mate's gone alow to mix in the scrimmage. Now they're at it, I bet. Wow! I wish I was out there with 'em. The two is right alongside now. Now the *Clarinda's* drawin' away a mite. Wonder what they're up to? Did they board her, I wonder? Oh, but there's sweet fightin' out there, I bet you!"

Suddenly he crouched, and grasped the glass with both hands. He continued to shout, but no one heard him. No glass was needed to see the great column of smoke and flame that rose from out of the fog. A moment, and the dull roar of the explosion came to their ears. The high-flung fragments rained back into the invisibility of the fog, and silence ensued.

"Did—did they blow up the *Consuelo?*" Hartman asked.

Rafferty was shaking and crying. "Gone! All gone!" he wept. "They went up together! Both vessels blown clean to glory, sir."

"Gone! Both gone?" Hartman echoed blankly.

"Gone together, sir, an' likely not a man o' either crew left alive. Both gone. That's what the cap'n had in his mind that he wouldn't tell us. He's blown up Weatherby with the *Consuelo*—an' himself an' the *Clarinda,* too. They're all gone, sir."

"Perhaps—perhaps not," Miss van Ameringe said faintly. "Perhaps they—escaped some way. We can't be sure that——"

"He had it in his mind when he left," Rafferty sobbed. "That's why he was particular to leave the whaleboat an' the divin' gear for us, so's we could get the gold an' get away to the coast after he'd wiped himself out an' all the rest with him. Oh, cap'n, cap'n, I wish you'd 'a' took me along with you! You was a white man, cap'n."

"But maybe he did make some provision for escape," Hartman urged. "He wouldn't deliberately blow up himself and all the men with him. Maybe——"

"Maybe the gang on the *Consuelo* done it," Dolan put in. "Maybe it was an accident."

"They might some of 'em got loose," Rafferty admitted. "The whaleboat! Me an' Dolan'll cruise out an' see if we can pick some of 'em up, sir. They might some of 'em got loose."

"Yes, yes; go!" the girl urged wildly. "Don't wait. They may be dying out there now. And the sharks—the sharks——"

"We'll get 'em," Rafferty shouted. "If they're alive we'll get 'em. Come on, Dolan!"

The two mates started over the hill on the dead run, awaiting no further instructions. Hartman, pale and shaking, walked back and forth, staring out into the fog that veiled the scene of the explosion. The girl sat by her father, her head buried in her arms, weeping softly. The old gentleman, bewildered, childlike, patted her shoulder, alternately murmuring words of encouragement and dread.

The fog rose higher and higher till at last wreaths of mist curled over the hilltop. Night fell. Hartman dared not make a fire. He wrapped the girl and her father in blankets and sat near them. The old man dozed, and Millie wept silently. Hartman felt her fingers on his arm, caught them in his own, and, holding them fast, waited. After a long time her head drooped into the hollow of his arm, her sobs grew weaker, and she slept thus while Hartman held his vigil alone in the dark and fog.

## CHAPTER XII.

Weatherby was in an ill humor as he sat in the stern sheets of the foremost of the two whaleboats full of armed men and diving gear leaving the *Consuelo* in the fog. He drawled a threatening monologue full of profane prophecies of what would happen to every man of the crew from Captain Foss on down if they allowed themselves to be driven from the wreck before they secured the gold.

"I never yet see a sailorman that had real nerve," he declared. "Not nary one of 'em. If I'd had good fightin' men with the nerve o' consumptive cats to stiffen 'em up we'd had that gang ashore cleaned out by this time an' been on our way. Hah! Sailormen! They ain't a one o' you that I'd denominate men. Men! Why, say, I'd guarantee to clean the lot o' you one at a time or come all together. I would that. Why——"

"An' you may have the chance to try it," some one in the following boat, barely visible through the fog, muttered vindictively.

Weatherby whipped out a forty-five, and stood erect, facing aft. "Who said that?" he demanded to know. "Answer me! Who said that? Cap'n Foss, you're in command o' that boat. Who said that?"

"I—I couldn't say for certain," Captain Foss quavered. "It's that foggy an' I wasn't rightly payin' attention, so——"

"Your health'll be a right lot better if you pay some attention," Weatherby asserted. "Whyn't the man that said that speak up an' show himself, huh? 'Cause he's nothin' but a poor sailor, that's why; a sailor, an' in the same breath a low-lived coward, same's I been tellin' you. Sailormen! Huh!"

He seated himself again, facing forward, and menaced the oarsman with his revolver. "Flatten out with them oars, you passel o' thievin' dogs!" he snarled. "Whatever d'you think I'm payin' you men's wages for? Lay to it, I tell you. That's some better."

He slipped the gun back into an arm holster, chuckling softly, and gave his attention to the manufacture of a cigarette. If he was conscious of the evil looks directed at him he took them as a compliment. He had held the crew from the start of the voyage in a grip of half-superstitious fear that his prompt execution of Marshall—after torturing a confession from him—had tightened about their hearts; and he gloried insolently in the terror he was able to inspire.

"We got this fog to work in now, an', hear me, we're goin' to get somethin' for our work this time! Don't take the trouble to run from no bullets that happens to fly to-day, 'cause I'm goin' to see personal to the funeral o' any one o' you that don't stand up to his work."

He continued his threats and boasts while the men pulled sullenly toward shore. He reiterated his statement that no man could get the better of him, and offered as evidence of this the fact that the crew—though armed and hating him—still obeyed his will and forbore to attack him. "You know better'n to try anything on with me, you miserable dogs!" he told them. "You know I'd slaughter the lot o' you. An' I would so."

And they were afraid of this monster with the crossed eyes; afraid as of some superhuman creature. They could have overpowered him by sheer force of numbers, but they were afraid, and, fearing, were impotent. So they bent to their oars without rest until the roar of the explosion halted them.

They sat in terrified silence for a half minute following the great roar, and then broke into a confused babble of conjecture. They could not determine from which direction the sound came, and until the swell caused by the explosion tossed their boats high, they believed that it had occurred on land.

Captain Foss was the first to divine the truth. "They've blowed up my schooner!" he wailed. "I knowed trouble would come of all this devilment. Lay to it, men, an' let's get back."

"Lay to it, an' we'll get ashore, where we started for," Weatherby disagreed with him. "If your schooner's blowed up there's nothin' to go back for, an' if she ain't there's no need o' goin', seein' whatever it was is over an' done."

Captain Foss—reluctantly, but as always—yielded to him. "What ye reckon it might o' been?" he questioned fearfully.

"Might o' been the end o' the world, but I reckon it wasn't," Weatherby replied shortly.

He was far more worried than he cared to admit, and when they reached the wreck he drove the work with curses and threats that did nothing to endear him to the sullen, frightened crew. Both boats were made fast to the stump of the mainmast projecting from the water, and a diver from each went down, looking like mammoth frogs of brass, rubber, and glass as they went over the side.

After twenty minutes both signaled to be hauled up, and when their helmets were removed reported that they had broken through into the transom and located a heavy oak chest which probably contained the treasure. Weatherby was in a perfect fury of avidity. He forgot the mutinous-minded crew, the mysterious explosion, the foe on the island, all save that the gold he sought was at last almost within his grasp. He raved at the divers for their tardiness, and drove them below again before they had fairly rested.

"I know how much there is to an ounce," he told them. "To an ounce, mind you, an' if so be you send it up one ounce short—— Well, you've seen me operate with folks I don't cotton to, an' you know what to expect. I know it to an ounce, mind."

He was fairly dancing with eagerness when the two lead-shod, helmeted men descended the second time, taking with them lines for the hauling up of the metal. He hauled up the first box sent, dropped on his knees in the bottom of the boat, and. mumbling incoherently, splintered the cover with a marlinespike. In the box was gold. Raw gold in coarse dust and rough nuggets. Rich, dull-yellow gold. Weatherby ran his fingers through it, chuckling and muttering to himself. He lifted handfuls of it and let it run back into the box through his fingers, laughing insanely as the yellow shower sprinkled from his hands. He bent above the opened box until his face was almost touching the treasure, and, scooping it up with both hands, gently caressed his features with the rough gold, breathing hoarsely all the while and shaking with the ugly passion of greed.

He hauled up another box, another, and yet more, until ten of them had been salvaged and his boat was appreciably sunk in the water with the weight of the boxes that contained approximately ten thousand dollars each. Then the divers signaled to be drawn up, and Weatherby went into a paroxysm of rage. He danced about in the boat grotesquely, brandishing his guns and shrieking profane execrations at the divers. When the one who was being furnished air from the boat which Weatherby commanded was hauled onto the stern sheets and his helmet unscrewed, the maddened man leaped upon him, and, twining his fingers in his hair, jammed his head against the side of the boat.

"What you comin' up for?" he screeched. "What for? Where's the rest of it? Don't you come none o' your shenanigan on me. Where's the rest of it? The rest of it, I say!"

"That—that's all!" the diver gasped. "Honest, that's all we could——"

Weatherby screamed: "Lie to me an' I'll kill yuh! That ain't the half of it. Get down there an' bring up the rest——"

The startling crack of a rifle and the scald of a bullet that burned his left ear lobe stopped him. The first shot was followed by another and yet more spanging in from out the fog to sea-ward. Captain Foss and one of the crew in his boat were hit and dropped. The diver that Weatherby had threatened groaned, and his head lolled limp on the brass collar of his suit. A round spot over his left eye told the story of his passing. Weatherby at first glance could not discover the foe. Then a dim glow of flame as a rifle spat gave him the location and he could descry a blurred bulk out in the fog at which he fired twice. He dropped to the bottom of the boat on his stomach and covered the terrified oarsmen. "For shore!" he yelled at them. "Pull for shore. Make a move to jump the boat an' I'll kill you sure. Pull!"

Choosing the chance of a bullet from out the fog rather than certainty of death from Weatherby's guns, the men laid to their oars and the boat shot for shore. The men in the other boat jumped overboard, gained the deck of the wreck where it emerged from the water forward of the mainmast, and, scampering affrightedly to the bow, leaped off into the shoal water, and thence gained the beach.

By the time Weatherby's boat had gained the shingle, the firing had stopped. Menaced by his guns, the crew stopped long enough to pick up the boxes of gold, and then, kept in close formation, they scrambled inland through the fog.

The diver in the stern sheets of the deserted boat on the beach lifted his clumsy arms, grimaced, relaxed with a weary sigh, and his life rode from him on the exhaled breath. The other boat drifted idly out beyond the wreck. Captain Foss lay dead. The wounded sailor in the bow was alive, but unconscious, and his life was passing fast. In the stern the other diver struggled frantically to free himself from his encumbering suit. He saw the enemy's boat loom near through the fog.

"Don't shoot!" he called out. "Don't shoot! I give up. They're all gone but me. Don't shoot!"

There was no answer. The boat was being sculled forward by one man standing in the stern manipulating the steering oar. The man was Dolan. In the bottom of the boat lay Rafferty, conscious, calm, and sane, but the victim of a mortal wound given by one of the bullets from Weatherby's gun. The genial, rollicking Dolan was silent and stern. He sculled alongside the boat containing the diver, and stopped.

"Get in here!" he ordered, and the diver clumsily obeyed. Dolan turned the boat around, and silently sculled out to sea until he was out of sight of the wreck. Then he dropped the oar and drew a gun. "Talk fast, an' don't stutter!" he said grimly. "Where's Corrigan?"

"I don't know," the diver protested. "On the level I don't. I do know that I don't want any part of this fight. Weatherby's the whole cheese with our gang, an' glad enough I am to be shut of him. I'd rather fight him than fight for him."

"Well, what do you know?"

Rapidly the diver told his story. Rafferty, sucking in the air in great, hoarse gasps, listened intently. When the diver had done he spoke. "Corrigan's out there somewhere. Cruise for him, Dolan. Keep a-cruisin' for him. He may be out there—somewhere. I'm—I'm through, Dolan."

Dolan knelt by his friend and raised his head. "Did they get you right, boy?"

"I'm through. Cruise around, an'—keep yellin'. You may pick him up."

"We'll get him that done you," Dolan wept. "We'll get him, Jim, boy!"

Rafferty shook convulsively. The spasm passed, and he lay quiet in Dolan's arms. Then: "If you find the cap'n—tell him I come with you—lookin' for him. Tell him he's a white man." His breath rattled in his throat. He opened his eyes, grinned good-by to his friend, and died. The moon trail he had followed had at least led him into the service of a man he was proud to die with or for. It was better than the knife in a drunken brawl or the rocks and the surf on a black night. Winging out, life left a smile of content on the features of the clay temple it had dwelt in on earth.

Dolan went back to his oar, crying softly, steadily. "You with me?" he asked the diver.

"You bet!"

"Grab an oar, an' get busy!"

"Help me out o' this suit."

Dolan did so. The man adjusted an oar, and took his seat. Together they sped the boat with its sad freight out into the fog. Approaching night added to the gloom. As he rowed, Dolan sent his voice across the water into the gathering dark: "Ahoy, Corrigan! Corrigan, ahoy!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

Weatherby was afraid. He sat by his gold in the dark in a rocky clearing three hundred yards up the hillside, whither he had forced the crew to carry it, and knew the pangs of cowardice. It had been pitch dark for two hours. Before night fell he had ordered the men to one side, and after the dark and fog rendered him invisible to them he had stealthily changed his position. If they attacked they would not find him. He waited with drawn guns and hearing strained to catch the slightest sound. He cursed himself for trembling, and trembled the more. And then he knew what made him afraid. It was the utter silence. There were no faint whispers, no sounds of breathing, no shifting of weary bodies, no grating of dislodged stones. He had encamped his men less than fifty yards distant from himself. They would not be so quiet, he thought, without some sinister purpose. Were they planning to attack? Were they even now creeping up on him? If so some one of them would give some warning, he assured himself, make some sound that would give him notice of their approach. He gripped his guns the tighter and waited, more alert than ever.

An hour went by. He longed to call out, but feared to disclose his exact whereabouts by the sound of his voice. Then he made another discovery. One of the elements of his fear was the sense of solitude. He had not the feeling of others near him. As some may feel the presence of another, even though unseen, so Weatherby felt his solitude. He was convinced that there was no one near him. His anxiety to assure himself of this overcame his sense of caution, and he called aloud. There was no answer. He called again, louder, with the same result. Then he rose and shouted at the top of his lungs, again and again.

He thought he heard an answering call, faint and far off. He cupped his hand back of his ear, and listened intently. Again, from far out on the water, the answering call came to him, faint, to be sure, but it seemed to Weatherby that he could detect derision in the unintelligible cry. He guessed, and guessed the truth. The fear-crazed crew had stolen from him under the cover of the darkness, gathered at the whaleboat on the beach, and put out to sea; put out to sea to join the enemy if so be they found him, and if not to pull on for Juan Fernandez and freedom from the tyrant with the horrible eyes.

And Weatherby was alone with his gold. But was he alone? Who beside Corrigan was on the island? What had been the meaning of the explosion in the afternoon? And had not his foolish shouting betrayed his position to the enemy? The darkness was peopled with a thousand hostile eyes that he felt and shrank from, but could not see. Fright cooled his greedy passion, and suddenly he hated the metal he had lusted after. He hated it.

He dared not move in the intense darkness, and he dared not strike a light. At the first hint of dawn he would seek a safe hiding place and then he could plan further. He must hide first; hide from the dark and the eyes that peopled it; hide, hide—— He squatted on his heels, hugging his knees, shivering with the cold damp of the fog and the yet more penetrating chill of fear, and waited for what the dawn might reveal.

The fog and the light air continued until midnight. Then the breeze freshened and it began to rain. The wind rose rapidly until it became a small gale from the southwest. The wind and rain continued until near dawn, when the sky cleared and it fell dead calm.

On the hilltop Hartman, the girl, and her father waited for the light of day, numb with exposure and terror. They had heard the firing on the beach and later on the shouting, and could only guess what it might mean. At the first hint of dawn Hartman was searching the sea with the telescope. As the sun peeped over the eastern horizon he made out a boat fully twenty miles away to the northward, a whaleboat containing eight men pulling away from the island. Some five miles distant from the island he saw a whaleboat floating, bottom up. It must be the *Clarinda's* boat in which Rafferty and Dolan had gone in search of Corrigan, he thought, and his heart sank. He could not know that it was the boat from the *Consuelo* in which Captain Foss and the sailor had died.

The litter of wreckage, widespread over the water, told plainly enough the fate of the two schooners. Hartman lowered the glass, and turned to the girl. "Good news and bad," he said sadly. "The bad is that we're the last of our party. Corrigan, Macklin, Rafferty, Dolan—all gone."

The girl paled and caught her breath sharply, but did not speak. "Some more of the bad is that Weatherby's probably secured the gold and gotten away with it. I can make out a whaleboat out there with eight men in it pulling away to the northward. That, of course, is Weatherby and his crowd; if they were our fellows they would be making for the island. Our boat—the one Dolan and Rafferty went out in—is floating out there bottom up."

"I wish I had gone with them," she murmured. "It's going to be hard to—to live and know that they died on my account. I wish I had gone with them."

Hartman winced. "I know. I feel ashamed to be alive. But we are alive, and what's past is past. And the good part of it all is that we're free of Weatherby. That menace at least is gone."

"I can't realize it all," the girl said dully. "It all seems like a dream or something I have read somewhere. I can't realize it yet. It will be a lifetime fully coming home to me."

Hartman shuddered. "We must not think of it now. Our immediate duty is to live and get away from here some way. We're here on this island alone with no immediate means of escape, and thinking is liable to prove dangerous. It's no kindness to those who have—gone, to torture our minds with the thought of their going. Come, now, be brave, and cheer up. The first thing to do is to get back to camp and dry ourselves out before a good fire. Then we'll plan further for our—outing, shall we call it?"

He tried to smile, and the girl tried to smile back at him, but the tears came in spite of her. "Poor Captain Corrigan," she murmured. "Just a great, wild, hot-hearted Irish boy."

Hartman put up his arm as though to ward off a blow. "Don't," he begged. "He was what Rafferty called him, a 'white man'; he was my good friend, and I was a traitor to him."

The girl shook her head. "You misunderstood him," she contradicted. "That was all, and he knew that that was all."

"He was big," Hartman said a little awesomely. "Big! Come, let's go!"

They descended to the camp, where Hartman built a big fire to dry out their garments. Mr. van Ameringe was in a state of bewildered stupor, and he dropped off to sleep immediately he reached his tent. He appeared to have no definite understanding of what had occurred. Hartman and the girl forced themselves to eat a little bacon and hard-tack, after which she also retired.

Hartman ascended the hill to the meadow where they had spent the night, and again scanned the sea with his telescope. The whaleboat with the eight men was not in sight, but thrusting up over the horizon away to the north and east he made out what he took to be the two masts of a vessel. He rushed back to camp, tore down the tarpaulin that made one of the tents, took an ax and some nails, and hurried back up the hill. He selected a tall oak tree on the crest, and climbing to the tip nailed the tarpaulin to it. Then he stripped away the branches for a distance of ten feet down the trunk so that his flag would be the more conspicuous from the sea.

Thereafter he watched the masts unceasingly, and was thrilled to find that they appeared to be slowly moving in the direction of the island. By noon the deck of the vessel was visible through the telescope, and Hartman's heart grew heavy as he gradually made her out to be a wreck. She was a bark, he decided, and slowly drifting toward the island broadside on. Her mizzenmast was broken off within six feet of the deck. Both her fore and main topgallant and royal masts had carried away, and the sticks he had first seen were the stumpy main and foremasts. He could make out no sign of life aboard. He wakened Miss van Ameringe, and together throughout the day they watched the dismal wreck drifting gradually toward them. As it came closer it became more and more evident that it was deserted. If it continued its course it would pass half a mile or more to the eastward of the island, they decided, and in the afternoon Hartman went down to the *Alfreda* and knocked together a rude raft to paddle out to the wreck in case it should drift near enough to make boarding practical. When night fell the wreck was not more than ten miles distant, and through the telescope Hartman could plainly see the havoc that had been wrought upon her. All her superstructure was gone, and her bulwarks had been smashed away. She was very low in the water, her decks being nearly awash.

Hartman and the girl had taken turns keeping watch on the strange vessel during the day, but had seen no sign of life aboard her. Nevertheless, they decided to keep a signal fire burning throughout the night. Just at sundown Hartman built a great fire before the camp, and then decided to go up the hill and build another there that might be more plainly seen. It was nearly dark when he got his second fire going to suit him, and he started immediately down the hill toward camp.

He had not gone fifty yards through the brush before he heard a stick snap behind him. He whirled with a sudden scream of fright, was dimly conscious of a form bearing down upon him, a shock, an instant of frightful pain in his head, a drop far, far through space—and oblivion swallowed him up.

A dull, all-pervading pain and a frightful sense of suffocation heralded returning consciousness. He was unable to move. By a tremendous effort he forced his eyelids apart, and looked into the fire that he had built before the camp. He was bound—standing—to a near-by tree, laced to it with a rope from elbows to ankles. He realized this much, and then feeling his senses slipping once more, shut his eyes and fought to hold them. A hard hand slapped him a stinging blow on the cheek, and he opened his eyes once more to see Weatherby standing before him.

"Come to, there!" Weatherby snarled. "You've slep' long enough from that wallop I give you with the butt o' my gun. I want you should wake up now an' know what's goin' to happen to you."

The shock of the blow had driven the fog from Hartman's brain. He groaned with horror, and sagged limp in his lashings as he saw Miss van Ameringe and her father across the fire from him bound to trees in the same manner as himself. Weatherby laughed and slapped him on the other cheek. "Thought you was shet o' me, huh?" he sneered. "Figured you had the game all your own way, didn't you? Hah! I reckon mebbe I'll have somethin' to say about how things is run on this island for a spell."

"If you harm us Corrigan will do for you," said Hartman.

"He's dead," Weatherby laughed. "Think I been layin' in the bush all day listenin' to you gab 'thout knowin' the lay o' the land? I got you where I want you, an' I got the gold too, my son. There's a reckonin' above ye, young man—an' plenty o' time for me to attend to it. Nice thing for me to come to see you gallivantin' around all alone with the lady that ought to be my wife. You'll plumb beg for the killin' that's comin' to you afore I'm done with ye, young man. But, as I say, there's plenty o' time. It's right liable to be quiet an' lonesome here, an' I don't aim to have all my fun at once. I lived in the 'Pache country back in Arizona some, an' I learned a few wrinkles from them boys in the early days on how to make the fun last out."

He turned from Hartman, and confronted the girl. "Handsome dog now, ain't he? Wouldn't run away from him if he wanted to marry you, now would you? No. Not like you done from me. I ain't as good lookin' as him right now, that's a fact; but listen to me, sister, I aim to be a lot prettier 'fore long. I do that. I reckon when you take a peek at him after I get done fixin' his face over to suit my taste you'll be right glad to favor me 'stead o' him."

The girl stood rigid, her eyes closed. "Look at me!" Weatherby commanded. "Look at me, I tell you! Won't, huh? I'll learn ye some tricks." He struck her on the mouth with his open palm; then slowly, deliberately, leaned close and kissed her bruised lips.

Hartman went mad at the sight. He strained and tugged at his bonds while the fire, the two bound figures opposite him, and the tall form of Weatherby whirled before his eyes in a phantasmagoria of horror. Mr. van Ameringe babbled weak protests and shed futile tears. The girl threw back her head with a shudder of horror as Weatherby touched her lips. He stepped back from her with a snarling laugh.

"Still uppity, are yuh?" he mocked. "All right, sister. That's the last time I lay a hand to you till you beg me to. I reckon I've bowed the knee to you plenty long enough. Y'ain't no better'n I be, an', believe me, for every time

I've asked you for a kiss I'll make you beg to me a hundred. Lots o' time, sister; lots o' time, but I'll bring you to it."

After Weatherby had cooked and eaten his supper—none of which he offered to his captives—he bade them a mocking good-by.

"Don't git lonesome. I won't be gone for long. I got some heavy yella stuff in boxes hid away down here apiece, an' I'm goin' to lug it up here to look at. Hadn't been minin', huh, sister? Yah! I'll teach ye to lie to me."

"He caught me from behind and took my revolver from me," Millie sobbed when Weatherby had gone. "I had no chance, no chance at all. Oh, Mr. Hartman, I'm so sorry! All the rest, and now you. And I'm to blame for it all. I——"

"Don't!" he begged. "Miss van Ameringe—Millie—he's going to—to do for me. We both know that. Before I go I want to tell you—Millie, I'd be glad to die any kind of death if it would only free you. Before I go—I want to tell you—I love you."

"My poor boy!" she wept. "My poor, poor boy!"

Hartman managed a little laugh. "Strange wooing," he said, with assumed lightness. "And now we're going to hope for the best. 'While there's life——' you know. I'm going to place a bet with myself that we get out of this, after all."

Soon Weatherby returned, bearing one of the boxes of gold. "Here's a part o' my bride's weddin' gift to me," he chuckled to Hartman. "Liberal woman, ain't she? Liberal, but shy, awful shy. They's nine more boxfuls just like this one, son, nine more. Nigh a hundred thousand dollars, I reckon. Nice weddin' gift, ain't it? Yeh! Must love me an awful lot to gimme that much, huh? An' trusts me, too, don't she?"

He departed after more, making ten trips in all, and when at length he had all the boxes piled by the fireside he wrapped himself in a blanket, and lay down alongside his treasure.

"I'll leave you people sleep standin'," he chuckled as he snuggled into his blankets. "Good for ingrowin' pride, sleepin' standin' is. I reckon that's the disease you're all sufferin' from. Sweet dreams, everybody!"

By midnight Miss van Ameringe was moaning deliriously. Her father sagged in his bonds, mercifully unconscious. Hartman tugged and strained at the ropes that bound him, hoping against hope that he might stretch them enough to free a hand. The attempt was useless, but he persevered while the hours of darkness wore on. He felt his sanity slipping from him and was dimly conscious that he was muttering mad nothings as he worked on, but was unable to be silent. Near dawn the girl joined her father in the welcome oblivion of unconsciousness, and even Hartman slept.

Dawn came. Weatherby woke, laughed, stretched himself, and looked out to sea. The derelict rolled on the low swell not a quarter of a mile from shore. Weatherby calculated that it would just clear the eastern end of the island. He yawned lazily, and decided to go aboard. There might be something in her worth salvaging. He tried unsuccessfully to rouse first the girl, her father, and then Hartman. "You'll be all the better for hangin' a while longer, an' you're plumb safe where you be," he muttered. He looked at Hartman and laughed. "Much obliged to you for buildin' that raft for me," he said. "Saves me some trouble."

He descended to the beach, went aboard the *Alfreda*, and, rummaging under the forecastle head, discovered a steering oar. This he rigged to the stern of the raft Hartman had constructed with a bit of half-inch line, and sculled leisurely away toward the wreck, whistling contentedly. He made the raft fast to the bobstays, clambered up on the bowsprit, and leaped onto the forecastle head.

"Well, quite some wreck," he said to himself, surveying the cluttered deck. "Quite some wreck! This here seems my lucky season for pickin' up maverick treasure; I'll just hike aft an' see what's in the cabin."

He walked to the edge of the forecastle head, and leaped down on deck. He screamed as strong arms encircled him from behind and crashed to the deck on his face as burly bodies, rushing out from the gloom under the head, bore him down and held him helpless.

## CHAPTER XIV.

It was night when Corrigan recovered from his stupor. There was a gradually freshening breeze blowing, from what quarter he had no means of knowing. "Any idea how the current sets around this island?" he asked Captain Macklin. The captain had not. "Nice mess," Corrigan grunted. "Come sunup and this fog clears away we'll mostlike just be in nice shooting distance of the island, and Weatherby and his crowd will sit on the beach and pick us off like so many gulls off a floating spar."

"Shut up!" Captain Macklin protested wearily. "My head hurts."

The freshening breeze kicked up a choppy sea that swept the low-lying raft borne down by the weight of the eight men on it, and they all huddled close to the center. Captain Macklin laughed a little crazily. "This sea makes up a mite heavier we won't all of us have to worry about bein' shot in the morning," he predicted. "Some of us'll make nice dessert for the sharks if this breeze keeps on a-growin'."

"Well, we might be worse off," Corrigan said, with mock cheer. "But I can't figure out just how. If she blows enough of a gale to take us out of sight of the island by morning it'll kick up a sea that'll sweep us off, an' if it don't blow hard enough Weatherby and his gang'll shoot us at sunrise. Well, that's the proper time to be shot. That's when they always line 'em up. We'll be shot in style, anyhow."

"You'd josh at your own funeral," Captain Macklin growled.

Corrigan laughed dismally. "I figure that's about what I'm doing now," he admitted. "Listen," he added sharply, and got to his knees. Faint and far away through the dark a call came to his ears. "Somebody hailing," he informed the others.

"May be Weatherby," Macklin warned.

"We can't be no worse off," Corrigan reorted, and sent an answering shout out over the dark waters. Listening intently, he again heard the far, faint hail. "Everybody whoop it up," he urged. "Keep yelling altogether. If it's Weatherby we might as well come to it with him now in the dark as wait till morning, when we'll be better targets. Altogether now—ahoy! Boat ahoy!"

For five minutes they shouted, and then kept silence to listen for the answer. It came, closer and intelligible: "Corrigan, ahoy! Ahoy, Corrigan!"

"Whoever it is they know who they're hailing," Corrigan said grimly. "Friend or foe, here's hoping they find me. Ahoy! Boat ahoy!"

The hailing came from closer, became more clearly intelligible. "Corrigan, ahoy! Ahoy, Corrigan!"

"Ahoy! Corrigan hailing," Corrigan shouted. "Who are you?"

"Ahoy! Dolan, sir. That you, cap'n?"

"Yes, God bless you! Keep a coming," Corrigan shouted back, and the men on the raft set up a cheer. In a few minutes Dolan brought the whaleboat alongside, and the men scrambled into it. Corrigan found Dolan's hand and wrung it hard. "Rafferty?" he inquired.

Dolan choked. "Done for, sir."

He hurriedly told the story of their encounter with Weatherby and of Rafferty's death. "I put a sack o' ballast at his feet an' let him go over the side, sir. He said to tell you that he was a-comin' to look for you, sir, an' that he thought you was a white man, sir, an'—an'—all that, sir."

Corrigan paid him his tribute. "He was a good man," he said, with a gruffness that was but a shield for his real feelings. "Good man! Where's this breeze blowin' from?"

"I can't find the compass, sir. We must o' lost it somehow or 'nother. I can't figure my position nohow. The wind's been shiftin' some, I think, an' I just been cruisin' here and there, tackin' all around, a-hailin' you."

"H'ist your sail and we'll run dead before it," Corrigan ordered. "I don't know where we'll fetch up, but we'll take a chance."

Dolan hoisted the sail. Corrigan took the steering oar, and the boat flew through the water before the rising wind. For an hour and a half Corrigan held her on her course. Then: "Aport! For God's sake, port!" Dolan yelled.

Before Corrigan could throw his weight on the great oar, the boat smashed head on into some solid substance, staving in the bow and opening up the seams the whole length of her. Corrigan was pitched over the side by the force of the impact. He sank, came to the surface, swam a few strokes through the stygian blackness, and his outstretched hand come in contact with what he knew to be the copper sheathing on the stem of a vessel. He reached out with the other hand and caught the bobstays. He knew by the position of the stay that the craft was water-logged. He drew himself up onto the bowsprit, and called out to the others.

Guided by his voice they caught the stay one after the other, and clambered up beside him. When all were accounted for Corrigan made his way to the forecastle head and shouted. There was no answer.

"Fine luck!" he sneered. "We're aboard of a derelict. Of course, we couldn't break up our boat on a craft with steerage way on her and somebody aboard to give us a hand. Not a dry match in the crowd and this hulk so low in the water everythin's flooded. The rest of you can do what you like, but for me I'm going to crawl under this fo'c's'le head and get some sleep. We can't even find out what we're aboard of till daylight."

The rest followed him under the head, where they found some old tarpaulins, on which they laid themselves out to rest. At the first hint of dawn Corrigan was up and inspecting the wreck. There was no land in sight. It was dead calm, and the hulk was floating slowly to the southward, broadside on. The ship carried a cargo of lumber that kept her afloat. On the capstan head Corrigan read her name, the *Harry K. Fox,* of Bath, Maine.

"Caught aback from the look of her," he said to Captain Macklin. "Her deckload shifted and went by the board, and she spit her calking out of her. Crew give her up. Well, where are we?"

"Don't ask me."

"We're makin' better than a knot drift to the south'ard. If we're north of the island we may fetch it. If we're not—— Well, my luck's got worse at every shift, and it can't keep so forever. I'm going to play it out and trust that it will turn. I don't know where I am nor where I'm going, but I'm going to take my ease aboard this craft and see what happens."

About nine o'clock one of the sailors

who had climbed to the maintop halloed down: "Land ho!"

"Where away?" Corrigan asked.

"Right abeam of us to the south'ard, sir."

Corrigan turned to Macklin, and laughed. "Matafuras," he said. "The wind was out of the south, and we made a northing in the whaleboat. We're drifting back slow, but sure. The tide of my luck has turned, and she's a-flooding. I'm going to ride it through." He ordered all hands to keep hidden. "Can't tell who's looking," he said. "There was glasses left on that island, and we can't know who's using them."

When night fell they could plainly see the signal fires lighted by Hartman. "Two of 'em," Corrigan mused. "What does that mean?" He brandished his clenched fist at the distant lights. "My luck's turned, Weatherby," he said softly. "It's turned—and now look out!"

He slept little during the night, and dawn found him peering over the rail intently at the shore but a scant half mile distant. What had happened there since he left? He scarcely dared to think. When Weatherby's form appeared on the beach he knew it instantly from the extraordinary height. When he saw him set off alone on the raft he knew a thrill of savage joy keener than any life had furnished him. At last he had him.

He stationed his men under the forecastle head and ordered absolute silence. He watched Weatherby's approach until he was out of his line of vision alongside, heard the raft bump against the vessel, heard the scrape of Weatherby's boots on the bobstay as he climbed up, the clack of them on the forecastle head; he saw his body as he sprang from the forecastle head to the deck—and then his hungry arms circled the neck of the man he hated so bitterly, and they crashed to the deck together.

Stripped of his weapons, ringed about by grim enemies, helpless, trapped like a bear in a pit, Weatherby rose to his feet and faced Corrigan. He read his death warrant in the Irishman's sea-gray, stormy eyes. Fear shook him to the core of his soul, but pride lent him a mask of bravado to hide his terror. "Reckon yuh almost got nerve enough to look me in the eye with all your gang around yuh an' me clean o' even so much as a penknife," he jeered.

Corrigan wet his lips, and made several efforts to speak before his voice came. "Where's Hartman?"

Weatherby raised his eyebrows and grinned. "Hartman!" he echoed. "Hartman! Now I wonder whoever the dear man can be a-talkin' about? Couldn't be that nice-lookin' young feller I let so much sunlight through only this mornin', now could it? No, couldn't be. An' he couldn' be talkin' o' that pretty young girl that went an' died so untimely just after daylight. No, couldn't be her he's speaking of. Mebbe so he's a-speakin' of her poor old father, him that——"

"You won't talk, eh?" Corrigan interrupted him.

"Talk!" Weatherby echoed in mock surprise. "Talk! Why, I'm doin' the heft o' the talkin', I am. Why, I——"

"That'll be all," Corrigan cut him short. He drew off his shirt, revealing his powerful arms and torso, and handed his knife to Captain Macklin.

"I'm going to kill you with these, Weatherby," he said very quietly, extending his hands in front of him. "I'm going to tackle you barehanded."

"Game man, you are!" Weatherby sneered. "If you're getting the worst of it your gang jumps me. Why should I scrap?"

"Any man steps in and I live I'll kill him."

"What do I get out of it if I do yuh?"

"A bullet where it will do the most good. You're a dead man, Weatherby, and the best you get is a chance to take me with you when you go."

"That's something," Weatherby admitted, and, ripping off his shirt, fell into fighting position.

The difference in physique of the two men as they circled warily on the sun-drenched, battered deck was striking. Corrigan's shoulders and arms were enormous. His sun-browned, weather-toughened neck—large though it was—seemed small in comparison to his great spread of shoulder and his massive chest, and his waist and hips appeared slender. As he crouched, the great, pliant muscles rippled and slid under the smooth, clear, white skin, suggesting deadly power. His wrists were thick, and the large hands short and broad, the palms heavily fleshed.

At first glance Weatherby seemed far inferior. There was little flesh on his long, bony arms, his habitually stooped body seemed scrawny, and the flesh hung loose on his thin neck, loose and dead looking like the skin at the throat of a turkey buzzard. There was no bulge of muscle, but running beneath the swarthy, dusty-looking skin of him, long thews showed like bunches of wire wrapped in thin paper. Across his wrists at the heel of the palm the radiating cords suggested strong wires flaring out from the end of a conduit. His great, bony hands made one think of the talons of a bird of prey.

Weatherby's was the lean, horrible strength of the gorilla, the strength of bone and tendon that dwells in the thin leg of an ostrich; Corrigan's was the massive, driving, smashing power of a lion. And there was in fact little to choose between the two.

Weatherby struck the first blow, lashing out with his long left and catching Corrigan fair on the mouth. He ducked back, avoiding Corrigan's right swing, and danced away untouched. Corrigan crouched and rushed, jabbing his left for the jaw as he went in and following up with a right uppercut. Weatherby blocked the left, but the right caught him flush under the chin and rocked him to his toes. The men clinched, swayed, broke, and stood toe to toe, slugging furiously.

At this game Corrigan excelled, and Weatherby broke ground. Corrigan leaped after the retreating man, took a left jab fair on the mouth, and came to a clinch. They swayed and strained and crashing to the desk together rolled over and over, first one and then the other on top, fighting furiously.

So swift was the fighting that the watchers could not follow it. The two men were a flying tangle of arms, legs, and bodies. Forced apart for an instant by the mutual violence of their efforts, the two gained their feet again for a moment and sparred.

Back and forth, all over the deck, sometimes rolling together, sometimes standing breast to breast and slugging, the two struggled. For twenty minutes the awful battle continued with no sign of weakening on the part of either. Then suddenly Corrigan dove at his antagonist and fastened his fingers at his throat. He drew his chin far down on his chest, hunched his broad shoulders to guard his face as much as possible, and clung to his enemy's throat like a bulldog.

Weatherby made one mighty, convulsive effort, and went altogether limp. Corrigan cried out an unintelligible shout of victory.

Then suddenly there swept through him an involuntary surge of revulsion. Against his conscious will he relaxed his grip. To gratify his hatred in conflict with a strength the equal of his own was savage joy to him; to crush the life out of an unconscious man was coward's work. He tottered to his feet and shrank away from the maimed, prone body, obsessed now by a feeling of loathing.

He staggered to the foremast, and

sagged against it, gasping for breath. "Is—is he dead?" he demanded hoarsely of Captain Macklin. "Tell me! Feel and—see. Is he—dead?"

Weatherby himself gave answer by a convulsive movement of the arms and a moaning intake of breath through his tortured throat.

And Corrigan was glad that the man lived. Weatherby strong, insolent, fighting with savage fury, he could meet and stamp out with a will, but Weatherby beaten, helpless in his hands, he could not strike.

He knelt by Weatherby's side, and aided returning respiration by working his arms. At length the beaten man opened his eyes. Corrigan bent close. "What have you done with Hartman and the girl?" he demanded. "Answer me. What have you done with them?"

"They—all right," Weatherby forced through his bruised throat. "All right. Don't kill me. Don't! They—all right."

Corrigan shook him. "Where?" he asked. "Where are they?"

"At—camp. All right——"

Corrigan rose. "He don't lie now," he said to Captain Macklin. "He says they're all right, and for once in his life he speaks truth." He reeled and caught Macklin's shoulder for support. "A snake like that ought to be killed," he said; "but I'm not the man to do it."

Macklin nodded understandingly. "We'll keep him prisoner, and when we get away turn him over to the authorities at Valparaiso," he suggested.

Corrigan shook his head. "Not that," he disagreed. "I'll leave him to the sea, Mac. Let the sea have him."

"What do you mean?"

"Leave him aboard here. If the sea lets him go—all right. I'll let the sea decide."

Captain Macklin was a sailor, and dimly, instinctively he understood. "All right, Bob," he said gently. "Let's get ashore."

Corrigan nodded. "Go ahead. I'll be with you in a minute."

While Macklin and the crew went over the bow onto the raft, Corrigan knelt by Weatherby and lifted his head. "The gold?" he questioned. "Did you get it?"

"At the—camp," Weatherby whispered painfully. "All there. Every ounce. Honest, I——"

"I ought to kill you like I would a snake, Weatherby," Corrigan cut him short. "But I can't do it. You're free on this derelict, but if you try to leave her while she's in sight of us, I'll shoot you. The sea can have you. I'd kill you if I could—but I can't. I can't do it."

Weatherby rolled over and clawed at Corrigan's ankles as the latter rose to his feet. "Don't leave me—alone," he whimpered. "Don't leave me—alone."

Corrigan kicked himself free of the weak grasp. "Ah, be game," he said scornfully, and, turning, went forward to board the raft. He was at peace. Weatherby's slavish begging had drawn the dregs of hatred from his heart. The man was a whining coward, and he felt for him only contemptuous pity. It was not for him to dignify such a one with his hatred. He slid down the bobstay and dropped onto the raft.

## CHAPTER XV.

When they reached the camp, Hartman was still straining mechanically at his bonds, muttering delirious nothings. He did not recognize his rescuers, and as soon as he was liberated he fainted dead away. The girl was still unconscious, as was her father. Tenderly they laid the three sufferers in blankets and administered stimulants. Corrigan told off the boxes of gold and set Captain Macklin to guard them while he directed the work of restoration.

The girl recovered consciousness first. She inquired faintly after Hartman and her father, and when assured that both were all right she smiled at Corrigan and dropped instantly off into a deep, peaceful sleep.

After two hours Hartman awoke, weak but sane, and bit by bit recounted the story of their adventures after Corrigan had left. Mr. van Ameringe was brought to also, and after partaking of a little broth went off to sleep like a tired child. The horrors he had gone through had left his mind nearly a blank. He had remembrance of only bits of his experience, and those bits faint like the dim memories of a dream.

After Hartman had told his story and like the others gone to sleep, Corrigan and Macklin sat by the gold, planning to build a boat from the wreck of the *Alfreda* and get away to Juan Fernandez. Shortly before noon Corrigan strolled down the hill toward the wreck to pick out the lumber that could be best used for the construction of the small boat. When he came out of the brush on a bare ledge where he could see the wreck, he stopped short with a long-drawn whistle of surprise.

The *Alfreda,* hitherto immersed to the mainmast at low tide, now rode free of the water. The pinnacle of rock on which her crushed stern rested was plainly visible. Corrigan looked along the shore of the island, and at all points the floor of the ocean was visible far out below the normal low-water line. Even as he looked he could see the water line receding yet farther. It was as though some force had pulled a giant stopper from the bottom of the sea and the water was all draining off.

Corrigan's face blanched, and he cupped his hand back of his ear. He could hear the sound he expected, a distant, faint, but mighty roar. His eyes grew wide with awe.

"I left him to the sea," he muttered awesomely. "I left him to the sea."

He looked off to the eastward, where, barely three miles distant, the derelict with Weatherby aboard rolled on the low, sluggish swell. The thrill that belief in a manifestation of some other than an earthly power brings to all mankind tingled through him as he looked at the dismantled hulk that bore the murderer he had so hated. "I left him to the sea," he repeated dazedly. The far, faint, deep sound that he had detected was rapidly becoming more clearly audible. He turned and raced back up the hill toward the camp, calling aloud to Captain Macklin. "Bring the glass!" he shouted to him when he appeared. "Bring the glass! Quick!"

Macklin crouched, put his hand to his ear, and listened. Then he rushed to the camp and soon appeared again bearing the telescope. Corrigan raced along the shoulder of the hill toward the eastern end of the island and Macklin followed. Corrigan gained a high point of rock that commanded a wide view, and stopped. When Macklin reached him Corrigan pointed silently to the wreck of the *Alfreda.*

Captain Macklin saw, swore softly, and nodded comprehension. The distant, deep, diapasonic roar grew momentarily louder, more ominous. Corrigan indicated the derelict, and laughed hysterically. "I left him to the sea!" he cried. "To the sea, Mac!"

Macklin drew a deep breath. "God!" he said prayerfully.

Corrigan's lips twisted in a strange smile. "I wonder if it is?" he queried.

Both men faced again toward the north. The water line was still receding. From the camp they could hear the excited shouts of the sailors. "Is it safe up here?" Macklin queried fearfully.

Corrigan nodded. "Can't come this high. I was in Africa at the time of the big one there. They sure come humming." He took the telescope and trained it on the derelict.

"Ah!" Macklin cried sharply. "That's her."

On the northern horizon, stretching from east to west as far as the eye could reach, a swiftly rising line of white appeared. It was approaching at express-train speed. It was a mighty, rushing wall of water seventy-five feet high, the face of it nearly perpendicular and slightly concave and the top a white façade of swirling foam. It was the dreaded tidal wave that sweeps all in its path to destruction and that only continents may effectually balk.

The dreadful roar of its swift approach numbed the brain. As it neared it appeared to grow in height like to a monstrous jinn of fable rising from the bosom of the sea to mark an ocean-wide path of death and destruction. As it neared the island Captain Macklin involuntarily sat flat on the rock and clutched the rough surface with his fingers. Corrigan remained erect, statuelike, staring through the glass at the distant derelict wallowing peacefully in the path of the onrushing engine of destruction. It broke on the base of the island before it reached the derelict, broke with a roar as of worlds bursting asunder, and charged a hundred yards up the face of the hill, bearing with it a tossing chaos of bowlders and uprooted trees. And on its angered breast the wreck of the *Alfreda* rode to utter destruction, churned to splinters in the fearful flood.

Corrigan did not flinch. He stared through the telescope at the derelict like one hypnotized. He saw Weatherby at the top of the mainmast, frantically binding himself to the spar with a length of small line. The huge, curling wave was within one hundred yards now. High as Weatherby was, the top of the wave was higher. An instant and it had reached the wreck. The great, white crest seemed to hang suspended for the fractional part of an instant, curving over the splintered top of the mast and the murderer lashed thereto, while the hull appeared to Corrigan to be propelled by some mighty force right up the concave face of the rushing wall. Then, as suddenly as the snap of a speedy camera shutter, the derelict was wiped from view, and the wide-speeding engine of destruction roared on its way.

The water rushed back from the hillside, rolled up again in a smaller wave, and again back; so on it went and came with ever-lessening force until it churned at the base of the hill at nearly normal level. The roar of the receding wave, now far off to the south, grew fainter and fainter. In its wake, above the tossing waste of water, from over the northern horizon, a phalanx of rolling black clouds, all laced with veins of lightning, spread swiftly to the zenith.

Macklin rose stiffly to his feet, and cleared his throat. "Storm always follows 'em," he said inanely, monotonously. "Big one, wasn't it?"

"I left him to the sea," Corrigan muttered dazedly. "To the sea." He turned and followed Macklin back toward the camp, stumbling a little as he walked, like an intoxicated man.

The following day both Hartman and Millie van Ameringe were able to walk about, and aside from the fact that both were stiff and so sore from being strapped in an upright position for so long, were but little worse for their experience. Mr. van Ameringe continued to sleep excepting for brief intervals when he partook of a little food. The reaction from the terror and the hardships he had undergone was rapidly erasing from his brain all memory of his discovery of the gold as well as everything that had happened subsequent to it. He imagined himself back in the Andes, and that he had been ill for some time. He recognized neither Corrigan nor Hartman, insisted on their being introduced, and inquired what they were doing back in the mountains.

Hartman kept aloof from the girl. He felt that his presence would be an embarrassment after his confession of love when he believed himself at the point of death, so he purposely avoided her.

On the morning of the third day after the passing of the tidal wave, Corrigan discovered a full-rigged ship off to the northwest. She had sighted the flag that Hartman had nailed to the oak on the hilltop, and was standing in for the island. A mile from shore she hove to and sent off a boat.

Corrigan, watching through the glass as the boat left the ship, slapped his thigh gleefully. "Cap'n McCall, of the *Guy C. Harmon*," he announced. "My luck's holding. Him and me was shipmates years gone, and we've been friends ever since. The man don't live I'd rather see right now."

With Captain Macklin he met Captain McCall on the beach, and soon after brought him to the camp. "He's bound round the Horn from Frisco to Boston with a cargo of wheat," Corrigan announced. "If you and your father would care to take passage with him, Miss van Ameringe, I can tell you that you'd never have nicer treatment than he would give you. I've told him all the story, and I know that you can trust him. You'd best take it."

The girl hesitated. "Well—what are you going to do?" she asked.

"Cap's going to give me one of his longboats and fit me out for the trip to Juan Fernandez. I'll get over there with Cap'n Macklin and the crew and wait for a passage back to Valparaiso."

The girl dug at the ground with one boot toe, studying the same intently the while. A pink flood of color crept up her neck and spread quickly over her face. "What—what's Mr. Hartman—going to do?" she asked, in a quavering voice, without lifting her head. Her shoulders trembled, and she threw one arm across her eyes and ran, sobbing, into her tent.



Corrigan turned on Hartman. "Well?" he drawled scornfully. "Want her to get the parson and the ring and a carriage to take you to the church? You court like my old grandmother drove nails. Can't you even say yes when you've been asked flat?"

Trembling in every muscle, bewildered, filled with a flood of happiness he was yet afraid to feel, Hartman entered the tent, and, kneeling by the side of the prostrate girl, raised her head.

"Millie—is—is it so?" he asked. "Is it——"

Her arms went around his neck; her lips were on his.

His brain awhirl, he gathered her close to his breast. Slowly she unclosed her tear-drenched eyes, and in their blue depths Hartman saw the glory that awaited him at the end of the far moon trail he had traveled.

They were married that afternoon on the poop of the *Harmon* by Captain McCall, who, as master of the ship, was licensed to perform the ceremony. Big Corrigan acted as best man, and when the ceremony was over he caught the bride in the circle of his arm, and, tilting up her small face, laughingly kissed her on the lips.

"I'll give you something to be jealous of, son," he laughed at Hartman. "Did you know your husband was jealous of me back there on the island?" he went on to the girl. She nodded, laughing. "Sure he was," Corrigan continued. "Going to shoot me one day, he was. Guess he thought I was going to grow wings and fly away with you some time when no one was looking. The real trouble was that he was mad because you weren't properly afraid of me."

"I knew better than that," the girl said stoutly.

Corrigan's face grew tender and his eyes misty. "I know you did," he said gently. "I've a hard name that I partly deserve, and the more I deserve it the more I appreciate a good woman's faith in me."

The girl smiled. "Any good woman would have faith in you, Bob Corrigan."

A spasm of pain passed over Corrigan's face. "I believe it," he said sadly. "A white man doesn't do twice what I did once. Well, my boat's waiting, and I know that Cap'n McCall is out for a good passage. I'm going to say good-by, little girl. All the love and luck and happiness in the world to you. You've earned it."

"Good-by, my fine, big captain," Millie said brokenly. "You are a—a—white man."

Corrigan turned and walked to the taffrail with Hartman. "You've got the one real thing there is in life, my boy," he said earnestly. "Don't forget it, for you'll never have the chance to regret it twice. Good luck."

Hartman clung to Corrigan's hand with both his own. "Good-by, Bob, and good luck," he said shakily. "And here—here's hoping you're as happy as I am—some day."

Corrigan looked at him with a twisted smile. "The woman in my brain that I murdered, Hartman, that woman was Love. Only fools marry for aught else, son—good luck."

He swung out on the jigger boom and dropped down a rope to the waiting boat below. The sail was hoisted and the boat stood away to the westward down the broad path of gold that the sinking sun cast across the rolling sea.

Together at the taffrail Hartman and his bride stood silently watching the little boat while the *Harmon* was put on her course and stood away for the long run around the Horn—and home. They stood so while the sun dipped from sight, and where the path of gold had been was a lane of shivery silver from the full moon that rode high in the eastern sky. And in this path of soft light the boat in which Corrigan rode back to the life he knew was a small black speck that diminished and finally disappeared on the far moon trail.

## RATTLING THE FAMILY SKELETONS

JOHN was the uncle, and Seth was the nephew. In the Pennsylvania village where they had their separate abodes, the story was that, in his early youth, John had stolen a yearling. What had become of the yearling, what profit John had secured from the theft, why he had never been reached by the long arm of the law—these were details unexplained by history. The only plain fact was that, in the dear, dead days of long ago, John, the uncle of Seth, had stolen a yearling.

Then came another story. It was that Seth had stolen a watch. Seth, the neighbors declared, had followed in the footsteps of his uncle. He had blighted his life through theft.

Thus the two, uncle and nephew, tried in vain to live down their reputations for ability to pilfer without punishment.

One day John, who had a sense of humor, saw Seth about fifty yards away, and made this thrust at him:

"Say, Seth, what time is it?"

Seth told him.

Said Seth in a high, falsetto voice:

"Time to take that yearling back!"

# The Projectile

By Edwin Balmer

*Author of "Under the 'Orion'," Etc.*

**An American aviator's part in the world's greatest naval battle, when the German fleet attacked the mighty armada of England. It becomes a battle of airships and submarines as well; a trifold action, fought below the water, fought two miles above it, and fought on the surface of the North Sea. The American intended that this adventure should "beat the world," but it was as nothing compared with the deed of a girl who had the other seat in his monoplane.**

"TO-MORROW, probably. Admiralty again has closed North Sea to shipping," read the laconic message left by the man on the motor cycle.

The man with the shotgun on his shoulder, who had received the curt communication, stood on the edge of the Northumberland moor and gazed east to the quiet, green water between England and Germany. It was nearly evening on a day late in the fall; the sun was setting behind the man, and his shadow stretched before him, grotesquely lengthened down the slope of the moor. The ruddy glow showed him another figure on the very edge of the cliff over the sea—a girl who seemed at first to be making for him, but who now hesitated and stood staring over the water as though something there suddenly had attracted her. The man drew powerful glasses from a pocket, and through them searched the sea vainly for sign of a ship, and vainly also peered into the sky for air craft. Screwing down his glasses, he turned them now upon the girl, and realized that she had seen nothing, but was standing in reverie, looking toward Belgium and Germany.

A shadow from behind moved upon the moor, and the man whipped his binoculars back into his pocket, turned swiftly upon the newcomer, and recognized him with relief—an old man, the head gamekeeper.

"Who is that?" the man with the shotgun demanded, motioning toward the girl.

"She, sir? Why, she is Miss Agnes—Miss Dumont!"

"Miss Dumont!"

"The same, sir; engaged to have been married to Major Graill. Yes, that one, Mr. Forbes. His name was on the first list of his regiment's dead in Belgium. He was killed outright in battle."

"I had heard," said the one called Forbes. He was a young man of less than thirty, well built and good looking, with the bearing of a man of much experience in the world; and his present English shooting garb only accentuated the fact that he was an American.

"Yes, sir," the old gamekeeper continued. "She was to be married to him this month. Some say the day was set; it would be to-morrow. He was a fine man, sir, and well liked by soldier and civilian, servant, sir, and gentry. Miss Agnes was much in love and he with her. Oh, they were a match, those two!"

The girl spun suddenly, as if she had heard what was said, though Forbes knew that was impossible; she was a hundred yards away, with the wind blowing from the sea. Forbes pretended to have been staring past her, but she made no pretense at lack of curiosity concerning him. As he stood against the sun, she shaded her eyes, and then moved to one side to see him better, and next advanced directly.

The gamekeeper uncovered as she came up, and the young man tardily did the same. The girl was young, slender, beautiful, with glorious hair and big, steady eyes; but now somehow her bearing suggested little of the feminine. Though all the statues and other representations of the British woman who first led her people against a foreign foe made her at least twice the size of this girl, somehow her manner, the expression of her lips, the proud, determined tilt of her head suddenly made the American think of Boadicea.

A brace of birds, just shot, were in the bag at Forbes' side. Their blood dripped through and stained the grass. He recollected them as the girl's eyes took them in while she estimated him; and he tried, too late, to put them away.

"You are the American known as Stephen Forbes?" she challenged without preliminary and with merely a nod to acknowledge his uncovering.

"Yes."

"What are you doing here?"

He motioned toward the gamekeeper and the moors. "I have taken Lord Merway's preserves for the shooting season."

"You mean to say that you are here only to shoot grouse?"

"Yes, Miss Dumont."

The girl looked at the old gamekeeper. "You may go, Grimes," she dismissed him quietly. The man obeyed instinctively, only glancing toward Forbes as an afterthought.

"All right," the American nodded.

The girl stood quiet, waiting for the old man to withdraw. "I'm afraid that won't do," she said then, motioning to the bloody bag; the tension on her nerves seemed to tighten a little. "The rent here is altogether too high to make shooting birds a profitable proposition, Mr. Forbes. And—well, even an American scarcely would kill for sport in these days; at least not"—she hesitated, and in spite of herself shuddered a little—"not on the shores of the North Sea."

"What do you want to know, then?"

"Whether you are fully aware that simply possessing an aëroplane, unregistered, is a most serious matter at this time and that the smallest penalty for it is confiscation of the machine and imprisonment of the owner; and also whether you fully realize that any one—particularly one desiring to be known by an alias—who makes unauthorized flights may be shot as a spy?"

The American managed to meet her eyes calmly, without evident surprise. "I had heard that. Why do you ask it of me?"

"To let you know that the only conditions under which to-morrow you can use the monoplane hid in the old sheds on Dampton Downs is that you must take me with you, Mr. Bernard Brent."

Her tone and manner indicated no attempt to astonish an admission from him; she had information; it was correct. She had told him the terms of her silence, and she was so sure of acceptance of those terms that she did not wait after her ultimatum. She bowed slightly and passed on.

He stood staring blankly after her. Recollecting the communication which he had crumpled into his pocket, he took it out and reread it and turned toward the shooting lodge, where the wood smoke from the chimney told that his tea was being brewed.

He ate supper alone and thoughtfully. Bernard Brent means but one purpose—indomitable determination to gather and spread news, censorship or no censorship, at no matter what risk or personal peril. The girl's knowledge of his name and his possession of an aëroplane made certain that she knew his plan. His reckless success in getting to the front of the fighting in Belgium had brought him unwelcome notoriety when he had been arrested, brought back, and banished from the Continent.

Both in the armies of the Allies and in the German ranks orders had gone out to shoot him if he appeared again at the front. The odds were too great against him to permit him to rejoin the armies; besides, the battles on land were getting to be an old story, though a million men engaged on each side. Newspaper readers were staggered by the numbers; destruction of army corps had come to mean no more than annihilation of companies, divisions, and battalions had become the same.

But the first great battle on sea would be different; it would tell a definite, comprehensible tale of ships sunk, disabled, captured, towed out of action, the success or failure of the dreadnaughts against the destroyers, the airships, and the submarines. When the British battle fleet should meet the German ships! Then would be the great news story of the war—of all time—worth any risk to tell!

Accordingly, in the guise of an idle American tourist, Brent had leased this Northumberland shooting preserve on the shore of the North Sea; he had smuggled in a monoplane and arranged intelligence to warn him when the great battle might be expected. Flying from his hiding place in the old sheds by the sea, he would dash to the sound of the fleet's guns, and, circling above the battle, get the substance of the great story of his life, the greatest news "beat" of all time. And now, almost at the last moment, this girl who had lost her lover in battle—this strange girl so calm, so assured, so direct—threatened to overturn all his preparations. He must have this base as a start for his flight; he could not now fit another base. But the coast guards were all about, within a moment's call, if the girl gave her alarm. What did the girl want? Merely to fly with him to-morrow? Certainly she had him in her power.

Brent went out on the moors to smoke, reviewing his recollections of her, and found himself strangely puzzled by her, baffled, perplexed. Something was behind her strange approach to him. What?

He started as he saw some one suddenly beside him; then he recognized the old gamekeeper.

"Mr. Forbes, sir, I heard what Miss Agnes said to you, sir, before she sent me off." The old man was apologizing for her. "You must think nothing of it, sir, and not hold it strange against her. The news of Major Graill's death came as a great shock; it's worse with them, sir, as pretend to take it so quiet. But, oh, she has been so strange since then, sir! It may be that Miss Agnes is a bit out of her head. When the news first came, she thought she must go at once to the Continent, sir, as a nurse to take care of some one in place of Major Graill, who was beyond care. Then, sir, something suddenly seemed to decide her different about a week ago. A change came over her, and she's been going about as you saw her to-day, so set and grim and quiet and determined and—well as if waiting for something she was going to do."

"I see, Grimes," Brent said thoughtfully. "I'll not think it strange of her to speak to me as she did. I'll try to understand it." It was about a week before that he got the monoplane to the deserted sheds unknown, he had believed, to any one.

The second warning saying that the great naval battle must begin soon reached Brent at four the next morning. As the dawn was beginning to show in the sky, he slipped from the shooting lodge and toward the old sheds on Dampton Downs. Above, the air was clear; but a little mist hung over the moor, which served to conceal him from any chance glance. The sheds loomed up suddenly before him, and he saw that the doors had been opened. His monoplane was still there, but some one had entered ahead of him and was quietly looking the machine over. The figure was a girl's in aviation garb, with jacket tight over her rounded busts; knickerbockers and puttees bound her legs. Her hair was covered with an aviator's cap; and her deft, slender hands touched and tried bolts, braces, levers with the rapidity of expertness.

He stared at her blankly, mechanically noting a peculiarly individual pattern in the weave of her garb.

"You are starting off now, I suppose," she said to him coolly.

"Yes."

"I am ready. Which seat do you wish for yourself?"

The monoplane was of the military type planned for two persons, and with the controls operated from either seat. Brent had planned once to take a pilot with him to leave himself completely free for observations; but his pilot was in jail yet. The girl seemed to have been aware of his first plan.

"I can pilot competently," she said simply, "if you want your hands for glasses and notes."

There was no question in her mind but that he would take her. Indeed, he realized he could not get away from her without a physical struggle with her. He shrank from that; moreover, if he overcame her now, she had him completely in her power in case no battle was fought this day and he would be obliged to return to wait longer. All she seemed to demand was to accompany him, and if she proved a good pilot she would aid him.

"You know what I mean to do?" he asked her.

She nodded to the North Sea. "Of course."

"The danger to us will be not only——" He related some of the risks to her.

She dismissed them. "I have thought of all that."

"I'll try you!"

Together they brought the monoplane into the open and started the motor. Under the girl's guidance, the machine moved forward, rose in a long, swinging spiral over the land, steered over the sea, dipped and lowered, turned and "banked" swiftly, skillfully, and flew straight east away from England.

"You'll do!" Brent shouted his approval. "Steer for——" He gave her the supposed position of the English fleet.

She nodded without looking around. "I was going there."

He studied her expression and poise; outwardly she was all calm, controlled, almost placid; yet suddenly Brent got the impression from her of a madman about to run amuck. So strong was this upon him that he was about to cry to her to turn back to land, and he put his hand on the duplicate control levers before him; but, with his attention caught ahead, the impulse against her passed. He raised his glasses to his eyes and gave all his observation to the sea below.

For many minutes, flying at top speed, the bright green blotch which was England had been dropping out of sight; the North Sea, smooth and sparkling under the sun, had passed below them empty, undotted by sail and unsullied by streamers of smoke. The admiralty order which closed the North Sea to commercial craft had been enforced; and yet no war vessels had come into sight. Now, however, a smudge of smoke far to the east told of some ship; two smudges, three. They were not approaching the aëroplane, but rather were racing on ahead in the same direction. Brent pointed them out to the girl; already she was feeding more gas to the motors and overtaking the smoke more rapidly.

The ships under the smudges came into sight, three destroyers racing to the east. The men on their decks had observed the monoplane; for Brent made out a crew elevating a gun to aim at him. But others on the vessel seemed to argue against the firing.

The girl guiding the aëroplane removed reason for their argument as to whether the plane might be friendly or hostile. She swerved the machine far to the left and passed by the destroyers. This action drew a shot; but neither of the two in the monoplane paid further attention. More smoke and the scurry of ships ahead told plainly of the presence of a fleet. Ships of all designs and all classes, Brent observed—the great gray dreadnaughts and superdreadnaughts, battle cruisers, scout ships, destroyers, strange, almond-shaped, half-submerged dots moving without smoke—submarines on the surface of the water. Other vessels, which were unturreted and which showed few guns, were the mother ships of sea-planes; and some of their winged litter sighted the strange monoplane flying from the direction of England.

Brent looked to his pilot nervously; she had tilted the steering planes so suddenly that the machine swerved to the right and up and now as suddenly "banked" and dashed to the left and down and then to the right and up again. The airships from the fleet lost interest and swung about.

"What did you do?" Brent called to his pilot.

She made no answer, but steered now steadily ahead; her maneuvers must have been some sort of signal countersign of the allied air forces for that day. The newspaper man studied his companion for an instant; her eyes gazed ahead.

On their level in the air, British and French aëroplanes, which had been scouting somewhere in advance, scurried back; far beyond and a little higher in the air, other planes—faint, glistening dragon-fly forms in the sunlight—appeared, but did not come near. French and English air machines from the fleet returned toward these strangers, and then again swung back. The hostile air craft had not come close enough for any possible attack; but, as Brent now glanced down at the fleet on the sea, a score of the smaller dots had disappeared. The submarines, to conceal their maneuver and their numbers from the German scouts, had sunk.

The entire fleet—the dreadnaughts in column now could be counted as twenty-four in number with threescore destroyers and scout cruisers dashing ahead of them—steamed slowly to the east. And out of the east and a little to the south slowly approaching and maneuvering so that the sun, rising, might be in the eyes of the British gunners, appeared another column of battleships, screened also by its scouts and destroyers, which could be only the German fleet. Equal in power to the British squadrons, the Germans appeared.

Whether the British had offered squadrons which the Germans might match in number or ships in order to tempt the Teutons to battle or how the equality had happened, Brent did not know; but as the fleets showed on the surface of the sea, their forces seemed well matched. The forces below and above them—under the sea surface and in the air—he could not count. He had seen some forty submarines with the English fleet, but another forty or another hundred and forty—if the French submersibles, too, were present—might be hidden below. The constant shift and flit of air craft through the air at all levels made possible only a guess at their number.

A few of the flyers from each side met and skirmished; puffs of smoke below the wings announced rifle fire; two planes together tumbled from the sky; a third dropped and splashed into the sea near them; then the encounter was over. The air craft returned to circle over their own ships, which, as they approached battle, steamed slower and slower.

On both sides this was undoubtedly to maneuver, the English to avoid opposing the sun as well as the enemy, the Germans to try to maintain the advantage of their position; but both fleets held back, Brent knew, for also another reason.

They advanced with less speed than their submarines were capable of when steering completely submerged; ahead of the German battleships, as ahead of the English, the submerged ships were advancing. The first true blows might be struck, not from the air nor from the sea surface, but from below.

The action of the aëroplanes on both sides demonstrated the dread of the assault from below; a few of the planes remained above each fleet and sped about at great heights for scouting and observation; but the others now swooped like flocks of great gulls to the sea and skimmed the surface on watch for the vague bulk of the submersed ships moving below. Bombs, dropped from these planes, burst under water and threw up great white spurts of spray. Once, it seemed to Brent, that a bomb might have found its mark below the water; a greater splotch of white told of an unusual explosion.

But the news man's eyes no longer followed the air craft; the leading battleships of the two fleets had come within range; the roar of a mighty fourteen-inch gun from the first English ship answered the trial shot of the German dreadnaught in the van. The two columns of ships were drawing toward each other on lines like the two strokes of a great, blunt V; the British line had maneuvered to get the enemy out of the eye of the sun, and clouds were coming over the sky and the gray, diffused light offered neither side an advantage.

The leading ship of the English line —the *Iron Duke,* Brent made it out to be—was now in action with all its broadside; the *Kaiser,* the first of the German fleet, engaged it gun for gun. The second dreadnaughts in each column—the *Marlborough* and the *Friederich der Grosse*—also had come into action; shots to try the range puffed from turrets of each; then the cloud of the salvo from the simultaneous fire of all the guns together rose above each ship and shut them off; the breeze—on the surface it seemed blowing lightly from the east over the beams of the battleships—cleared the smoke away swiftly and showed favor to neither side.

For an instant, after each salvo, the powder haze from the German ships shut out the sight of the English from the Prussian gunners, but for the same second the smoke screened the Teuton targets from the British. The third, the fourth, the fifth, the first ten ships in each column had engaged its opposite, and now, as Brent looked down from overhead, he saw the line of battle no longer as a V; on both sides the leading ships had sheered off, and, at something less than six miles, steamed parallel, broadside to broadside, destroying each other with their salvos.

The shock and concussion of the great guns could no longer be separated, nor could Brent tell, when the sounds reached him, from which ship the roars came. Moving north and at the same speed, the battleships staggered on under the shock of their battle. Now, in the farther line, the sixth ship—Brent supposed it to be the *Nassau*—dropped a little behind; its firing did not cease; regularly, three times to the minute, the smoke of its salvo enclouded it and the breeze delivered it to sight again; but its hull or engines had been damaged. It was losing its place in the line, and, as the battleship following it also slowed, the *Nassau* steered aside and dropped behind its battle line which closed and continued as before—but one ship shorter.

Brent stared at the drifting ship to make sure of his recognition to record its disabling as "first blood"; but, as he glanced back to the British line, he saw that it also was one ship shorter; the *Collingwood* had fallen behind. The others passed it and left the two drifting dreadnaughts within battle range of each other, both sinking, both unable to steam or steer, pounding each other to final destruction with their unceasing salvos.

And now the battle was far beyond. Brent, gazing down at the other ships still fighting and steaming on, had forgotten himself and his companion. As he witnessed this terrible, titanic struggle, he had been utterly detached, unconscious of means of his viewing, oblivious of possible danger. He saw the torpedo craft of the English, gathered behind the British battle line, dart suddenly between their dreadnaughts and dash, reckless, headlong, devoted, toward the German fleet. He saw that for the first miles of the wild charge, the Germans seemed to pay them no attention; the great turret guns of the Teuton line roared on regularly in their salvos against the British battleships; the twelve and fourteen-inch guns were not for use against the torpedo flotillas.

But now the small scorpions of the sea had run into range of the German secondary batteries, the torpedo defense. The quick-firers and the machine guns spit from the German decks, clouding their positions in the haze of powder smoke; and the English torpedo craft began to suffer; two together swerved sharply and swung broadside to the German line, riddled, helpless, sinking; the boiler of another burst; the ship broke in two and went down; upon another, a German shell seemed to have found and exploded a torpedo in a tube or in magazine; the whole bow of the tiny craft blew off; two or three others, with their superstructures shot away, were out of control.

But others raced on and on, unhalted, undeterred. Where the lately launched dreadnaughts and the superdreadnaughts of the *Kaiser* class led the German column, the secondary batteries of the battleships had not yet suffered severely from the fire of the English ships of the line; and before the *Kaiser* and its class, the English torpedo attack was failing; but in other parts of the line, German battleships of earlier design opposed more powerful British ships, the *Orion, Monarch, Ajax*.

The German battleships still worked their great turret guns, protected by heavy armor, but the protection of the smaller pieces was crumpled and shot away. Toward these ships the attacking destroyers rushed unscathed; and to protect these battleships, as their plight was known, suddenly the German destroyers sortied from behind the kaiser's battle line. They rushed out to meet the British, quick-firers rattling. A chance, ricocheting English fourteen-inch shell, aimed at a battleship, caught one of the tiny craft, crushed it, and sank it; fire from the

British destroyers stopped others of the Teutons; but the rest of the counter attack came on.

It seemed to Brent as, fascinated, he stared down at the battle through his glasses, that the British destroyers faltered suddenly and were abandoning their charge; then, the next instant, he saw that this was not so; the scorpions had come close enough to use their stings, and they were doing it. Still two miles away from the German line—four thousand yards, or it might be five—they had launched the torpedoes from their bows and delivered them to the water; they swung to bring their beam tubes to bear and add those torpedoes to the first; and now as they swung away their stern tubes discharged their final stings toward the Germans; and the British scorpions—in number half of those who a few instants before had dashed to the attack—fled back to the protection of their battleships, firing their guns that engaged the destroyers of the Germans pursuing.

But Brent no longer held enough consciousness of his work to watch the fleeing and the pursuers. A hundred torpedoes, driven by their motors of compressed air just below the sea surface after being launched from the torpedo boats, were steering automatically toward the German line. Brent stared back to the battleships, his glasses swinging up and down the long column. Now the first torpedoes must be reaching those ships, or passing between them.

What was that? The eighth ship of the Germans—the dreadnaught *Thuringen* or one of its class—suddenly staggers; it may be from the shock of the fourteen-inch shells of the *Centurion* discharged ten seconds before; but, no; the fountain of white spray bursting up at its side tells the story; one torpedo has gone home!

And what is that farther down the kaiser's column? Another torpedo has reached the *Hessen!* No; two together strike that; and now—one scorpion had sent all its stings together—another strikes the *Hessen.* The *Thuringen* is lamed; but still it steams on, it struggles in its place in the battle line, still storming its shells at the *Centurion;* but the *Hessen*—or some ship of its class—is mortally hurt; already it is going down.

Farther back along the German column a ship of the *Mecklenburg* design, hit twice, also is dropping from the battle, sinking more slowly. But the toll of the torpedoes is taken; the other missiles must have passed between the steaming ships; they have missed; and Brent, recollecting, looked back to the battle of the little ships.

During his moment of inattention to the fight of the flotillas, the British destroyers had changed their flight into a retreat; their guns were engaging the German craft; for these no longer merely pursued the English scorpions, but rushed in an attack of their own against the British battleships. The quick-firers of the English dreadnaughts, aided by the machine guns of the retreating destroyers, beat off this counter attack, however.

The Teutons, no less devoted than the Britons, brought some of their scorpion ships into torpedo range; like the English, these ships shot their bow torpedoes, those from their beam tubes and from the stern. But few of the Germans floated to launch their missiles within effective range; an English dreadnaught of the *Orion* class dropped from the fighting column when the torpedoes had been spent; one of the *Hercules* class steered badly and listed; an *Indefatigable* fought its guns more slowly.

Now in the mighty mêlée of the action, individual movement of battle units, attack and its result no longer could be kept clear—the retreat of the German destroyers which had survived and the counter pursuit of the British, the failure of the fire of dreadnaught after dreadnaught as gun silenced gun, the careening and sinking of the riddled hulls, the bursting of torpedoes beside or under ships assailed by the submarines. Brent witnessed it all, close above it, yet apart, as one from another world, immune.

Hardly once since the roar of the first great gun trying the range had he thought of himself or of his companion, the girl piloting beside him. When he thought of her at all, it had been to observe that she, too, was staring down as oblivious of herself. Mechanically, automatically somehow she seemed to steer the plane to keep them circling ever over the battle without consciousness that she was doing anything to follow the movements.

In his passion to see, to realize, to miss nothing, he had tried to quench all feeling for one side or the other, all partisanship which should spoil his great story; and as he looked toward her, he saw no triumph in her face, though, so far as the battle had gone, the British had gained advantage.

Without time for thought to wonder over that, he looked down again to the ships struggling below, and he forgot her. It was no sign from her, nor was it any cry which warned him, it merely was a change in the character of the progress of his aëroplane which made him know that some new element had entered into the battle.

"What is it?" he shouted, turning to her.

She made no reply, but kept her gaze directed ahead; she was looking up into the air now, and Brent followed her eyes.

During the progress of the great struggle on the sea he had observed aëroplanes from both sides dashing about, charging each other, passing over vessels upon which they endeavored to drop bombs; but so far, besides scouting, they had done nothing of importance. Now, reminded of attack through the air, Brent searched the gray under the clouds over the German fleet; and, with a start, suddenly he saw the great, gray, pencil-shaped form of a Zeppelin war dirigible. Smaller forms flitted before and below it, aëroplanes accompanying it on guard. And now a second great pencil, likewise accompanied, appeared; a third.

With tremendous swiftness, driven by their propellers and blown by the breeze which swept over the sea from the east, they came; scarcely a moment after they had appeared, they were imminent, threatening; another moment and they had passed over the broken line of the German ships and were bearing on toward the English.

Six miles still separated the main battle lines, and in less than six minutes the Zeppelins had bridged it. The English on the battleships below saw the coming menace, and their special quick-firers, elevated for aëroplane defense, spit into the air ceaselessly, desperately; but the great airships, charging faster than the wind, bore on and from their platforms below the gas chambers powerful guns fired down macarite shells with a two-mile drop to accelerate the velocity from the smokeless powder.

These terrible shells, aimed first at the center of the English line, attacked the *Superb,* half stripped of protection already by the fire of the *König Albert* in the German column; the first Zeppelin, approaching the *Superb,* rained down its fire, and the stream of shells from above found breaches in the armor, caught a magazine forward, and exploded it, almost simultaneously blew up a magazine aft, and the ship, torn asunder, sank into the sea. The two following dirigibles turned their guns on the great *Marlborough,* as yet little harmed, the strongest in the English column; the first balloon now had slowed and circled and returned to attack the *Thunderer*.

About the great war balloons the German aëroplanes swarmed watchfully, incessantly on guard; and at the advance of the Zeppelins, the British and French air craft also swarmed. But these, as though waiting to witness result upon the dirigibles from the fire of the battleships, merely circled and made no attack.

The shells from the ships of the sea burst harmlessly below the great balloons, above them, and on the sides; the dirigibles, moving with great swiftness and ever altering their elevation, defied estimates for getting their range, while they rained down destruction and death. The *Marlborough*, attacked from above, began to fail in its fight against the *Friederich der Grosse;* the German dreadnaught, suffering less from the shells of the *Marlborough* now, pounded the English ship pitilessly. Now the British dreadnaught was dropping from the action, and the terrible hail from above turned on other vessels. But the allied aëroplanes hesitated no longer.

As the scorpions of the sea had gathered and rushed the great ships of the German battle line, expecting many to fall for the few which would strike, the British air machines gathered now and charged. But the German flyers had learned from the tardiness of the counter attack of their destroyers; and the war planes of the kaiser did not make the same mistake of delay.

Machine for machine, they charged the French and English air flotillas, the rifles of the sharpshooters beside the pilots puffing with smoke. Some of the machines met, wing against wing; others, encountering with propellers, crashed into each other head on and tumbled together to the sea. But the French and English flyers formed the greater swarm; a score of the machines got through and past the German aëroplanes only to be met by the deadly fire of the Zeppelins' machine guns which sent the first of the score after their fallen fellows into the sea. Yet a few survived this fire.

The rifles arming these aëroplanes rattled ceaselessly; their bullets riddled the great gas chambers of the balloons; but the tiny perforations were nothing. In time they must empty the gas compartments, but before that time the guns raining the macarite shells might complete the confusion of the English fleet.

The English and French flyers—those who survived—darted past the Zeppelins and withdrew. Their attack had succeeded and yet accomplished nothing; half the aëroplanes of the Germans were plunged into the sea; but an equal number of the machines of the Allies were gone; the Zeppelins, uninjured, maneuvered above the dreadnaughts and continued their bolts of destruction.

As Brent's consciousness now concerned himself for a space, he realized that the difference in the motion of his machine was more marked; his pilot no longer calmly, quietly circled him away from the danger in the path of the shells and the flights of the fighting air machines; instead, his monoplane had swooped almost to the water, where the shells from the great guns of the German dreadnaughts roared above or ricochetted on the sea, sending great spurts of white spray up beside him; and, as he looked to his pilot for explanation, her eyes flashed at him.

"Jump!" she cried her warning to him before he could realize the change in her. "Into the sea before it is too late!"

"What?" he cried.

"Drop! I brought you down to give you this chance!"

Staring at her eyes, fascinated, Brent felt for the control levers, which duplicated hers, and he tried to pull them;

but she shook her head; and, as he felt the levers, they wabbled uselessly in his hands. She had cut his control and herself alone commanded the aëroplane.

"Drop!" she cried to him again. "For your life, before it's too late!"

He realized now, but still tried to oppose her; he lurched over and attempted to snatch her levers, but she was too quick for him. Letting go of her control, she seized his arm and pulled him, and at the same instant kicked his feet from their rest, overbalancing him. Grabbing her control levers again, she tipped the machine suddenly forward. This toppled him farther as he fumbled for support; she swerved suddenly, banked, and, all clutching hands and kicking feet, he tumbled from the aëroplane, and, turning head over heels, he dropped into the sea.

The impact of the water bruised his face and chest as he struck, but he did not feel the pain as he plunged below. Holding his breath and swimming, he came to the surface, cleared his nostrils, and winked the brine from his eyes. He could not now witness any action of the German ships six miles off across the water; the English vessels, behind him, were merely great, moving bulks screened with smoke from behind which the discharge of the turret guns deafened him. But he could see up into the air above the Zeppelins floating and fighting, their attending aëroplanes clustering about; and he saw the English and French air flotillas flying to the attack again.

They raced into his sight, and once more the kaiser's flyers—but far, far fewer of them in the swarm—swooped to meet the attack; again, as they met, a few from each swarm broke their wings and began falling; and again aëroplanes of the Allies passed through the counter charge and rushed on toward the great balloons, firing. As before, the machine guns from the Zeppelins' platforms spit out their death; the attacking aëroplanes swerved and rushed past.

But, no; not all swerved this time! For, as Brent watched, one monoplane which had passed through the German swarm and which had not fallen at the dirigible's fire still rushed on straight, direct, devoted, absolutely reckless; it crashed into the first giant balloon head on, collapsing the great forward gas chamber, setting it on fire, exploding it, blowing all the mighty war balloon to atoms, and now, driven deep into the tangle of flaming wreckage, it was falling with the broken war balloon down to the sea.

The blazing wreck fell slowly, for the fabric yet unconsumed parachuted and held it in the air. To Brent, swimming below, it seemed that the great battle upon the water had ceased for the moment; at least, he had no sense of anything but the sight of that great, flaming mass falling, falling faster and faster now as more of the fabric burned away and the weight of the bared ribs and silenced guns dragged it down. It had been almost above Brent when it burst, and it seemed to threaten him as it fell; desperately he swam to one side. But the mass was no longer directly over his head; it fell to one side, blazing red and hot; now hissing, splashing, still burning, it plunged into the sea.

Cries of agony from men dying and terribly burned, with great raw wounds washed by salt water—cries of delirium which the unconscious could not control—called Brent to swim beside the wreck, now ceasing to blaze, no longer hissing, sinking lower and lower. A shout from some one still conscious, a charred arm flung toward the sky, sent the swimmer's glance again into the air.

He saw the two remaining dirigibles, floating above, fighting together against another aëroplane attack. The defending screen of the German planes again had been penetrated. Rifles puffed before the assailing machines; but now, as they faced the fire of the Zeppelins' guns, the charging aëroplanes did not swerve. Direct, devoted, undeterred, the planes pulled by the whirring propellers drove into the flanks of the war balloons; explosions of flaming gas again enveloped all; again, as parts of the fabric parachuted, slowly the mighty, burning masses began to fall.

Brent, pawing about the fragments floating on the frame of the destroyed dirigible to which he had swum, picked up a piece of the peculiar cloth which had formed the jacket of the girl who had guided his monoplane.

He still held this when boats from the English auxiliary fleet rescued him, along with survivors from the sunken English ships, after the battle was over.

He calls that piece a part of the projectile which, at the crisis of the world's greatest naval battle—if so you can call an action fought below water and two miles above as well as on the sea—saved the victory and the command of the sea to Britain.

## THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY

THE traveling man, staggering under the weight of two big grips, encountered on the dusty country road an old negro driving a big rawboned horse.

"If you don't give me a lift to the station," said the drummer, "I'll miss my train."

" 'Deed, boss," answered the old man, "I don' know whuthah I can give you no lif' or no. I'se a powahful horse trader, an' I don' know ez I kin manage dis horse. I jes' got him. An' he's a cavalry horse."

"That's all right," retorted the drummer, flinging his luggage into the buggy. "I used to be in the cavalry, and I can manage him."

The traveling man took the reins, braced himself, and shouted: "Attention!" The horse quivered in every fiber. "Charge!" shouted the drummer, and the steed, remembering the old days, tore down the road in a terrific gallop. At the station the drummer shouted: "Halt!" and the horse came to a standstill.

"Humph!" soliloquized the old man. "Cavalry horse! Dis is sho some horse!"

A week later another traveling man, anxious to make the round of the little country stores in the vicinity between trains, asked the old negro if he could make quick time with his horse.

"Ez a makah ob time," said the old man, "dis is some horse. He's a cavalry horse. Git in!"

"Attention!" yelled the negro. The horse quivered. "Charge!" came the second command, and the horse was gone as if he had been shot out of a gun. He ran as if to break his neck, ran so fast that the first scheduled stop was half a mile behind before the drummer attracted the driver's attention.

"Why in thunder don't you stop at the places I tell you?" thundered the salesman.

" 'Deed, boss," shouted the old man above the roar and tumult of flying hoofs, "you'd bettah fin' a sof' place an' jump out. Dis is a cavalry horse, and I done forgot de las' word."

# Split the Wind

By H. G. Van Campen

*Author of "Battlers of the North," "Unraveling Mike," Etc.*

**From the frozen North comes this gay story of sport. Few of us have the opportunity of witnessing a fifty-mile race on the ice! You can read about it here, and reading it you will have all the thrill and excitement that would have been yours had you followed the line of people walking out to the track on the anchor ice, and joined the white men and Eskimos massed about the course. We have had several stories by H. G. Van Campen. If you have read the others there is no need for us to commend this. The Van Campen pen is dipped in realism.**

"NO," said the colonel's niece through an opening so narrow that the supplicant without could not see her face at all. "You can't come in! I hate people who —*Clarence!*"

There was a scuffling of crowding, eager sled dogs; a foot in a hair-seal mukluk held the door that Nanette Lawton tried to shut, and P. C. Berkeley was in the colonel's hall, after the latter had said positively that he shouldn't intrude his useless self upon a girl who was too good for the likes of him! Rosinsky, the colonel's striker, washing dishes in the kitchen, snickered as he heard the door slam and the voices. Aunt Lawton, steaming her complexion, upstairs, remarked to herself that it was a pretty state of things. The colonel must have seen the Berkeley team of Mackenzie River huskies, drawing the lightest and fanciest hickory sled in Nome, go past the office. Maybe the colonel would come up with a guard, and put the fellow off the reserve!

"But I haven't done anything," protested P. C. Berkeley.

"That's why I don't want you around," said Nanette.

He sought the sitting room and the warmth of the Yukon heater. Nanette followed, eying him disdainfully while he hung his elegant land-otter parka over a chair, and put his mitts under the stove to dry. He was lean and lengthy, with a fresh color and clear gray eyes, and a high forehead under thinnish brown hair. His tan flannel shirt and his gray mackinaw suit had been tailored for him in New York. She was of short stature, full-figured, brown-haired, dark-eyed, with a few freckles dotting the pinkness of her round cheeks. A few on her pert nose, too. She wore a plain gown of dull blue, and patent-leather pumps on her small, shapely feet.

"I'd be ashamed to be nothing but rich," she said derisively.

"I could go outside and run a trust company, or that sort of business. You know why I hang along here," said he, sighing.

"Uncle Pat says you've bought out every old sour dough who showed you four willow stakes and a patch of tundra—you even took the same one twice, after the snow was on!"

"Well, a man doesn't need to sell a good placer prospect. He can work it himself."

"You bought a worn-out boiler that'd been on the beach ten years, and claims so far off nobody could find them, though I'd stand that, but I'll always be taunted about the dog race—you going clear across to Siberia for wolf dogs, and then being disgracefully beaten! I thought for once you were really going to do something. Just looking at you makes me very, very angry."

Nanette had eyes that changed with her feelings. They could be soft and warm and sweet; they often snapped; now they spurned the gentleman who said humbly:

"But, Nan, darling, tell me what you want me to do!"

"Stop it! Once more and I'll call Rosky, just as sure as you're sitting there, Mr. Berkeley! Maybe you didn't know he's in the kitchen. Well, he is!"

Rosinsky, at his labors, loyally sloshed and cracked Aunt Lawton's fine china. He was no friend to civilians, whether they worked or idled. Then he coughed, reminding listeners that governmental walls are thin.

"Come and take a ride, won't you? It's hardly snowing at all, and the air's great. I swear I won't aggravate you, and you can drive," said Berkeley, in a whisper.

"No!" cried Nanette fiercely, and Rosinsky coughed growlingly.

"Do you truly mean you've had enough of me, Nanette?"

The dark eyes grew slightly softer at his dejected manner. But she gave no verbal comfort. He stared out of the window, at the steeply peaked roofs of the fort, at the banked snow above the walks, at his dogs rollicking in the snow. P. C. Berkeley was wounded. He was not lazy, nor did he elect to be a loafer. Considering the fashion of his upbringing by several indulgent female relatives, and the amount of money that had been at his command since childhood, he was remarkable. He desired to work, and the many Alaskan guides who had been in his pay on long mushes had reported that he was always doing their work and making them act as tourists. He did not mind hardship, and no one had ever claimed that he complained or shirked. He would split and chop wood, or cheerily pack, all day, a log for the fire in a treeless camp. He went to every stampede, carrying a medicine kit and extra grub, to aid those who found the trail too rough. He cared for his dogs personally. He had learned to cook, and could turn out a fair mess of sour-dough bread.

But Nome's people asked what he was good for, anyway, and why, if he was rich, should he wish to do these things? He had never invested in a property that had value, or made, through money or physical effort, as much as one dollar. When a man had a wildcat to unload, he sold it to Berkeley and exulted, and no one was sorry for the purchaser. Often as he was misled, the rich young man remained interested in the country and the people. It was his second year in Nome. The men grinned when he was mentioned, and the women, if unmarried, or with unattached daughters to provide for, merely smiled tolerantly. There were wonderful possibilities in such a nature as his, for a lady in need of a husband. He was kind and thoughtful, always bringing presents and remembering birthdays, and ordering expensive things from "outside."

The women spoke somewhat harshly of the treatment accorded him by the colonel's pretty niece. They said if she didn't want him, she might let another who did, have him. Between Alaskan posts and adjacent towns there is usually a feeling over one thing or another, although the officers' wives and the town's elect visit back and forth, "my dearing" each other vigorously. To feminine supporters, Nanette's suitor was Mr. Pliny Cyrus Berkeley, as his neat calling cards informed the world, but he had registered at the Golden North Hotel as P. C.—and purchased the Formation Kid's barren claim on Snake River fifteen minutes later. Somebody who saw him signing a check said the initials must stand for Percy Clarence, which robust Nomers known as Bill, Doc, Kid, Sam, or Sven considered names for weaklings. They cut it to P. Clarence later, and even the colonel's family dubbed him with it. The colonel remarked that it was quite suitable to a man of thirty whose hair was so bald in front, with such promise of soon being balder in back. P. Clarence had mildly retorted that ever so many persons were getting bald in their youth in these days. The colonel only sniffed.

"If you could only build something, or discover a new district, or win a big race—yes, a wonderful race! It would reëstablish you. If you only could!" said Nanette, and her tone was too low to include the vigilant Rosky.

"Supposing I did?" asked P. Clarence hopefully.

"Just you do it first!" said she, and the eyes flashed. After a pause she said: "I think you'd better go home, Clarence. Rosky's listening to every word we say, and so's Aunt May, and, honestly, it does irritate me to look at you, drooping over that chair—a great, tall creature, who's absolutely ineffectual! And while we're talking about it, really you can't come any more, at least until the ice breaks and a ship gets through, and people are less grouchy, for it just keeps us all quarreling, and I can't defend a man like you. I'm sorry to sound so mean."

"I—I thought of going to one of the poles, or that sort of thing," said P. Clarence. "Except that it'd take me away."

"Why, everybody's going to them now! That's not original. Do something that people can see—something sensational, *here*. Oh, what's the use wasting breath on you? You're enough to drive one mad! Go home!"

"By George, if I do, I'll stay," he said suddenly. "Not that you'd care!"

"I wouldn't care a bit! Good-by!"

She swept into the dining room, without even asking him to a cup of tea from the samovar that he had presented. He waited, and Aunt Lawton's door opened warily, then shut as he looked up. Stentorian breathing at another door proved Rosky's interest. P. Clarence indignantly put on parka and mitts. Dismissed the service!

He left the Lawton house, harnessing his dogs speedily.

"Mush!" he shouted, and the team sprang ahead, P. Clarence running with them, practiced hand on the gee pole. Through with him, was she? It was her interfering family! He was through, just as much as she, and he wasn't going to the post again, to be lashed by her cruel speeches, beset by her acidulous uncle, bored by Aunt May's stories of how you had chicken every meal in the Philippines. And as for that Rosky, he should have gone into the kitchen and punched the impudent minion!

"No, *gee*—we're not going to town, and I care precious little where we do go," he informed the impatient leader. "Haw! Olaf! Mike! Mush on!"

It was two o'clock of a February day, the crust was hard, and the team wanted to travel. He would go to Sinrock River, where there was a reindeer station that he had never visited. He must do something, many things, to keep his mind from Nanette. He thought wildly that he ought to have kissed her, or thrown his parka about her and borne her off to a minister, who might need to be prompted with a gun—then he laughed bitterly. It was hampering to be a gentleman. And she wouldn't have sat tamely down to life with a husband who had abducted her—no, she'd have set the house on fire and called the army out!

Win something? The All-Alaska Sweepstakes for dog teams had been run, the fencing tournament was over, and people were tired of athletic contests in the big hall at Nome. There was only one event scheduled before the "break-up," when the ships were due. The fifty-mile running race would be decided late in March. He had been chatting with a Swede from Kiana, near the pole, in Dawson's saloon, earlier in the day. The Swede had mushed part of the way with an entrant from Shungnak, the most northerly mining camp. There was an Indian from Herschall Island, and a party from the head of the Koyukuk brought word that a runner was coming from the Chandalar. Fairbanks, Dawson, Sitka, and Seward would be represented. Fort Davis would send Jim Brennan, a sergeant who had a dozen medals in his kit. The post would bet on him. Nanette had informed P. Clarence that no one, anywhere, could beat Brennan, of Company F.

P. Clarence fancied the Sitka man, who had carried the mail through the drifted wastes of the North for many seasons, arriving as nearly on time as snows would let him. P. Clarence began to thrill with an idea. At prep school, in Andover, far to the east, he had won a Marathon. Suppose—but the thrill died out of him. He hadn't run for years. And these men were seasoned, because, winter and summer, they were always going, in a land where feet or boats were the only means of transportation. And it was feet oftener than boats. No—he couldn't even attempt the fifty-mile. She would laugh harder than ever if he did. Over the snow flats went the team, the driver cracking his whip occasionally, while he pondered his woes. Win something—how he wished he might!

## II.

Eskimos who breed reindeer under the governent's wide wing, having reached the pastoral stage, build houses that are like the white man's house, and fill them much as the white man would. In the village on Sinrock River was one large, imposing structure that was the home of the bachelor Ablako, an affluent reindeer rancher. The smallest, poorest house belonged to Ahpuk and her son Emu. Ablako was tall, with a laugh invariably displaying blackened teeth. He was so wealthy that he had several herders in his employ. There was a piano lamp and a sofa upholstered in bright-green velour in his parlor. His house had four rooms—four, for one man! To the herds inherited from his departed parents, Ablako had added more, won in races, and the natural increase was great, the herds doubling every three years.

Ablako intended to wed Lily Sarnak, the handsomest girl along the Bering coast. Lily wore a nugget cross that he had given her, and the shade of his piano lamp was pink, because she liked pink better than other colors. Lily belonged to a family who owned a flourishing herd. In her kitchen was a large cooking range and a sewing machine, and when she had ironed her personal washing, she invariably sprinkled the pile with a barberish scent that was most gratifying to her nostrils. Her parka was elegantly trimmed with wolverine, and her mukluks were edged with the same fur. When Ablako wanted a reindeer to race, he had the pick of his own and of Lily's large herd. He had ample time in the summer to cut grass for winter feeding, and so keep the selected animal fat, and with herders guarding his interests, he could give attention to breaking the racer.

Emu, so poor that his parka was of reindeer without trimming, and his house of but one room, loved Lily Sarnak. Because of this he strove to beat Ablako with inferior reindeer, for the astute Ablako often staked out a reindeer cow, which mated with wild caribou bucks and strengthened the breed. Emu had graduated from the mission a year previous. Mission pupils must guard the school herds while receiving instruction in the reindeer industry and an education. They are paid for herd service in reindeer, and Emu had returned to his people with twenty—his wages and the increase from them. There was his grandmother, his mother, and a young sister with a whitish, blue-eyed baby to support. The sister's husband was vaguely supposed to have gone on a far mush into the Peace River country.

Emu, having been to school and learned of the ways of some white men, did not expect the baby's father to return. It was a nice baby, named Emu for the uncle that was never too weary to carve a toy or hush the small one to sleep. All of the house of Emu were nice-nice but poor. Sister and mother burnished the tin cooking utensils until the baby's solemn face could be seen reflected upon their surfaces. The one room invariably had the look of a place just painstakingly cleansed in every corner. The family's clothes were clean. The snow that was banked about the house, to add to its warmth, was evened neatly at the top, and ice was always chopped away from the doorstep. Ablako's mansion was not as well kept as Emu's hut.

Emu might have plodded on and prospered had the mission teachers told him what to do when he fell in love. It was for Lily that he desperately raced, and lost, his reindeer. For it was not a time for delays, with Ablako taking her treasure of dress patterns, of gay brussels rugs, and of silken waists. Ablako traded with Siberian natives who crossed the Straits, and gave Lily rich furs, while Emu must sell what he found in his traps, and could only give her articles that he carved of fossil ivory—and to an Eskimo girl this was like sending roses to a florist's daughter! And Ablako was tall, while Emu was three and a half feet from the ground. But he was so good to his family, so gentle and thoughtful, that Lily Sarnak often wished Ablako were more like him. She had not as yet definitely told Emu that he was wasting words in wooing a reindeer queen, but others had, and Emu's womenfolk gloomed together over his prospects. When the few deer he had left were slaughtered for food or sale to the Nome butchers, he would have to go far away, to fish for tomcod.

Ahpuk and her deserted daughter had been talking of this all day, talking faster after seeing Lily and Ablako go by, for Ablako stared at Emu's humble shack, then gave his loud laugh. Lily had laughed with him.

"Wait until she gets him, and she won't laugh much," said Ahpuk bitterly, in her own tongue. "I knew his father."

"Husbands are not to be trusted, anyway," said the blue-eyed baby's mother; but Ahpuk retorted:

"My son Emu is the best man in the world!"

The daughter spiritedly asked who had said he wasn't? Twilight came, and snow flurries struck the skin window. Ablako and Lily had glass windows.

"What's that?" asked Ahpuk, and over the gurgle of boiling reindeer meat, they heard the musical clashing of bells. Then the pad of feet, and Emu, breathing loudly, entered, throwing off a light denim parka and crying a greeting to the baby. He handed a package wrapped in hide to his mother, as a voice outside shouted:

"Hello there! Anybody home? This Sinrock?"

P. Clarence held his lead dog by the collar when the door was opened, and Emu answered:

"How'd do—you come to stove, get walm?"

"All right, I'll just go you," said P. Clarence. He hungered for companionship, and the stew had a good smell. There were no chairs, but Ahpuk graciously pulled a skin near the stove, inviting him with a gesture to sit.

"Give me a hand with the team, will you, lad?" asked P. Clarence, and Emu helped him unhook the dogs, examining the teeth of each with care.

"That pine leader you got," said the little man, whose tongue, as with the rest of his tribe, made "l" of "r," and vice versa, "f" for "p," and "p" for "f."

"Like to own him?" queried P. Clarence, grinning as his host's face opened in a smile that made him look like a gargoyle. "And what about this one? Ain't he a beauty?"

Emu opened the resisting mouth of a big dog, and shook his head.

"Him too rong a dog," he observed. "You want see my baby? Come see."

"So Mike's old, is he—and I thought he was pretty near a pup," said P. Clarence sadly. "Stung again, of course! Why, that's a lovely baby, ma'am! May I sit here if I don't get in the way?"

His courtesy charmed Ahpuk, who displayed the blue-eyed baby advantageously. P. Clarence found himself holding the young person, and feeling rather alarmed as a soft hand investigated the hair in the rear of his bald section. The baby worked his otter cap off, which made Emu and the ladies giggle. Then P. Clarence, expanding in the friendly circle, took out his gold cigarette case and cigar cutter, and a fifty-cent piece, which he craftily and secretly slipped down the baby's back. A yelp resulted, and he guiltily passed his charge to Ahpuk.

"I guess I no savvy 'em—but very sweet child!" he exclaimed. Then:

"Say, you breathe very hard—run after reindeer lot?"

"I go Nome to-day," said Emu, whose thick chest rose under deep respirations

"Nome to-day, lad? You mean come back from there? Go from this place yesterday?"

The Eskimo gave P. Clarence his wide smile.

"No, no! Go eight crock to-day, come back now—I do that easy."

P. Clarence got up from his mat, and standing, cried:

"Nome's twenty-seven miles from Sinrock, on the map, and it's fifty-four miles there and return, and you're telling me you made it in eight hours?"

"Stay Nome ha'f hou'—my glandmother sick," said Emu patiently.

"Did you ever do it before? Seven hours and a half! That's the record or better, unless I'm a lot mixed. Now see here—you ever see me before?"

"No—do' know you," said Emu, puzzled. "You deputy? I not do one thing bad. Mission deer all I got. I hones' boy. This my mamma, my sista."

Ahpuk was in obvious terror. The baby on its mat began to wail. What did the tall man with the fine dogs want of them?

"By George, if it's another job on me—I've been had so deuced often," said P. Clarence to himself, as they stared at him. "Still, I didn't say a word to a soul, and I didn't think of it myself even! Look here now, will you take a Bible swear—not really do it, but would you, you know—that you never heard of P. Clarence Berkeley?"

The name was beyond the family's powers. They tried to say it, gazing appealingly at the owner, who next asked:

"What's your name?"

"Emu. White man name me Sfrit the Wind."

"Call you *what?* Say it again! Split the Wind? You did all right, if you made that time! And where'd you ever run?"

The family all told at once, of the races Emu had run when they lived farther to the westward.

"I no lace now, no mo'. Rose all my leindee', Ablako. Now him mally—but nev' mind. No use. I no lace any mo'—goin' fish fo' tomcod."

"Yes, you will, too, race again, Split the Wind," said P. Clarence, with emotion. "You're going to take these two gold twenties, and I'm going to take you away in the morning, and when I'm through training you, there's a bunch around Nome that'll change their minds about P. C. Berkeley!"

Next morning Lily Sarnak, in her best parka, strolled toward the village's smallest house. She desired to know who owned the dog team, and to discover the identity of the white man who, with little Emu, was harnessing the team of Mackenzie River huskies. Lily pushed back the fringe of her hood, showing a patronizing smile to Ahpuk. And Ahpuk cut her! Also Ahpuk was packing sacks that from their labels plainly contained flour and sugar. Lily lingered, despite Ahpuk's hauteur. The white man did not notice the Eskimo beauty, but Emu smiled, although he was too much occupied to see that she had questions to ask. He had never been too busy before, and Lily was disturbed. She had Ablako, of course. Yet, as the team started, with Emu, in underclothes, light parka, and mukluks, running ahead of the dogs, Lily looked after them, wondering. She sat long beside her nickeled cooking range, reflecting. And when Ablako came in without knocking—he had not been taught mission manners, like Emu—she scowled.

An hour later, the dog team approached a road house. Ahead ran the pacemaker, lifting his feet high, his knees rising gracefully toward his chin with each step.

"You've got a great stride, and you're a natural runner, Split!" exulted P. Clarence. "Any man can be taught to run if he has a good constitution and a strong heart, but the natural runners are the record holders, and when we get to town I'll get a trainer for you, though I'll mostly handle you myself."

"But when I lun?" demanded the new employee.

"Split, if I stick to you and make you a lot of money, will you play square with me, and do what I tell you?"

The wide smile came as they shook hands. P. Clarence grinned happily. He looked in the general direction of Fort Davis, muttering:

"I'll show her! And all the rest of 'em, too!"

## III.

Bets were coming by telegraph and cable to the Board of Trade Saloon. The crowd that had skiied in from Kiana to the North had two years' clean-up to bet on Bjoren. Fairbanks men were a unit for Bunchgrass Joe, and Joe declared if he couldn't win he didn't want anything left—not even breakfast money. Nome society was in hot argument over its favorites. The countless Johnsons, in from the creeks until sluicing time, backed Jimmy Johnson, more because he had won the All-Alaska Sweepstakes than from sentiment. Stepan, the Aleut from Herschall Island, had a following. Purdy from Seward had been backed down from thirty to ten to one, and the price on Niemeyer, the Sitka mail carrier, had been forced from fifteen to eight. Such a volume of money had gone on Brennan, of Fort Davis, that he reigned favorite at two to one. Johnson's price was four. Bjoren, of Kiana, was now fifteen, for only his immediate friends supported him. The Aleut remained stationary at thirty. Bunchgrass Joe was ten, and the odds were falling under cables from Fairbanks men, who were lobbying for the opening of the coal lands and the passage of the railroad bill in Washington.

The busiest coal claimant was not so absorbed as to forget the big race in the North. Billy Murphy, of Nome, was entered, and had bet his dredge on the Kuskokwim upon himself, and, stirred by such faith, friends gathered funds, and Murphy's odds fell from forty to twelve in a day.

The floor of the rear room of the Board of Trade Saloon was wet with snow from many feet as Rusty Downing stood on a box set against the wall, calling the odds. Rusty was a long, lean gambler from Missouri, and he liked his job. He began with Brennan, the favorite, and concluded gayly:

"And the longest shot, boys, is Split the Wind, of Nome—you can write your own ticket on him! Split the Wind, a hundred bucks for one!"

Several men were making book on the event, and as Rusty recruited himself by lighting a cigarette and smoking it, some one exclaimed:

"P. Clarence just strung another hundred on the Eskimo! Ain't he a bright kid, though? He thinks he's got a dark horse again, poor slob."

"There's no sin in coppin' Clarence's change. He was simply throwed in here to keep smarter guys from havin' to go to work," said a voice, and during the resultant laugh, P. Clarence bet more money on Split the Wind.

"Well, the books think so well of his judgment that the odds ain't reduced as much as one point since he commenced bettin'," said Rusty Downing, between puffs.

"Jim Galen was tellin' me Clarence has got the boy livin' like a prince, trainin' him on porterhouse steaks, an' actin' as general valet to him. That guy is sure one complete nut!"

P. Clarence partook of a pint of mineral water at the bar and strolled out. There was a crowd in Front Street. The hotels were filled with people from other camps. Sleds owned by the visitors stood outside their stopping places, and countless dogs from strange teams contended with pedestrians for right of way. P. Clarence halted briefly at the Golden North, and to a young fellow who began putting on a full-length caribou parka, at his entrance, he said confidentially:

"Brennan's a hotter favorite than ever, Kelly, and they're taking the money on Split as if it was about the easiest they ever got! How's he feeling?"

"Like a two-year-old!" said young Kelly. "I gave him a breather over the flats a while ago, but I couldn't do it quietlike, Clarence. There was a couple of parties clockin' him, so I told him not to let himself out much, but at that I think you'll find them odds won't be so high after these people get back to town and do some chatterin'."

"I've got enough down now to clean up a bundle," said P. Clarence. "Let's go over to the house and get some grub."

Kicking through sniffing malamutes, which ranged hungrily through the town, they reached a house into which P. Clarence had moved the day after acquiring the Eskimo runner. It had three rooms and a wooden protuberance called the "cache." Anything non-freezable went into the cache.

"Who on earth's in there?" queried P. Clarence, fumbling in his parka for a key. "Doesn't that sound like women talking?"

"It is wimmen! I guess I'll beat it," said Kelly, alarmed, but P. Clarence insisted on Split the Wind's trainer remaining, and with Kelly reluctantly following, P. Clarence walked into his parlor, where four ladies, their furs in soft heaps beside their chairs, were gazing at the dwarfish Eskimo.

"What ho, stranger! We just waltzed in and took possession, as long as you wouldn't ask us to see your new place," cried the handsomest. "Mr. Split the Wind has been host, and he's made us tea. Have some?"

P. Clarence was rather partial to Mrs. Mowbray, wife of a lawyer, and president of the Bridge Club and the Five Hundred Club and the Ladies' Thursday Travel and Study Circle. She was a blonde of dainty coloring, and not averse to flirting a trifle, whether Mr. Mowbray was in sight or not.

"The whole house is yours, and I'm your willing slave," declared P. Clarence, whereat Split the Wind, very smartly clad in a suit of real clothes, instead of overalls and hide shirt, laughed delightedly.

Clarice Mowbray laughed, too, and her blond sister, Virgie Taylor, gave P. Clarence a dazzling glance from bright blue eyes. Lola Joslin got up and poured tea for him, then pursued Kelly into the remote corner into which the latter had shrunk.

"I'll sit by Mr. Kelly, even if he has forgotten my name. I haven't forgotten him, nor how lovely he was when mother and I were going outside, and he gave us his cabin. Wasn't that sweet of him?" appealed the brunet Lola, and while Kelly blushed, her companions cried that it was, indeed.

Mabel Dangerfield had a conquering black eye, and a lisp.

"We gave up our bathket weaving today to vithit you," said Mabel, eying P. Clarence over the rim of her cup.

"The poor boy ought to marry some one, if only to get this house cleaned up decently," said Mrs. Mowbray. "We've been all over it, admiring your ties and clothes, and making faces at the dirt in the kitchen!"

"I crean eve' thing, soon—make nice fo' boss!" said Split the Wind, distressed, and the quartet asked each other if Split wasn't just perfectly darling?

"I'd marry P. C. myself if it wasn't for Arthur. One can't be too informal," said Mrs. Mowbray. "Really now, Clarence, where have you been? Betting?"

"Bet until I'm nearly broke," said P. Clarence. "What's Mowbray doing? And who does your father like, Miss Lola?"

"Why, all Nome's for Brennan, except a very few who are throwing their money away on Murphy," said Mrs. Mowbray. "Brennan'll win. He's training like everything, and the officers have made a tremendous pool. Nan Lawton sold Bessie Towers her ruby bracelet—I hope it wasn't one you gave her, Clarence? And she bet the money on him!"

"Bessie was just crazy for that bracelet, and the rubies are *tiny*," observed Clarice. "And the colonel gave Nan fifty for a potlatch on her birthday, and she bet that as well! Mrs. Lawton's been hanging up her bridge losses for a week—and she's some loser—because she daren't ask the colonel for any more until he has his Brennan winnings. But nobody's paying any one, until the race is over. I've got eighty on Brennan."

"He no win! I win!" said Split the Wind suddenly.

"Eh? Why, *he's* not in it—for mercy's sake?" asked Mrs. Mowbray. "Where would you be with those great long-legged dog punchers, Split?"

"They'd step on him," said Clarice, and she laughed, which hurt the little man, for the Eskimo loves fun, but jeer at him, and he will commit suicide.

"They won't do no steppin' on this little geezer," said Kelly, from his corner, and Split the Wind's luminous brown eyes turned gratefully toward his defender.

It was soon apparent that the ladies had not been aware of the little man's candidacy. They asked a dozen questions, and P. Clarence said proudly:

"Run? Split can tie the whole lot in a knot! He's done the distance from Nome to Sinrock and back in seven and a half hours! Tell that to the folks who think Sergeant Brennan, of Davis, is such a wonder! And you girls had better bet on my kid while he's a long price."

"Oh, Clarence!" wailed Mrs. Mowbray. *"Again?"*

"But he's in right this trip, ma'am," said Kelly stoutly.

The ladies had to look in at Mrs. Regan's bridge party, so they were helped into their furs, declining cakes and candy which Clarence had produced.

"I'd love 'em, but when you have to go home, full of tea yourself, and then cook supper for some one who's starving, it makes you feel so stuffy and awful," admitted Mrs. Mowbray.

"Make Arthur do it," counseled Clarence.

"No, he gets the breakfast, now," said she. "Did you say seven and a half hours, Clarence?"

"Them dames will spread it all over this burg by supper time. You've killed our long odds," lamented Kelly, as the ladies departed, but Clarence said that didn't matter at all. He wasn't going to deceive a lot of women.

He put on his apron and mixed the sponge for his next baking of sourdough bread, while Split stood on a wooden stool and peeled potatoes. Kelly filled the coffeepot, then cut a thick steak from the quarter of beef hanging in the cache.

"I suppose we ought to scrub this shack up a bit," said P. Clarence.

"What do they want to be rubberin' around so for?" demanded Kelly. "If some of these Nome skirts could make biscuits as good as they can play bridge, I wouldn't had so many husbands around my kitchen lookin' for a handout. Leave it be."

"W'ich one you mally?" inquired Split, and P. Clarence blushed as he answered:

"Oh, none of them, Split! They wouldn't have me."

"They got no idea of makin' a home for a man," said Kelly, out of the smoke of the broiling steak. "Now, my Gertie's different. She likes to stick around the house, doin' things, an' if I hadn't been sucker enough to sink all my savin's in a low-grade quartz proposition at Fairbanks, her an' the kid would be right here fixin' this for us. But if we pull this race off, my share'll be plenty so she can come up on the first trip of the *Vic.* Then you can board with us."

"I rather like the idea of having my own place," said P. Clarence wistfully, and he thought of Nanette and her ruby bracelet, which was not of his providing, for she declined any except the simplest attentions. Even the copper samovar had to be given to Aunt Lawton.

He put the sponge in a pail, and opened a can of pineapple, then responded to a knock on the front door, and brought in the three cans of water from Moonlight Springs that was a Nomer's winter allowance of water, unless he melted snow. Kelly said that the steak was ready, and P. Clarence set the tin of potatoes on a plate, while Split carried the coffee, and a pillow that was required to make his chair high enough.

"A couple of big malamutes come near eatin' up Judge Hoggatt's bull terrier in front of the Mum Club to-day," observed Kelly. "And that Miss Lawton from the post was drivin' by, and out she jumps, and tears right into the middle of the fight! She hit one with her dog whip, and dragged at the other, but her and the bull both'd been hurt if some of the mob hadn't saw it and come in a hurry. She's certainly game, but foolish."

"She might have been killed by those great brutes!" said P. Clarence excitedly. He knew how she must have looked, as, dark eyes alight, whip poised to strike, she had gone to rescue the little terrier.

"Where you goin'?" asked Kelly, as his housemate disappeared without excuse.

"I had to write a note," explained P. Clarence, when he emerged from his bedroom. "Just telling a friend not to bet on Brennan—and a couple of other things. The phone's ringing—will you talk, Kelly?"

"It's Al Sullivan," reported Kelly, proceeding: "Hello, Al, this is me talkin'. What do you know about that! Say, that's rich, ain't it? Come on up when you git through, an' bring Harvey along."

"What happened?' queried P. Clarence.

"Why, Art Mowbray blew into the Board of Trade about fifteen minutes ago an' bet five hundred on Split, and they cut the odds to fifty on him, and he hollered so strong that old Colonel Lawton horned in, tellin' him to keep his change, as you never picked a live one yet, and Mowbray got sore and said he had inside dope that you'd been secretly trainin' the kid for months, and was only lettin' on to be a mark, and the colonel come back with a crack about Art bein' daffy. The whole camp is mullin' it over now, I s'pose."

P. Clarence smiled. Nanette had told him to do something sensational, and before he was done she should have no reason for complaint.

## IV.

The day before the race, Kelly handled their entrant, while P. Clarence cooked rice. He boiled it for hours, pouring off a thick liquid, adding more rice, and pouring again, until a large bucket was filled. The house reeked of a liniment that he had mixed from the recipe of a champion runner, and with which Kelly was annointing Split. The little man was glowing.

"I not 'flaid. I beat 'em, boss," Split frequently assured his keepers.

The men who had watched one of the Eskimo's trials had hustled to the Board of Trade, and when they finished betting, the odds chalked on the blackboard were fifteen instead of fifty. But the soldiers and their friends had sent Brennan's price to seven to five. This P. Clarence learned by telephone. He had no time to gad about the town. He wished that Nanette had replied to his note. She might have thanked him, when he was doing all possible to achieve a triumph for her sake. But probably, as usual, she did not believe him capable, although if his man downed the army's colors, she would surely be just enough to dub him something besides her favorite taunt of "ineffectual." It was Split who heard a sled, and notified P. Clarence that a pretty lady was at the door.

"Why, Nan!" he exclaimed gladly. "Will you—dare I ask you in? Your aunt's not along? Then shall I get in the sled, or will you walk?"

"There's only Sergeant Brennan with me, and he'll wait, while you and I walk up the street," said Nanette.

"Brennan?"

"Yes, Brennan! He had the team out, and I made him bring me. Can't he go in and wait in your house?"

"The sergeant will do very well out here, Nan," said P. Clarence. "Split the Wind's in there, and I don't want the boy worried."

It was dusk of a cloudy March day, and he could not glimpse her face when she let the parka hood hide it. Silently she walked inland, toward the bare white flat back of Nome. Dogs came out from the snow porches of the houses they passed. One dog howled, and a hundred more raised their voices in the mournful wolf cry of the North, as Nanette began:

"Oh, a person can't think for their racket! I could just take a stick to every one of them! Clarence, you know perfectly well why I'm here, don't you?"

"Because I wrote you?"

"You say you've got a runner who will win over the fastest in the country, and that you're doing it for me, and what I say is, take him out, and that will be doing more! Will you take him out?"

"But why?"

"We've bet ever so much on Brennan—not that I think any Eskimo can beat Jim Brennan, but the less chances one takes, the better, uncle says, so please take him out. You will, won't you?"

"Your uncle sent you, then?"

"You know he didn't! But that's true, and I want Brennan to win, and he will win! He can beat Johnson."

"He can't beat my Split the Wind," said P. Clarence. He stopped and looked at her. Nanette, feeling a struggle impending, put her hood away from her face. Her pink cheeks and brilliant dark eyes, seen under a street light, set his heart jumping. But he regarded her suspiciously, fearfully, for she withdrew a mittened hand from her white fox muff, held the hand toward him, and said softly:

"You will, won't you? I'd die of shame if that Eskimo won!"

How many times he had yearned to touch that hand! The white mitten curled around the end of his protruding silk muffler, and she cooed:

"Don't you think enough of me to do that?"

"Little Split's got to win, Nanette! He has a whole family to keep, and he wants to marry a girl who's the owner of more reindeer than he ever saw, poor chap, and she's engaged to a fellow with even more reindeer than she owns too——"

"What does he go setting his heart on what he can't have for?" she asked coldly.

"Ah, but I'll make his dream come true! And Joe Kelly can bring his wife here with his winnings—they've got the greatest kid, a little black-eyed rascal! And Nome will have to say at last that I put something over. If I were rotten enough to go back on Split and Kelly, I've got myself to think of! I haven't enjoyed being the goat exactly."

"It would be a noble action if you gave this up and let Brennan win!"

"I don't happen to see it that way," said P. Clarence stiffly.

The mittened hand was jerked away, and Nanette said haughtily:

"We'll win without you doing a single thing! And I will now say good-by *forever!* I was a fool to depend on you!"

"Permit me to see you safely to your sled," said P. Clarence, and his tone was as chill as the night air. But Nanette gave him the merest bob of a bow, and sped into town.

The sled, with Brennan urging on the dogs, went by P. Clarence as he slowly sought his house. Had he given in, he might have hoped to get her some day. But she meant that "forever." The hard glint of her eyes proved it. The wolf dogs, calling to each other, the darkening, starless skies, the white waste of ice that was the frozen Bering Sea, the little houses banked with snow, increased his misery. How lonely he was!

"All right, Nan, it's all over for

keeps, I guess," he thought. "But I wouldn't wish to buy you, girl. I've bought enough gold bricks!"

The Kiana men were very drunk that night. They drank and sang and betted furiously. The backers of Bunchgrass Joe were equally boisterous, and the Sitka mail carrier's supporters were hunting trouble with the backers of Jimmy Johnson. Rusty Downing, at midnight, announced, per the blackboard, that the odds on Split the Wind were four to one. The tip was all over camp. The Chamber of Commerce had proclaimed the date of the race a holiday, and business was to be suspended. The women were making lunches to carry, and a force of men were at work on the track. The clouds made the populace fear snow, and anxious faces peered from windows and doors. P. Clarence, Kelly, and Split stayed in their house, and a sign on the door informed the public that callers could not be received. Split was put to bed at eight o'clock, and Kelly went forth to seek takers for more Split the Wind money, while P. Clarence napped by the sitting-room stove. Outside, dogs howled and roysterers yelled. At midnight, the clouds rolled southward, and dawn came clear and cold.

The temperature was ten degrees above freezing, there was no wind, and a pale sun made the ice field glisten. Only saloons and eating houses were open for custom. White men and Eskimos marched up and down; dog and reindeer teams rushed about. A line of people were walking out to the track on the anchor ice, and massing about the course. Two straightaways of a hundred and fifty yards were roped off, with a short curve at each end. The track was twelve feet in width. There was a small grand stand at one side, reserved for the prominent folk of town and post. The proletariat either stood or sat in their sleds. Trainers, handlers, officials for the race occupied the infield. There was a high score board, and a scorer for each runner. Handlers were already setting up small kitchens in the infield, when Kelly appeared with a basket filled with vacuum bottles, and was greeted by:

"Are they full of blubber, Kel?"

Mrs. Mowbray arrived, crying to Mrs. Albert Rink, wife of Nome's most astute attorney:

"Art's hunting for Albert to ask if he got the answer filed in that suit? There's a quarter of a million involved, you know, dear!"

"Albert says there's half a million in this race," said Mrs. Rink cheerily. "But the judge won't hold court to-day, and when he gets down here they can ask him for an adjournment. What do you like?"

"Nothing to it but Split the Wind," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"Huh! We bet on Johnson!"

Then parties from the post came, preceded by the regimental band, playing a quickstep while traversing the ice plain. There was the lieutenant's wife beside the senior captain who, the colonel's wife claimed, didn't dare give an order until he consulted with Mrs. Lieutenant, and there was the colonel's wife, with Mrs. Lieutenant, snubbed often and well, pretending not to see her. The doctor's wife had bet on Split the Wind, defying her associates, and the colonel's wife regarded Mrs. Doctor's conduct as mutiny. Nanette Lawton had come in a sled with the colonel, who was irked over departmental cables, and fretted about his niece, who had inexplicably begun to sob at the breakfast table.

"It's not about that Clarence fellow, is it? For by George I'll have him put out of the country! Don't cry, darling!" he had exclaimed, and Nanette had said:

"No! I've only got contempt for *him*. I just don't feel good, that's all."

"Then she'd better stay in the house,"

said Aunt Lawton. But Nanette had not stayed.

"Now there's a man with a sensible head on him—getting those vacuum bottles instead of monkeying with an oil stove like the others," said the colonel, brushing a little ice from his mustache. as he indicated the industrious Kelly. "I ought to have had 'em for Brennan. Still, they'll heat ptarmigan breast and coffee for him—that's what he runs on. Where's that Berkeley hiding, I wonder? I don't want him around us!"

The stand was quite filled when P. Clarence, to the music of "What D'ye Mean, You Lost Your Dog?" put a long leg over the rope and faced the throng, with Split wrapped in a blanket in his arms.

"Three cheers for Split the Wind! Split the Wind! Hurray!" screamed Mrs. Mowbray.

Hisses from the army's section replied. Then the army cheered for Sergeant Brennan, entering the infield, solicitously attended by an officer and three privates. Fairbanks men who had wagered their next year's output against Nomers who had mortgaged gold-laden dumps to be washed up in summer, roared a welcome to Bunchgrass Joe when he went under the rope.

"They say Split the Wind's some runner," the miners told each other, and the Kiana men ardently begged those who thought so to back their judgment with cash. Soldiers in heavy brown overcoats pushed against parka-covered prospectors. Jurists and capitalists swapped views with barkeepers and waiters. The runners carded to start stood waiting in overcoats and blankets, while the judges fastened on numbers, which were drawn from a hat.

Number one had first choice of position. There were eleven entries, so that several must start in the second row, but under a handicap of only a yard in fifty miles. Brennan drew one, elected for a position third from the rail, in the front row. Split got six, and the other entrants, all tall, big men beside the Eskimo, willingly gave him the rail, aware of the sharpness of the turns. The starter took out a revolver, and outer coverings were thrown off.

Split was revealed in a black jersey with half sleeves, and running tights, with his number on breast and back. He wore socks and track shoes.

"He's too small to beat any one! Look at his thin legs and arms, and he's just about as high as Brennan's waist. No need of fearing him," said Colonel Lawton disgustedly. "Just what that Clarence would pick out, I'm dashed if it isn't!"

"He's got a great thick chest," said the doctor's wife.

P. Clarence, whispering with his charge, looked into the grand stand once, and saw Nanette in the midst of her circle. Mrs. Mowbray and Virgie Taylor smiled and saluted him, Mrs. Rink and her faction waved their muffs, but Nanette was engrossed in Brennan's kitchen. She had a scarlet band about the sleeve of her white fox parka—and scarlet was the color of Brennan's sash. Split had elected for a pink—the shade of Lily Sarnak's silk dress. As P. Clarence stared, Nanette removed her amber snow glasses and looked directly at him, and there was only scorn in her gaze. Was there no justice in her? He did not notice her after that.

"When I say a number, you see the number on that man's back, and run right behind him, Split," instructed P. Clarence. "Run just like I tell you, see?"

"Yes. I beat 'em," said Split, and he laughed.

"The first man over the tape gets ten thousand dollars, and you'll have every cent for your own."

Split grinned at a sled holding his mother and the sister with the blue-eyed baby. Then a shot sounded, and with a pound of feet upon the ice, they were off!

Bjoren, of Kiana, running in mukluks and thick red underwear, made the pace for the rest, with the Sitka man sprinting after him. Split was fifth, running easily. In the third mile, the field was bunched, passing the judges, and hidden as he was by the forms of his opponents, little Split was not seen by the scorers, and lost a lap. P. Clarence hotly disputed this with the judges, who upheld the dilatory scorers.

"All right! Let it go at that, then! Get over by the score board and show Split to that scorer every time he comes by," P. Clarence ordered, and Kelly bounded off.

"Run, Split, run round one time and catch 'em!"

Split heard this on the next round, and began to sprint, the crowd yelling while he sprinted three laps, and picked up the tail of the field, gradually working through to a place near the leaders.

"He's settled the Eskimo by that trick! Lucky to last ten miles now," groaned Arthur Mowbray, but Mrs. Mowbray screamed:

"Go on, Split! Hurray for Split the Wind!"

"I think it's positively unladylike to be so demonstrative," said Mrs. Lawton, observing Mrs. Mowbray through a lorgnette. "She wants P. Clarence for Virgie Taylor, or she wouldn't make such a fuss."

There were bets that Split would not last the first five miles, but he was still running when a flat-footed dog musher from the Koyukuk, an outsider in the odds, held his aching side for a lap, then crawled through the ropes and quit. One man out, and forty-five miles to go!

"First five in sixty-eight minutes was hustling along, boys. Who wants five hundred to four hundred that Split the Wind lasts twenty-five?"

Colonel Lawton was hurt that his crony, Albert Rink, should espouse the cause of P. Clarence. After a moment of thought, he cried:

"I'll take that bet, Rink!"

"Brennan! Brennan!" bellowed the soldiers, for Brennan was ahead of Bjoren, and Johnson seemed in distress. Split was fifth, the rest straggling in the rear. Trainers gave their men light food and stimulating liquids. P. Clarence refreshed Split with hot rice soup from the bottles, administering it from a vessel with a long spout.

The Chandalar entry, another long shot, gave out after fifteen miles. At twenty, Bunchgrass Joe made a gesture of despair, and limped off, the Fairbanks delegation receiving their winded standard bearer in silence.

"That joltin' motion to the left, when they do the turns, is what's settlin' 'em. Won't many finish," said Rusty Downing, who was a scorer; but Kelly grunted, and grinned, as he saw Split jogging along in the rear of Brennan, Johnson, and the Aleut. The trio were holding their sides. Another mile and the Aleut stumbled, lay panting on the track for a moment, and rolled under the rope. He had enough.

Murphy, of Nome, slowed to a walk after thirty-five miles, and his faction, eating sandwiches and exchanging bottles, sent agents to proffer any, or all, of the bottles to bolster his failing will. But Murphy stopped.

"There goes my dredge," he whispered, and fell to his knees, then pushed himself into the infield.

Split and Brennan were now equal favorites in the betting at nine to ten. Johnson kept up with Brennan, but it was evident that it was taking every ounce he had in him, and when Purdy, of Seward, collapsed, Johnson looked enviously at him.

"All right, kid?" P. Clarence asked, as he sent a squirt of hot rice soup into Split's throat, and the boy said:

"Pine, boss! I beat 'em!"

Suddenly Billy Murphy, many laps behind the others, reappeared and ran weakly around the track.

"Are you hopin' they'll all drop dead, Bill?" a friend inquired, and another observed:

"Well, if they can't last, and he does, that three thousand third money's not so bad, if he didn't win. They don't have to go the full fifty after the first man's in."

But Murphy again quit, and Niemeyer, the mail carrier, went with him. Spectators who had watched for hours stamped their feet and clapped mittened hands, endeavoring to create a little warmth. A wind rose as night came nearer, and the wilting Kiana men, growing more conscious of their lack of sleep, passed bottles with greater frequency, as they yelled to the lagging Bjoren to keep it up.

Forty-six miles traversed, with four to go, and four men left in the race.

P. Clarence felt his reddened nose, and drank some rice soup, then grinned in response to Split, laughing as usual as he went by. P. Clarence felt sure that he had stared a thousand times at Nanette, who resolutely waved a scarlet banner when the post's champion passed the stand.

P. Clarence had decided on his future movements. He would go out over the winter trail, down to Seward with the beaten Purdy. He might be unable to keep from thinking of Nanette, but he would do his regretting in another land. But he had to see Split win to leave Nome as he wished to—with nearly two hundred thousand dollars of Nome money, won in bets. Maybe they wouldn't sneer quite so contemptuously when his name was mentioned.

And there wasn't to be any more of that P. Clarence business, either. His name was Cyrus Pliny, and Nome had best get used to the sound of it. In other words, the worm was so thoroughly turned that it was now rampant. Let her go—heartless, cruel, without any kindness in her, despite the sweet looks she could give when she wished! Split and Kelly were his only friends in the whole place, and he would leave them in such a state of wealth that Nome would marvel. Personally, he did not want the money—he had more than most of them had even seen. He drank again from the spouted rice pot, and caught the red of Nanette's banner as she gave it a final flirt. Brennan was essaying a sprint, and P. Clarence's face hardened as the soldiers yelled:

"Brennan! Brennan!"

Bjoren urged his swollen legs after the sergeant. Johnson followed, his mouth open and breathing distressedly, but livening somewhat under a great chant of:

"Johnson! Johnson!"

"Split the Wind! Split the Wind!" screamed Mrs. Mowbray, and the doctor's wife hoarsely said:

"Oh, why doesn't he go ahead? Split the Wind! Run, run!"

"Bjoren! That's the boy, Nels, don't weaken!"

"A thousand even Bjoren goes the limit!" cried a voice, but another exclaimed:

"Shut up, Bill, you're drunk! They got him wingin' now."

"Thousand dollars on Split the Wind—nine hundred to a thousand, I mean!" shouted Arthur Mowbray, and Albert Rink quietly accepted the bet.

"Split, Split, Split!" called Mrs. Mowbray; adding: "Heavens, I'm frozen!"

Scattered shouts as the men spurted. P. Clarence poured rice soup into Split, and ordered:

"Go behind number one and step on his heels, like I taught you."

The Eskimo still laughed, and he ran as if he had plenty of energy in reserve. Now he let himself out enough to swing in back of Brennan.

"Looka the little swine steppin' on the sarge's heels! Foul! No fair!" squealed an overwrought private, but the miners laughed and applauded as the little man trod on the big man's heels. Then Johnson, with feet blistered, and suffering excruciating pains in his left side, refused the coffee which a handler held out to him, and staggered off. The Johnson men instantly began to bet on Split, offering odds of one to five. But there were few takers. Split ran too well.

"Oh, you P. Clarence! . The kid's a wonder!" shouted one of Split's new backers, and P. Clarence's heart went faster. Wanted him to do something sensational, did she? He was doing it! Bjoren was three laps behind.

"Nels'll make them laps up next year!" joked a Fairbanks man; and the soldiers chanted:

"Brennan! Brennan! That's the boy, Jim—shake him off!"

"Brennan's cursin' the kid—look at his face. Losin' his temper won't help him any."

"That kid botherin' him is just takin' the pep out of him, all right. Split don't mind the turns at all, does he?"

Brennan glared savagely back at his small tormentor. Split held his left side, as the other two were doing, and a howl of joy left the soldiers, until Split calmly removed his hand, winked at the soldier leaning farthest over the rope, and took a turn as if it was a straightaway. Another howl ascended, and P. Clarence hustled across the infield, for a scorer had called that Split was holding his stomach.

"He's kiddin' 'em again—he's all right," said Kelly; and the audience, convinced that this was another jest on the part of the lively little fellow, laughed and yelled his name. As P. Clarence reached a turn, Split came around it, three yards from Brennan. He fell, with a moan.

"Quick—what's matter, Split?" asked his patron.

Split could not speak. He heaved out great breaths, and held his stomach, as P. Clarence laid him on a blanket and began to work over him. In the stand, they asked if he was hurt. Would he go out on the track again? Brennan made another pitiful sprint, and the band crashed into "Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" and at the notes of the regiment's most popular quickstep, Brennan smiled, for the first time since the start. As Split lay gasping in his blanket, a thunderous roar for Brennan went up from the army men. The band stopped, and a bell rang. It was for the start of the last mile. The crowd heard that Split was out, from cramps of the stomach.

"It was your crazy enthusiasm that made me bet six hundred of perfectly good money on him! You've got to give it back to me, too!" wailed Mrs. Mowbray to her husband, and Virgie Taylor weepingly declared it was all P. Clarence's fault. Lola Joslin said she certainly would have taken Brennan if it hadn't been for Mr. Berkeley begging her not to.

"I'm in about eight thousand, and I wish you'd never gone to tea there," said Arthur Mowbray gloomily.

The Lawtons laughed. They could afford merriment. The general sentiment among the backers of Split was that P. Clarence had done them a grievous wrong.

"Seven laps to go!" came the ominous voice of a judge, as Colonel Lawton cried:

"Here, where you going, Nan? Come back, d'ye hear me?"

Nanette had dropped her scarlet banner into his lap, and leaped over the railing of the stand. She fled across the track, and the only person present who failed to see her was P. Clarence, who, race forgotten, was crooning over his ailing Split.

"Clarence, you've got one friend! *I'm* for you, whether they are or not, and I'll give Split the Wind every cent I win on Brennan—poor little sick pet!" said Nanette, with a sob. With a wonderful glow in her dark eyes, she timidly slid a hand against his. And Kelly, with Rusty Downing, and twenty more, all listening and looking!

"No, no—I take him home. He my Emu." Clarence found an agitated Eskimo maid on the other side of Split as he stammered:

"Nan! Do you——"

"Yes, of sourse, silly! And *let* them hear, I don't care!" said Nan superbly, and even Rusty Downing blushed. But Split the Wind was struggling up, and he gurgled:

"Mo' betta, boss. I want—lun!"

"Six laps to go," said the voice through the megaphone.

Brennan and Bjoren, two weary, bowed figures circling the track in the chilly dusk, heard flying feet behind them, and Split went past. Sprinting, after forty-nine miles on the ice! People shouted that he could not do it—that no one could make up four laps at that stage of a race. Four times he scudded around. And he crossed the tape ahead, while the backers of all the runners who had fallen out drowned the soldiers' howl with a tremendous shout of:

*"Splint the Wind wins!"*

Reindeers and dogs rushed over the ice toward the lights of Nome. In the first sled rode P. Clarence and Nanette. Split, wrapped in blankets, was with them. Kelly, debonair under the laughter of his acquaintances, drove Lily Sarnak, while a tall Eskimo man who had come in Lily's handsome sled, walked back alone. Split, facing Lily, constantly waved his hand and grinned widely.

"Oh, Lord, *stop* worrying over Nan!" commanded the colonel, to Aunt Lawton's protests. "She could do a whole lot worse than take a chap who can win a couple of hundred thousand from this bunch! He'll bring her home safe enough!"

## ANOTHER CONVERSATIONAL DIFFICULTY

COLONEL FRANKLIN P. MORGAN, who for several generations has maintained an intercity reputation as a beau, drifted into a box at the race track one afternoon and found himself confronted by the necessity of entertaining a débutante. It looked easy to the colonel, and, after projecting into space several wise and weighty observations on horses, racing, and the placing of bets, he wandered into other paths of talk.

It required only a few minutes for him to decide that the brain power of the blushing young thing was not particularly high. The best he got was monosyllables, and, in his own expressive language, "most of those reminded me of a person walking timidly in the dark." He hazarded a few comments on the society news, the latest styles in hats, futurist art, political scandal, the modern dances, and the old-school courtesy. Still he found himself compelled to do all the talking.

At last, after a long and deadly pause, he turned to her and inquired in an extremely curious tone:

"How do you like 'The Blessed Damozel,' by Rossetti?"

"Oh, that," she replied. "I think I remember it. Is it tango or one-step?"

"I'm not exactly certain," answered the colonel blandly, "but, if she got there in one step, it was the longest on record."

# Spirit

By Harold Titus

*Author of "The Man Who Made 'Em Block," "Business," Etc.*

**At Princeton, for instance, you will hear a great deal about that intangible something which pervades the atmosphere of the little town, which clings to the ivy of Nassau Hall, and thrills even the spectator who listens to the singing on the steps or watches the whirling arms of the cheer leader on the football field. It is not peculiar to Princeton; every college has it in greater or less degree. It is *spirit*. Not every undergraduate catches this spirit. In the story by Titus there is a very diligent student to whom the campus is a commonplace lawn; the college walls no more than the walls of an office building. One day the astounding thing happens—astounding to him—he understands what spirit means.**

HE walked apart from the crowd—yet it rubbed his shoulders and jostled him, its clatter of tongues and scuffling of feet made a sea of sound through which he waded. Down the wide, elm-lined street it swarmed, so dense and so oblivious to the natural purposes of the thoroughfare that a trolley car stood on a corner, the motorman idly hanging from a vestibule door, waiting for the regiments to hurry past. Colors, gaudy and flashing in the dull autumnal gray, were everywhere; draped from buildings, borne by stalwart men, worn by beautiful women. Bright-eyed expectancy was there, too, finding vent in a shrill clatter—breathless, incoherent, interrupted by nervous laughter, bubbling in a meaningless manner, still with a decided theme. And confidence was there, youthful, blatant, unreasoning confidence—Spirit!

With none of it could David Thornton mingle. After a peculiar process of thought he had purchased an arm band and wore it on the sleeve of his shoddy overcoat. Somehow, the color had no lightening effect; his appearance was unrelievedly sodden. He could no more be expectant than he could appear festive. It would all be the same, he knew. He had seen the big game three times before, had gone to it, and taken his place on the bleachers religiously, as though attending a rite that bored him, rather than witnessing a wild-eyed battle of brain and brawn on the gridiron below. He could not enthuse over the prospect, and even as he walked—bodily in the crowd—his mind revolved about the lecture on a distinguished French philosopher which he had heard earlier in the day.

As for confidence: all the confidence that throbbed within David Thornton was that of a fulfilled duty. He always felt as though every one should attend the big game. The contest over, he would go back to his room, regulate the gaslight, adjust the eye shade, open his book, and hump over a study table. It was his only recourse. Because he was alone. The spirit was not there.

Over the brow of a steep little hill, quickening its pace and taking on the semblance of rapids, poured the crowd. At the bottom it veered a bit to the right, became more compact, and pushed its way through great gates. Even in that crush Thornton was not of the whole. The gatekeeper, it seemed, snatched at his ticket as though the little man with round spectacles had no right to be there.

On the giant bleachers were the same elements again: the color of pennants, ribbons and crysanthemums, and womens' gowns; the enthusiastic expectancy of the thousands; the confidence—the spirit!

David read the line-up in his program perfunctorily. One of the men on the varsity was in a history class with him, bright fellow, but strange. The two were far removed. Their points of view were as the two poles. Not only that, either; it seemed as though the football player had the point of view of the student body, while Thornton had only the outlook of Thornton. So he had nothing in common with the eleven—not even a personal interest.

The red of the bleachers became obliterated by the blanket of humans that swarmed to their seats. Down there below them, the smooth green, streaked regularly by immaculate white; the goal posts, wrapped in bright colors—it was all so clean and precise and peaceful; no suggestion of a struggle about it. Then through an end gate came the front rank of the band. A wild yell went up, purpose descended upon the place, and a fellow in a white sweater trotted down the edge of the gridiron, trailing a huge megaphone.

"Now, everybody!" he bellowed through it. "Nine for the band!"

Everybody joined in the nine, short, snappy, confident, brutish bellows, full of the lust for battle. That is, everybody except David Thornton cheered. He smiled a peculiar little smile. It was all the same, that cheering. He had never done it. He never remarked on the fact to himself, either. It did not seem natural for him to give way to such animalism, nor did he feel impelled to do so. That combination of facts was sufficient. He kept his mouth in the grim line and let the others cheer.

The four trombones in the front rank were elevated to four respective mouths. The snare drum beat its rat-ta-tat-tat, the cymbal fell with a crash, and into the triumphant march, filled with its chromatics, alive with fervor, they blared. A mighty shout went up from the thousands and rolled away over the high tiers of seats, off into the quiet country.

The roaring slumped to nothingness. At the far end of the field huddled a group of men, great, yellow letters flaring from the chests of their dark sweaters. They were bareheaded, in outlandish clothes. For an instant they stood by the gate, warming their hands in their bulky jerseys. Then they broke and ran, parallel with the seats.

A sullen roar, deep-chested and meaningless, rippled through the crowd. It grew, became pregnant with import, losing its sullenness and taking on wild triumph, joy. The team! Spirit! How they screamed as the lumbering, husky varsity raced down the cinder path that bordered the gridiron!

With an abrupt, mechanical sweep attention went to the other end of the green rectangle. It was another huddle of men. In red jerseys, these, with red stockings, black leather helmets low over their ears. They ran out in a compact mass, shoulder to shoulder, knees snapping up and shooting down like things of rigid metal, heads low. It seemed as though they must be growling and snarling like dogs.

From the opposite stands came another yelp, but smaller by far, for the supporters of the visitors were fewer.

They charged through the signal work, both elevens. The kickers sent the yellow ovals spinning through great spans of space. The captains consulted in the middle of the field. The red legs scattered over one end of the gridiron; the home varsity lined up across the center. A hush. The thin piping of a whistle. A player, running forward with short, hesitating steps, slammed his heavy boot against the poised ball. It soared.

Like loosed dogs, the cries crackled from the throats of the thousands. Tense of posture, vibrant, wide-eyed, the screeching rooters arose to their feet as a unit. The grip of the game, the *big* game, was on them. They were molded and welded, joined inseparably by the great passion. The great spirit!

David Thornton sat calmly through it all. By and by he, too, arose, for he could not see sitting down, with all those standing about him. He wiped his glasses in a matter-of-fact way, buttoned the throat of his overcoat, glanced curiously at the shouting youth beside him, and settled down to watch the game. No tumultuous spirit surged within him. He, alone in all that horde, was not under the spell.

Thornton had never seemed to fit, anyhow. His had always been a life apart, out of joint with the scheme of things. As a youngster, his weak little body and puny limbs prevented him from adjusting himself properly into the life of the large Thornton family. He could not play with the boys, so he was thrust among the pigtailed little girls. In the district school he was out of place because, in an owllike way, he took the meager lessons seriously. Later, when he went to the town high school, he was left alone because he was not considered proper material for any of the secret societies that flourished there. True, others were outsiders, beyond the social pale, but they were not the sort to furnish inspiration or comfort for one another.

And this inability to fit in with the scheme of things followed the boy through the toiling, hoarding years before he dared enter the university. He was alone with his books, with only himself for company, becoming more warped, more hopeless, as month followed month. Still, he did not realize; there was no consciousness of it with him. All, he thought, was success: the upward climb to financial ability, to study, the way things came to him from great minds, the physical environs of his living—all such was well with him. Something, he knew, was lacking in his life, a great something. He sought it, looking for emancipation from the condition in books, digging, prying into the mysteries of knowledge and, by those tactics, being farther and farther removed from the thing he really sought, the thing he needed: common interest with others.

When the sophomores, in astute glee, waged humiliating war upon the first-year men, David Thornton was overlooked. When the student body crammed University Hall for mass meetings, Thornton was unable to work his way through the press of bodies. When his class held a smoker, Thornton was not there; and he was not missed. When he had studied at night until the chimes in the library tower tolled the longest hours, he often wandered down to Tut's—that big room of mirrors, bare tables, wheat cakes, and camaraderie. The crowd came around from the *Daily* office, settling in the hard chairs and talking in an opinionated, familiar way of things close to the heart of the university, yet strange to the ears of Thornton. He was always alone there, while all the others were together. Now and then a familiar face was in the room—the face of a classmate, perhaps the man that sat next him—but only at rare intervals did David's presence draw so much as a nod; never a word. The little, dumpy old lady waitress, with the black-bowed spectacles and puffy lips that were always on the verge of an embarrassed smile, had no flutter of recognition for him, although she knew exactly what scores of students would order to eat in the easy hours of the night.

Athletics filled a small, peculiar part in his life. He felt, somehow, that they occupied a decidedly particular niche in university affairs, yet he could not name it. The games themselves did not interest him. He could not understand the ins and outs of them. He liked best the field events in the spring. He liked, above all, to watch the pole vaulters go up and up and up, raising the bar hands' breadths at first, then inches, then mere fractions of inches. *That* fascinated him because he had gone up and up and up in just that patient, plodding way. But the rest: well, he never had interest in it. Each autumn he gravely walked into the office of the athletic association and reserved his seat for the big game. It was the only one of the season that he attended, and he did so because the infection that made the campus universally heedless of any other interest permeated even his life to that extent.

The big games were always the same to him, though. Three of them he saw, on three successive November Saturdays, and each year it was the same screeching, the same insane joy that he could not fathom. The score rolled up for the varsity in precisely the same way, and, to him, the opposed elevens went through the identical evolutions year after year.

He did not see why the young men of the university became so violent over the outcomes, when they were always the same. It was the attraction of the ordinary, the commonplace, and he did not understand. The game ended, they remained on the stands for one short, sharp cheer, and then, like an avalanche, swept to the ground and made their crazy way up the hill, past the campus, filling the town with their bonfires and ear-splitting revel. The racket at night disturbed his studying. Had victory been anything unusual, he might have been able to see some reason for the demonstration, but as victory was the rule, he could not comprehend.

This year he expected the same thing. He watched the soaring ball plump into the arms of a red-stockinged player; saw the knot of stooping, determined men gather closely about the runner, watched them shoot forward at an angle, saw others hurl themselves on the compact interference, and saw them tossed aside as the ball advanced, yard after yard, across white line after white line, until it was well toward the point from which it had been kicked. It was all meaningless to him, as were the wild entreaties, the oaths, that battered the drums of his ears.

David tried, as he always tried, to distinguish the words that made up the yells, but could not. Rhythm was all he could detect; the rest was a meaningless jumble. The game went on, the cheer leaders worked relentlessly, the voices of the wild undergraduates and unbalanced alumni became husky, but still they cried on to their warriors.

"Good Lord, this is *awful!*"

David glanced at the speaker, whose voice, filled with awe, came to him during a lull in the game. The fellow was pale, with set jaw, and, after he spoke, he swallowed with an evident effort.

The whistles piped again, the two elevens crouched; sprang, lithe, snarling, into the fray. The home varsity was thrown back once more; it had been thrown back many times since that first kick-off; the bleachers roared their plea again and again:

"Ho-o-o-ld 'em, varsity!"

The line-up, the crash, the upheaval, the slow yielding, and the quick fling backward! Closer and closer upon the goal the strangers worked the oval. Slowly, bit by bit, they gained new territory; always, *always* it progressed; there was no such thing as retrogression. Nothing availed to stem the advance.

The new note in the bleachers' bellowing suddenly became clear to David Thornton. It was terror! Those thousands of young fellows who roared and pleaded and flung their arms about him were afraid! What the great fear was, why it came, whence it came, he was unable to understand. Then he realized, with a thrill of horror, that the fear seemed to be creeping through *him!* He could feel it in his spine. It made his thighs ache queerly, as though numbed by a plunge into icy water.

David wiped his glasses again and glanced nervously about. It was raining a trifle, and he shook his shoulders to throw the ill-fitting overcoat closer about his neck, and something bound one sleeve. He looked down. It was the arm band he had purchased that day. A tingle went through him as he saw the dark letter on the bright field—the emblem of the university!

It was a groan that died into a sob, a sob from twenty thousand throats. David saw the heap of men untangle. They were at the far end of the field, and on the big score board flashed a figure, dead white, accusing. It indicated the score, the first trophy of the visitors!

The intermission between halves was exasperating. An occasional flake of wet, heavy snow came down with the fine rain, and a chill wind sprang up. The cheer leaders could not provoke the bleachers to action.

But when the teams appeared on the field again, a vicious, snarling shout arose. It was crammed with deadly determination. The rigid postures of the men about David became more tense, spoken words became more abrupt, with more of an irritable snap. There was no let-up to the roaring. It was a different spirit, a horrid spirit with gigantic strength. It was desperation!

"This is the half! *Our* half!" cried a thin-voiced boy as the hush of the kick-off fell.

But it was not, could not be. Outplayed, outpunted, outtackled, outblocked, outgeneraled, the home team went down and down and down! It had held during the first half, held to a single touchdown, but now—even in the face of desperate, heroic fighting, it was utter rout! Disorganized, disrupted, swept from its feet by the vicious advances of a vastly superior machine, played into a state of numbness, the varsity was twisted about the fingers of its opposition and shunted up and down the field; touchdown after touchdown was scored, and the grim visitors merely made their gains longer as the strength ebbed from the overpowered machine before them. The great, hulking captain, all-American the year before, massive, a name to be conjured with among followers of football, was led from the game, battered, bruised, weak as a child physically, nervous as a woman. He cried aloud, and his huge, unpadded shoulders shook with the racking emotion. Another player reeled to the side lines, one shoulder drooping deeply.

Through his megaphone the cheer leader cried:

"Nine for him—all o' you! He's played the game with a broken shoulder!"

And the beaten backers roared their sobbing cheer for the modern gladiator who, broken of body, pierced by excruciating pain, had played on and on, upheld solely by—the spirit!

The total rolled up and up. The handful of rooters that had followed the visiting eleven danced delirious delight, urging their score-mad heroes on to greater achievements. Here and there on the home bleachers, a man stood and swore aimlessly, without object. Faces were white, lips compressed; voices were unable to carry.

A man waving a handkerchief ran out from the side lines, and the whistle he held between his teeth cut the air like a knife. At its call, the crouching players lost their alertness. The home team trailed for the gate silently, with hung heads, lagging feet, and heaving chests. The others, leaping, shrieking, running here and there, were swallowed up by the company of rooters that swarmed from the visitors' bleachers over the fence to the trodden arena.

About David Thornton settled a thick silence. He started to move. *They* always did when the game was over; always *had* moved, at least. Now it was different, somehow, and he stopped, wondering, enthralled by that new feeling! He did not become impatient to get back to his room and his books! Strange!

The band walked out onto the field and formed slowly, facing the bleachers. The hiss of falling rain was heard. Here and there hats came off. The movement became general, and a sea of bared heads met the downcoming storm. The wave of the leader's baton, the deepening hush, and then into the slow rhythm, the sweet theme of the university hymn, went the musicians. The voices joined—the thousands. They were shaking, tear-filled, but they swelled to a brave, sane, serious chorus. Out there in the rain and the snow, drenched, chilled by the cutting wind, while the other rooters serpentined about the gridiron and stripped the colors from the goal posts, they sang through the anthem.

When it was finished, they remained standing. Not a man moved. The frolicking victors stopped and watched, awed. The band leader, white and drawn, looked upward at the cliff of faces, and turned back to his musicians. He waved his arm, and into the opening bars the cornets cried. Once more they sang it through, sometimes wavering under the intense emotion, threatening to give way entirely, but always recovering, always going on. The spirit indomitable!

David Thornton had never learned the words to the hymn. He had no idea of the text, even. But he opened his throat and made unintelligible sounds to the tune. His head was thrown far back, and from under one of the thick lenses of his spectacles crept a drop of water that did not come from the dripping heavens. Once his voice caught and almost refused to go on, but after a struggle he overcame the difficulty.

A great spirit had descended upon him; something rested upon his slight shoulders with a fierce weight, something to be borne forever; his *share* of something. It demanded a great effort from him, but he welcomed the task. He felt that it was crushing him down, down, out of himself into the mass! He was giving way, becoming drop-forged into a *part* of something by that burden he bore!

A tall youth beside him laid his hand on Thornton's sleeve. He looked up, but he was not surprised at the unaccustomed familiarity. The man was dressed as David never could dress—in the swagger campus clothes. He had the university look about him that David never would acquire. Yet, somehow, his touch seemed natural then. The arm crept across David's shoulders and the hand clutched the other sleeve, fingers caressing the gaudy arm band.

"Old boy, they played like *men!*" he muttered huskily, pulling Thornton toward him fraternally.

"They *did*—old boy!" cried David.

And he knew that he was one with the rest.

# The Arm of As-Sanusi

By Leavitt Ashley Knight

"When will opposes will no Qadi can decide."—*Bedouin proverb*

**Concerning a group of Mohammedans who realized that a holy war in the face of machine guns was hopeless and had gone in for light fingers instead of heavy artillery. A new kind of crook story from the garden of Allah**

THERE were four of us. The British government and the French had bidden us journey in disguise to the great oasis of Jarabub, in the eastern Sahara, and there to spy upon the terrible brotherhood of international thieves and their inscrutable, hidden ruler, Ibn Ali As-Sanusi.

A full year through, we secret-service men and a thousand British and French consuls had been watching the brotherhood, all along the ten thousand miles where stretches Islam from the pestilential fogs of the Gold Coast to the fever winds that puff heavily out of Malacca Straits.

We had seen a gaunt dervish in the blue shadows of a Tunisian mosque, receiving gold watches and necklaces from passers-by and slipping the loot swiftly into a deep alms bag. We had seen a rich Mohammedan in Bengal hand a bundle of British bonds to a cripple who had come whining to his door at night. We had seen a huge leather-skinned marauder make off with a Frenchman's camels, near Koweit, and vanish into the Arabian Desert, shrieking a sura from the Koran. We had seen little bands with heavily laden camels slip southward into the shimmering saffron haze that enshrouds the sand billows behind Barca, in Tripoli, making off over routes that no trader follows. And all the while British and French merchants in the Orient, and travelers, had been streaming into consular offices, bewailing their stolen purses, jewels, and precious freight.

Merriman and I had a theory about it all. We said that the old religious brotherhood of the Sanussi had given up as hopeless its ancient dream of a world-wide holy war against the Christians, and had turned to the easier and more profitable enterprise of holy thievery.

"They're the most conservative Mohammedans in the world," Merriman told the British foreign office. "They believe that anything done in Allah's name is right, and anything that makes trouble for the infidel is pleasing in the sight of the Most Merciful and the Compassionate. Old As-Sanusi knows that a holy war in the face of machine guns is suicide. So he has gone in for light fingers instead of heavy artillery. Shrewd, I say!"

"Nonsense!" laughed the foreign office.

"Indeed?" said I. "Then what do you think of this?" And I hauled out a scrap of burlap. It was rudely marked with black stenciling ink. Above: "Bismallah." Below: "Jarabub." And between these words an outstretched arm with talonlike fingers.

"I cut it from a bale of stolen silks in Tangier. And thirty of your men have seen the same mark on packages in India, Turkey, and Egypt."

The foreign office laughed again. But it set a closer watch. And pretty soon it saw strange things. Over the counter of Sin-Mahow's jewelry shop in Singapore, they bought a gold watch which an Oxford student had lost in a crowded Constantinople street. They saw the pin-eyed Hanbal, in his souvenir shop hard by the Gate of Everlasting Joy, in Tangier; saw him wrap up thirty gold-mesh purses that had been snatched from a show window in the Boulevard des Italiens, wrap them up, and hand them to a sullen Tuareg who clambered aboard his camel forthwith and headed into the deserts. And they saw, too, the mark of the outstretched arm.

"Fix up as natives and look into this," said the foreign office. "Find out whom we must catch, and where."

We had "fixed up." Separately we had gone to Cairo. Merriman was a Syrian wine dealer. Spears tinkled all over with the silver and brass trappings of a rich Uled-Naïl from inner Algeria. Sachs' heavy Bavarian jowl was concealed under the blood-red *litham* (half veil) of a mad Tibu magician. As he strode from bazaar to khan, mumbling incantations against Iblis and the jinns of the simoom, and exhorting the world to follow him to his monastery in the Tibesti Highlands, even the alley thieves fell back in awe. As for me, I was a wretched Berber camel driver out of work. I slept alongside dirty Qadarite beggars, outside the east gate, Bab el Wazir, near the Tombs of the Caliphs. I gnawed foul crusts and gritty figs. Mornings I loitered through the reeking ways of the old native quarters, and gossiped with Blue Nile fishermen, Barca ruffians, sheiks from Bagdad, Copts, ebony giants from the Nyanza uplands.

All the while, we were gleaning scraps of news about As-Sanusi and Jarabub—and also buying camels and supplies for our terrible journey. We lived apart in an abominable rabbit warren, in Sirat-us-Suhad, which is the Street of Sleeplessness, and well named. And each of us chattered Arabic with everybody on every possible occasion. We wanted to be sure of our disguises, for it was a matter of life and death.

Merriman, Spears, and myself had lived fifteen years in North Africa and Arabia; and our skins were the color of desert skins. But Sachs was a blond Bavarian only six months out of Munich. He had spent years in the tropics, but in six-month stretches only. And his face turned beet-red under the Sahara sun. The foreign office begged us to leave him behind; but he was the only one of us who spoke fluently all the desert dialects. So we painted him all over with a beautiful walnut stain, and dyed his hair black, and veiled him below the eyes. Twenty days we sent him out among the natives, and not one gave sign of suspecting him. That settled it. We packed for Jarabub.

One late afternoon we left Sirat-us-Suhad. We headed our camels southwest across Cairo toward the bridge at Giza. Just below the monastery of the Howling Dervishes, on the Nile bank, we swung into the shore road. A few hundred paces ahead, we saw four camels, two bearing men, headed southward. Below the old aqueduct, we overhauled the party. And from under a cork helmet there stared at us the mild blue eyes of The Typical Tourist.

A most ordinary appearance he was. Short, plump, soft-muscled, hands in riding gloves, and his German nose woefully sun-peeled. He looked like a doll-man beside his hulking attendant Turk. And he rode his camel with the joy and grace of a tarred-and-feathered man riding a rail. He wore a broad canvas belt, from which dangled two aluminum drinking cups—and a palm-leaf fan! And from a shoulder strap swayed perilously the inevitable field glass in the inevitable yellow leather case. From his coat pocket there peeked the red cover of the inevitable Baedeker.

As we were passing him, he called out, in grotesque Arabic: "*Tuba!* (Greeting!) I would ask a question, friends."

We halted curiously.

"Do you know any young, healthy *sa'il* who would journey with me into the desert? I will pay him well." He addressed Sachs, who was nearest to him.

"We are strangers from afar," answered Sachs, smiling behind his *litham.* "But you should find many beggar boys in Misr——"

"I have searched the streets a week, and have found none that would do." The Typical Tourist grumbled, eying Sachs sharply. "They are all sick or maimed or weaklings. I must have a healthy boy. Hah!" His tone changed suddenly. "A word with you alone!"

Our mad Tibu magician wavered one instant, then wheeled his camel aside. Clumsily The Typical Tourist followed him a little way up the road. We saw the two talking briskly—then, of a sudden, Sachs drew back as if dealt an invisible blow in the face. Back to us he came racing.

"He—he's made a fool of me!" Sachs babbled through his blood-red *litham.* "Me, fifteen years in the Oriental secret service! And such a simple trick——"

"Lord!" Spears gasped. "He didn't see through your make-up?"

"He looked into the white of my eye —while we were talking" Sachs groaned. "He's a big surgeon, he says. He said he spotted the color of my cornea at once. Then he took me aside —and"—Sachs raged now—"he stumbled along in his crazy Arabic a while —and then, with never a change of tone or looks, he slipped into English—and asked me how long it had taken me to learn the native lingo. And I, like a drunken fool, said: 'Ten years'—in English!"

Spears was cursing, when up shambled The Typical Tourist's camel. The Typical Tourist was hanging on desperately and singing out, in excellent English, with a faint German rasp: "I say, sir! Don't take it so hard! You're safe enough! There aren't three men in the world who could read your cornea. The other two are in America. And I'll not breathe a word. But I'm going to ask a favor of you."

Merriman and I fell to chattering in Tuareg slang. The Typical Tourist leaned shakily toward us and peered into our eyes. Then he whistled: "Well! All Englishmen, eh? I didn't suspect it before. Well! What luck! Off on a slumming expedition? May I join you? I've a very special reason. And I can show the best credentials. See here!"

He rummaged swiftly through a saddlebag, whipped out a long wallet, and passed it to Sachs. "Excuse me if I seem conceited. But I can't afford to hide my light under a bushel. I must persuade you to take me with you. It is supremely important. Read first. Then I shall explain."

Sachs opened the wallet. Out fell a tiny leather case. In it lay a gold medal inscribed:

The English residents of Singapore, to Professor Rudolph Metzger. As a token of their gratitude for his distinguished and daring services rendered during the plague of 1898.

After that came a German passport, showing the bearer to be a citizen of Berlin, and proprietor of a private hospital there. Next a letter from the famous Schramm, of the Vienna Polyclinic, to the director of the Bombay

Hospital, saying that Professor Metzger was the most skillful surgeon in all Europe; that he had retired from practice, and was devoting his life to experimental surgery; then followed a lot of technical news that we did not understand. The professor had undertaken a most difficult research, said the letter, and the most advanced surgeons and biologists in Europe and America were awaiting his results breathlessly.

"What results?" Sachs asked querulously. "What are you doing, anyhow?"

"Look here!" The surgeon nodded curtly and went to his larger pack camel. In a little wooden cage on the animal's back we saw two young chimpanzees soberly chattering at each other.

"Stand up, Bismarck!" Metzger snapped his fingers, and the smaller chimpanzee arose and swayed comically. "How is your digestion today? Gentlemen, Bismarck isn't feeling like himself. Yet he's quite well, thank you! He had traded stomachs with his brother Goethe. Up, Goethe! Show the gentlemen that you're in prime condition."

"What the devil!" exclaimed Spears.

"It's the first case of successful homoplastic transplantation of organs in the world's history. It's the turning point in the science of surgery!" Metzger spoke quietly, but with a gleam in his mild blue eyes. "There are three kinds of transplantation. Autoplastic—that's taking one part of an animal's body and grafting it onto the same body somewhere else. Mending a man's broken nose with a piece of his own shinbone, you know. Carrel mastered that trick and showed us the way to homoplastic transplantation—that's grafting from one member of a family to another. But I've outrun them all! I've found the trick of the third and highest kind of grafting—grafting from one species to another. See here!" He shot a hand into the cage, caught Bismarck's shoulder, twisted the beast's head with incredible speed and skill.

"Ugh! Take it away!" Merriman yelled and turned away his head.

The chimpanzee's left ear was a human ear, a pink and shapely child's ear!

"The little boy was dying—meningitis—but I saved his ear," Metzger recounted, as calmly as if he were saying that it was a fine day. "His father lost his head—wouldn't listen to reason—came after me with a revolver—that's why I'm here! They say he's still lurking around my hospital. Aren't people foolish? No vision! No perspective! No sense of the infinite possibilities of science! They give way to animallike emotions—cheap sentiment! Why! If they'd let me experiment with people ten years undisturbed, I'd deliver the human race from misery! I can put a dog's kidney in place of a man's now. In ten years I could transplant brains! Take them from condemned murderers——"

At that Spears screamed. Spears was decidedly old-fashioned. He had lived long in the Orient, hadn't heard about the astounding flights of western surgery. He had seen some pretty horrible things on the desert, but they were done in the exaltation of religious zeal. Very different from Metzger's dispassionate, gentle proposal!

Metzger smiled indulgently at Spears. "Now, gentlemen! Will you do me a small favor? You know the desert. Take me to some small oasis beyond all tourists and out of the caravan routes. Help me set up my clinic—and tell me where I can get some natives to operate on."

"You're insane!" Sachs laughed hysterically. "The whole eastern Sahara is peopled with the Sanussi. They're ultraconservative Mohammedans. If they caught you cutting people up, they'd say you were interfering with the will of Allah. And they'd bind a fresh sheepskin around your naked flesh and let the maggots eat you. I saw that once in the Sudan."

"I have thought that all out," Metzger declared, unshaken, and nodded toward the big Turk. "My friend Mezzem and I shall manage to keep our patients out of sight. Mezzem is reliable. He's a physician—I cured him of cancer six years ago—he's loyal and clever and strong as an ox. Come now!" He clapped his supple hands. "I'll pay you your price! I must get to a place where I cannot be disturbed. Take me to it. I'm rich. Name any figure!"

"Yes, you are mad!" I surveyed the man with a kind of awe and horror. "The desert swarms with thieves, cutthroats, and fanatics. They're a proud people, too. The Frank who meddles with them, for good or for evil, dies. Go back to Cairo. Take the train to Khartum. Rent a house there. You'll find lots of black Fuzzy Wuzzies to—er—experiment with. They're tough—and not so particular as the desert people. Also, you'll have an English garrison to save your life, when the Fuzzy Wuzzies find you out and break into your clinic with their big spears."

"You don't understand!" Metzger shook his head sadly. "There are too many people back there. They'd be nosing around—gossiping. And the climate is too moist. Risk of infection greatly increased. Now, in a small, uninhabited oasis, it's as dry as a bone—with my patent dust screen, sepsis would be impossible. No! My plans are fixed. Where are you going to take me?"

For an answer, we urged on our camels, wheeled west across the Giza bridge, and lost the uncanny genius behind us in the swift dusk that was falling, blue and chill, over the eternities of sand.

Nine nights of travel on our swift *hagin* over the old caravan route to the Oasis of Siwa, which lies on the Tripoli frontier, two long days' journey from Jarabub. We had left Gara behind and were climbing the snow-lifting ridge of bowlders and winnowed sand that stretches all the way to Siwa and the Temple of Jupiter Ammon. It was three o'clock in the morning, and bitter cold, cold as only the desert can be at night. We entered a *sogag,* which is a natural road made by the rightful simoon of springtime, the *khamsin,* and lined for miles with towering sand dunes. At the west end of the *sogag* we came out suddenly upon a cluster of palms and shrubs, and saw a huddle of sleeping camels.

There were six Sanussi. They had come from Constantinople, and were bound for the great monastery at Jarabub, where they would live three years, studying for the higher degrees of the brotherhood. Two of the travelers were deathly sick—they had eaten the runty brownish desert melons that grow in some of the oases and look luscious, but are as fire in the stomach.

Sachs, in his rôle of mad magician, gave the groaning pair stiff doses of honest patent medicine made in Germany; and, at sunrise, the six Sanussi were our friends for life. That was our great opportunity. We told them that we, too, were bound to Jarabub, and would be taught the True Faith. Now, the Sanussi are the most zealous missionaries in all Islam. The fellows almost wept for joy that they should be privileged to bring four converts to the Mahdi, As-Sanusi.

This is how, three days later, we passed unquestioned, unchallenged, under the myriad date palms, past wide and splendid gardens, into the delicious darkness of the overarched streets of Jarabub. They quartered us in a little house half underground, as many are in the Inner Oases. In the middle of the tiny court, there bubbled up a spring which flowed in a stone gutter through our sleeping rooms, cooling them perceptibly, and vanished through a hole in the wall into the street. An innkeeper across the way brought us mint-scented tea, a serving man set before us great brass washbowls. They gave us wide-bowled pipes of chittagong wood—for the Sanussi are liberal toward tobacco—and arrayed before us lacquered dishes of dates and melons and sugared ginger.

Then we recited the Ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names of Allah; and, after the city fell asleep in the furnace heat of midday, we whispered in English our plans for finding the loot of the world and the world looters whom we had come to trap.

We soon found that our task would be harder than we had thought—and Heaven knows we weren't optimists! The city lay wide open before us. But the vast, rambling *takkiyat*, the cloister of the Brotherhood, was inaccessible. None save initiates who could utter the secret passwords might approach within a quarter mile of the place. We saw, at night, little caravans and sometimes solitary riders wending their way through its high-arched portal leading to the court. And once Spears rashly turned his field glass toward the spot, but saw nothing.

Eight days we loitered in the shops and discoursed with our six Sanussi friends and the elders of the town, around plashing, marble-rimmed fountains. Cunningly, in many a devious way, we led the conversation to the question of *Ghanima*. Now, you should know, *Ghanima* is the law of dividing booty in a *jihad*, or holy war. It is a very precise and elaborately minute code, like unto nothing in European warfare. And you may guess that we hoped, by talking about it, to trick some knowing one into saying that the world-wide thievery was a new *jihad*, and that the loot the foreign office had trailed was all brought to As-Sanusi, by him to be apportioned under *Ghanima*. But never a hint slipped from the drowsy talkers.

On the morning of the ninth day we strolled beyond the town through the date orchards, to debate upon our next move. We had gone far out the hard, glaring highway, when there drew near a caravan from out the desert to the south. As the camels loped past us, we saw, bound flat upon an ugly animal, Professor Rudolph Metzger. His cork helmet was badly dented, and the lower half of his face, which the helmet did not protect at all, was blistered with heat. He was moaning very softly, with closed eyes. On the camel behind him rode, in like style, his companion, Mezzem.

"Good Heaven!" Merriman gasped, in English. "They caught him red-handed!"

"Let's follow them," I said. "There's one chance in a million that we can help the poor devil!"

The captors took the pair to the public square on which stands the squat *Jami-s-sa'ih*, or Mosque of the Traveler. And, in a terrific uproar, they summoned the Qadi of Jarabub, a secretive man, who said of himself, in the words of the poet: "Only the night and the horses and the desert know me."

"What has this infidel done?" I asked a man of the caravan.

"We came upon him and his devil friend," said he savagely, "in a little oasis beyond Siwa. Our camel boy, Hassan, had a great piece of his forearm torn out—an ugly pack animal had nipped him. This infidel, speaking through the Turk, said that he would make the boy well. So we left him there, knowing that the doctors of the Franks are powerful. Five days later we returned from Gara. The infidel had fled. But the wretched Hassan was sitting beneath a tree, weeping. He held up his arm, and we saw, already half healed upon the old wound, a patch of hairy skin from an accursed dog. Was ever a fouler insult done to a true believer? *Uff!* Allah forgive me for not having smitten the monster dead when we caught him, the next day, in the village of Mayeh!"

"Woe unto you that you did not!" thundered Merriman, in mock pious wrath. "Why have you let him live?"

"Because," said the fellow humbly, "we were all stupid wits, and could devise on the spot no torture worthy of the crime. So we have brought him to the Qadi, who is a man of infinite ingenuity, and guided by the whisperings of Allah in his dreams."

"Great Scott!" muttered Merriman to me, while the mob around us rumbled. "The skin of a dog! The most loathsome and despised beast in Islam! How did Mezzem let him do it? He's doomed."

Pretty soon the Qadi rode into the square, a tall, gaunt man with sunken eyes and a silent mouth. They pushed to the fore the wailing Hassan, who held up his patched arm. Metzger's deft bandage had been torn off it. Qadi and mob saw clearly the coarse, long dog hair growing inside a raw, red ring. The Qadi stared in stupefaction. After a long time he asked the usual questions and pondered over the answers with evident perplexity.

"Since the world began, at the word of Allah," he proclaimed at length, "there has never been such an outrage. I do not trust myself to judge its penalty. For it is written nowhere in the Law, nor handed down in Tradition. Let the culprits be brought before the great Mahdi! To him, As-Sanusi, whose arm reaches across the world, and whose thoughts are from Allah, the just punishment is known."

The Qadi rode off toward the great white cloister, while all Jarabub screamed hideous curses in the square.

An hour or more we stood there, heedless of the murderous sun, which was now high. Then came a cloud of dust from the cloister, and out of it a man on a majestic black camel with trappings of gold and mother-of-pearl.

The snarling crowd hushed, opened a wide path, and salaamed as one man. The black camel knelt not ten paces from where we four spies of Europe stood, cold with horror. The rider swung off, and we looked full into the sinister face of As-Sanusi, Mahdi, head of the world-wide Brotherhood of Fanatics, leader of the pious, Prince of Thieves. A huge tiger of a man he was—some six foot three, lean as a wild beast at the end of the long droughts, and lithe as bull whip, for all his fifty years or more. His face was the face of a man whom neither foe nor circumstance has openly thwarted or challenged. Power shone from it—the power of planning and the power of ruling.

The Qadi of Jarabub, who had returned with the Mahdi, dragged before him the staggering Metzger. The men of the caravan told their story, and an ominous gleam lighted As-Sanusi's still, sunken eyes. He asked the surgeon to tell his side of the affair. Oh! It was a pretty pretense of a fair trial!

Metzger's swollen tongue mumbled in his blistered mouth. He asked for Mezzem, to interpret. But Mezzem lay as dead with sunstroke, for his head had been bared, as his captors had bundled him off his camel an hour before.

"Is there any who can speak the speech of this Kafir?" the Qadi demanded. "It is but just in the sight of Allah that he be allowed to make known to the Guided One of God why he committed the impious act."

For one lightning instant silence

hung over the square. Then I pressed forward, crying out: "Most Glorious One! Many years have I driven lame old camels for the barefaced ladies of the Franks up and down Misr and to the Pyramids. If the infidel will speak slowly, I shall understand him."

The Qadi nodded. Metzger uttered a blurred cry of recognition, then checked himself in a masterly way.

"You were right," he groaned in jerks of agony, as I stepped up to him. "Proud lot—these desert people—not progressive, either—I must teach them —I can prove I'm right."

"Man!" I spoke as calmly as I could, to save myself from suspicion. "You'll not do that! There's no arguing with these devils! No man living can tell them they're wrong and an infidel is right. Tell them you didn't put dog's skin on the boy. Tell them you were binding the wound up as any man might, and a jinn arose out of the oasis well and pronounced a curse upon the boy; and the boy fell in a swoon, and your bandage turned into a hairy patch. I can dress the yarn up so that they may swallow it. It's one chance in a thousand. But it's your only one."

"Facts! Facts!" Metzger cried, in a dry, cracked anger. "I'll give them to them! They can't help seeing I'm right. The boy would have been crippled for life if I hadn't done what I did. They *must* see it! It's the truth! Tell them—all about the new surgery—what I told you back at Cairo."

"Not a word of it!" I snapped, and a ghastly chill spread through me. "They'd put you to the torture!"

For one terrible moment this plump, soft-muscled little fellow, with the red guidebook peeking from his coat pocket, fixed his mild blue eyes upon me. His split, bleeding lips stirred, but wordlessly. At last he spoke again. "You will tell them what I say—word for word. If you don't, I'll tell them that you four fellows are Europeans—you don't want them to know that, I guess!"

Merriman, behind me, heard that. And he said, in a casual way, so that As-Sanusi caught it: "This is a madman. He should be locked up. Let him tell his story as he will, and the Most Glorious One will understand that the curse of the jinns has fallen on the unhappy infidel."

He spoke in purest Bedouin, which the surgeon did not understand at all. I caught the cleverly veiled hint. Merriman meant that I should translate Metzger's story word for word, to save ourselves. And we should try to save him by proving him mad. The desert people deal kindly with the insane. Like most primitive folk, they think a madman is either inspired or under a spell.

"What does the blighted one say?" As-Sanusi demanded of me.

"Talk very slowly to him—in Cairo dialect—so that I can understand," Metzger ordered. "Tell him first that —I am the greatest surgeon in Europe —I am trying to deliver men from disease."

"This sounds like madness," mused As-Sanusi, as I translated. "Why should the greatest surgeon of the soft-skinned Franks be alone in the desert's burning heart—with an accursed Turk —and outraging a camel boy? Also, men are to be delivered from disease, if Allah so wills, through *tibb* (medicine). But not through wounds and mutilations. We know this as a divine fact. For in the law of Islam, which is above all sects and heresies, there are ordinances regulating *qisas*, the retribution for wounds and mutilations. Now if the law punishes all who inflict such, then it must be that it is sinful to inflict wounds and mutilations, save upon infidels in a *jihad*."

This I made known to Metzger. His whole face brightened. He even smiled. "Tell him," he cried, "that I *have* made

Hassan's arm well. And with no medicine. Only my knife and my fingers! Tell him I have built new ears and noses on fifty men. Tell him I have repaired fifteen stomachs. And all these sick men are now alive and well."

As-Sanusi's lips tightened. His mind was great enough to note that this little battered man had shattered, with one Fact, the fine-spun theology and law of *qisas*. Hassan *was* cured! That was the Fact visible to all Jarabub! Allah must have willed it. And not through medicine, but through knife and mutilation! The great Mahdi was beaten in argument before his own people—and by a miserable infidel!

"There is but one God, and he has created all things!" the fanatic snarled, and his bony finger thrust at Metzger, as if it would stab him to the heart. "Past, present, and future—all have been ordained by him according to his infinite will! Man can create nothing! Nor can he change the divine order of events! He who says he can lies—or else he is a worker of magic and conjures up illusions which deceive the eye of the Faithful."

"Pff!" Little Metzger laughed and shook his soft, supple finger at the Mahdi, while a sea of black scowls rose around us. "Fatalism! That's what you people in the East think! And that's why you are two thousand years behind Europe! That's why we rule the world, and you live in hell holes like Jarabub, and die like flies in every plague! We do things. We invent. We create. We're making the world over, to suit ourselves."

The mob shrieked. As-Sanusi flashed his rage and started to say something. But Metzger, utterly blind to his peril and lost in his enthusiasm, blurted along in broken sentences and crazy grammar. "Go look in the little wooden cage on one of my pack camels! Look at the chimpanzee's ear! That'll prove your law is all wrong! Why! You Mohammedans say there is no creator save Allah, eh? You say man can create nothing? While you *say* that, we *do* otherwise! You come to Berlin, my good fellow! I'll show you how I can make people over! I can fix them lots better than your Allah does!"

As these blasphemies streamed forth, the whole square shrieked its horror and rage. A huge fanatic struck Metzger from behind. As-Sanusi lifted his hand, and the assault ceased. Then he sent men to fetch the wooden cage. In Spears' eyes I read his despair of saving the blundering surgeon now.

All of a sudden, I saw the square and Hassan and the Mahdi and Metzger with new eyes. And I thrilled, as I realized that I was looking upon the greatest drama in the world. The clash between the Powers of the Old and the Powers of the New. The confrontation of blind Faith with hawk-eyed Science. As-Sanusi, the Superman of Islam, whose arm reached from the Gold Coast to Malacca Straits, commanding a fanatical Brotherhood of eight million. Little Metzger, whose fingers drove a scalpel true to a hundredth of an inch, while great surgeons in the hospitals of Berlin and London and Bombay and San Francisco tensely awaited each laconic bulletin from his operating room. As-Sanusi, the Superman, who looked beyond the grave to a paradise of houris, and would loot, torture, and slay infidels in Allah's name. Metzger, the Superman, who dreamed of a world of well men, and would cut up monkeys and dogs alive, in the name of human health. As-Sanusi, fearless as all Mohammedan zealots are, would dash shouting into the spitting muzzles of British machine guns, if he thought there were aught to gain for Islam. Metzger, the cold-blooded scientist, would hurl a fact into the teeth of a thousand yelling fanatics, explode their ramshackle religion, and shout triumphantly, while they tortured him: "I told you so!"

Was there ever a stranger meeting since the world began?

Two men brought to As-Sanusi the wooden cage. As-Sanusi stared at the pink human ear on the chimpanzee, while the Qadi of Jarabub covered his face. When the tumult of the frenzied onlookers had been quelled, As-Sanusi lifted his long arms to the brazen sky and bellowed: "This is no madman! He does what he says he does. He is a worker of deviltry, a jinn. Allah has brought him to me for punishment. What it shall be, I shall make known in season. Meanwhile he shall sleep in the *jubb-ul-hayyat*. As for the Turk with him, I command you, O Qadi, to bathe him with the broth of the brass workers!"

The mob shrieked its delight while they bore Mezzem away.

"What's that mean?" Metzger chattered.

"I don't know!" I answered, in a nausea of fear. "Haven't you some poison? If you have, swallow it quick!"

"Oho! It has come to *that,* then?" The surgeon blanched, but kept up a brave smile. "Go to the left saddlebag of my largest camel. There's a quart bottle of ether there."

"If I can!" I muttered, and slipped away.

Undetected, I reached the surgeon's camel and slipped back to him with the bottle that would rescue him from torture.

"My poor Mezzem!" he was murmuring plaintively. "Poor old friend! I—I must—really—teach these fellows better!"

"Drink that stuff, quick!" I choked. "If they take it from you——"

"Not yet!" The amazing man was actually smiling. "You say they're going to keep me a while. Well, maybe I can work out a scheme—while there's life, there's hope—that's my religion, man! I want to teach these poor devils that their Mahdi and religion are all humbug." He paused, while the shrieks of Mezzem pierced my ears. "You will go with me—as interpreter—they'll not say no—perhaps—somehow."

Well, that's how it worked out. Metzger told As-Sanusi that he would soon have a most important message for the Mahdi; and he must have me at hand, to translate it. This is how I gained entrance into the secret cloister of the Brotherhood. For thither they led the surgeon straightway. There I found what we four had come to find: bales of silk, trays of watches and rings, cellar rooms packed ceiling-high with rugs and laces—loot, immeasurable loot! And more of it pouring in every night through the north portal! But of this I shall not tell here. There is a greater story that must be told first.

They led us to a tiny court—one of a score in the county-wide cloister. In the middle of it was a heavy iron grating. This they lifted and lowered Metzger into a black hole beneath.

"You will stay in this court, day and night," commanded the officer in charge of me. "All its gates are open. But Death sits wide-eyed and hungry in the passageways."

A long time after they had left me alone, I whispered into the black hole. And back came the words: "I'm pretty well, thank you! Rather cold—and the snakes are uneasy."

"Snakes?" I gasped weakly.

"Don't worry!" Metzger sang out placidly. "I dare say they'd frighten you to death. But they're all quite harmless—they feel like *Colubrinæ*—very common around the Mediterranean, you know, and all nonpoisonous. They don't like it down here as well as I do."

"You *felt* them?"

"I can see with my fingers quite as well as with my eyes," Metzger stated dryly. Then his tone changed. "Say! What do you suppose that As-Sanusi wants most of all?"

"That's easy!" I answered. "He'd like to chase the British out of Egypt, in one grand holy war, and ride into Cairo on a milk-white mare at the head of an army, and have the sheiks of Al-Azhar proclaim him the leader of Islam." And I told him why.

"Excellent!" I heard a chuckle in the blackness below me. "Now, I want you to tell him that, if he will swear by the Prophet to set me free in safety, I'll teach him how to drive the British out of Egypt. Tell him I can put a new and strange power into his arm—and before it the British soldiers will flee in terror."

Late that night they let me bear this mysterious message to As-Sanusi. He listened with grooved brows, suspicious, scornful, yet touched in his weakest spot. He ordered me to repeat. He quizzed me about the British. I had driven camels for their tourists, hadn't I? Were they all terrible magicians, like the great lord who had flung the mountain of rock across the Nile at Assuan? Or like the little man who put boys' ears on monkeys? Craftily I told him that the little man was not British. He hated the British. He would like to see them driven out of the land.

At that, up sprang the Prince of Pious Thieves and tossed his splendid head backward. "I shall hear him out! If he is lying, so much the worse for him. And if not——" He clapped his hands, and attendants hastened. "Come. To the cistern of snakes!"

At the grating we parleyed a long time. Metzger, with sublime impudence, refused to come up, unless As-Sanusi agreed to the magic proposal.

"I promise," said As-Sanusi solemnly. "Lower a basket for him."



"One minute! I have lost my watch. Let me find it," Metzger mumbled.

We waited. And as we did so, we heard him shuffling about uncertainly on the invisible stone bottom of the snake-infested pit. I leaned over the rim, to offer him a light. And there rose into my nostrils the pungent, heady fumes of ether. Instantly I guessed what had happened. He had dropped, not his watch, but his bottle. And he dared not come up without it, remembering poor Mezzem's unknown, but easily imagined, fate.

Pretty soon he sang out: "All right! I've got it!" And we hauled him up.

"Listen carefully!" he said to me, in English. "I'm going to work a hocus-pocus on this great brute. I'm going to give him miracle medicine—tell him that it will make his arm a terror to all foes—they'll flee before him—and all that. Tell him it may take a week or more to work—and nobody must speak to him nor look upon him while the miracle is taking effect."

"See here!" I demanded. "You aren't going to try poisoning him—with ether? They'll put you to the most horrible torture."

"I promise you I'll not do that." Metzger held up his hand solemnly. "I'm going to beat him—teach him and all his crazy followers a lesson they'll never forget—and save my skin. Now, tell him I must have a still, upper room—and a balcony, if you please!"

Eleven days and eleven nights, a white-robed guard squatted, mute and motionless, before the brass-studded door of the great upper room into which the little surgeon had vanished with the terrible Mahdi. At the last minute, As-Sanusi feared a trap, and swore that two of his disciples must enter with him. To this Metzger had cheerfully assented—which bewildered me utterly. What trick would he play, with three big fanatics scowling at him? Many an hour I speculated over this puzzle, as I sat on the cool floor stones, a little way from the door.

Came the evening of the twelfth day, and with it the luscious coolness of the desert night and the unspeakable splendor of the full moon. Jarabub lay below us, a huge, squarish pattern of greenish silver and black blotches, relieved here and there by the onionlike curve of a mosque and the nubs of graceless minarets. Over the roofs there floated to the guard and myself the all but imperceptible moaning of the open desert. Men say the sound comes from the Ifrits and the jinns, whispering conspiracies against mankind. But I knew it to be the desert wind sifting infinite grains of sand. It is like unto nothing that English words can describe. Fainter than the singing in one's ears. The hiss of lips pressed with a warning finger. And yet something more, something almost unearthly. Sitting in the chill breeze that poured through the open window, I listened to the voice of the sands, fascinated as I always am. . . . And then, like a crash, broke in Metzger's voice.

"Hist!" It came muffled through the heavy door. "It's done! It's worked! Tell all the men of the cloister to assemble below the balcony! Tell them to bring all Jarabub! I'm going to teach 'em a lesson! Hurry up!"

In twenty minutes, the enormous courtyard was packed with ghostly figures, muttering excitedly to one another. The full moon revealed every face, and I marked on many a one a superstitious fear. This I whispered in to Metzger, who rushed his commands.

"Go out on your balcony—it's next to mine, isn't it?—and say what I'll tell you. Speak up loudly—and bold. Above all else, bold! If it doesn't work, I'll say good-by, old chap, whoever you are! I'll open some arteries. Thanks for what you've done. If I don't get out of this mess alive, will you send word to my old mother—Victoriastrasse twenty-seven, Berlin? Now, ready?"

"Ready!" I sang out, my throat tight, as I stepped out upon the balcony.

Metzger began to dictate slowly, studiously. And, like a phonograph, I translated, scarcely knowing what I was saying. As well as I can recall, this was the surgeon's message to Jarabub and the Brotherhood of Sanussi:

"Men of Jarabub! True believers! As-Sanusi boasts that his arm stretches across the world. And he prays that I lend it power to strike terror in the hearts of all who behold it. I have put this power into his arm. The Prophet, blessed be his name, has said that the true Mahdi, when he comes into the world, will fill it with equity and justice. If, now, the deeds of this As-Sanusi, who calls himself the true Mahdi are just, then is he the Mahdi, guided aright by Allah. Then, too, will the power which I have put into his arm be beautiful in the eyes of all believers. It will be such power as Allah has chosen, to glorify the leader of his *jihad*. But if this man is not just; if he did evil when he murdered my friend Mezzem by torture, then will the power in his arm be the power of Satan. And he will be accursed in your sight."

Metzger paused. I heard a faint scuffling, then the noise of a soft body being dragged over the floor. From the balcony not ten feet from me, Metzger began speaking again:

"Arise, O As-Sanusi! Stretch out thy arm across the world! The power is in it! Show it and strike terror to thy foes!"

There was a short, deep silence. Then arose from the multitude below the most awful groan of horror I have ever heard. I wheeled toward Metzger's balcony. . . .

Against the wall, glinting like polished ebony in the glare of the moon, leaned As-Sanusi. He was limp and dazed—seemed to be coming out from under ether. He blinked stupidly, stretched his arms upward—and at the sight, I collapsed, as if a sledge hammer had smitten me in the pit of the stomach. For the two arms of As-Sanusi stretched smooth and sinuous above his head. They twisted, writhed, lashed, and tapered to points! At the wrists, the arms became glistening brown snakes, some four feet long! As I stared, one of them wrapped itself around the Mahdi's neck. . . .

Then I heard shrieks. And down below I saw a mob, fleeing from the courtyard, stumbling, wailing, covering their faces. . . . The door of the balcony closed, leaving As-Sanusi locked out. Metzger appeared behind me and clutched my arm. He was dressed in the garments of the Mahdi.

"Quick!" He hurried me down the corridor. "While the panic is on! Get me out of here in the night—with your friends. Heteroplastic transplanting. Carrel said it couldn't be done! Ho! Ho! Anything can be done, my boy! Anything! I caught those snakes in the pit—where the scoundrel threw me that night—sprayed them with ether till they went to sleep—wrapped them around me—under my coat—then I gave the old Mahdi ether—and one of his friends—the other one fell asleep from the fumes—then I tied all three—tore up the clothes with an old scalpel—had two cases of operating tools with me—always carry them. Then I cut their vocal chords, so that they wouldn't yell for help—very simple operation, you know. How mad they looked at me! I had to laugh! Those arms aren't a neat job—didn't have any benzols with me—need them for injection. We must get away to-night sure. Arms may not live long—snakes' blood corpuscles enormous size—won't go through finer passages in his body—probably they'll wither in five or six days. He's getting off cheap! Poor old Mezzem!"

Thus he chattered, as we raced through forsaken halls and tunnels, now in the moonlight, now in blackest night shadows. Outside the cloister, we fell in with a panic-stricken crowd. They were shrieking: "He is a pretender! Allah has smitten him for his lies and wickedness! Woe to Jarabub!"

The whole oasis was raving mad with fear, horror, and rage. We four spies met, by instinct, in our rooms, while outside the crowds surged toward the cloister once more, calling for the punishment of the false leader. After they had passed, we rushed out, found our camels at the khan, and fled.

On the crest of a great sand dune, we looked back and saw the glow of a fire in Jarabub. Metzger turned stiffly in his swaying seat and cried into the hideous devastation on the rim of the night: "Stretch out your arm, madman! And teach the East that the men of the West are greater than your gods!"

## NEW STYLES IN ARCHITECTURE

PRESIDENT WILSON, whose addresses and state documents have proved him a great writer as well as a great statesman, has at his command an ample supply of wit, and, as his term progresses, more and more "good things" are being credited to him. One of the latest to be put into circulation is that, when he was making his campaign for the governorship of New Jersey, he spoke at the dedication of a new building in Jersey City, and, in commenting on architecture as it is to-day, observed:

"These modern New York hotels remind me, in their architectural style, of a cross between the early Pullman and the late North German Lloyd periods."

# When Lawyers Disagree

By William H. Hamby

*Author of "The Hill Billy Stories," Etc.*

**The tribulations of a young lawyer—a tiny star in the firmament of Cedar Hill, where two eminent stars of the bar were dazzling the Southwest and threatened to completely obliterate the smaller luminary**

RAY CRAIG slammed his office door shut with a whack that rattled down another handful of the rotten, leak-streaked plaster beside the flue; and made the half-soaked proprietor of the Crow Drug Store below wonder if Samuel Pope Grivin, his best tenant and customer, was falling through the ceiling. He kicked the legs of the rickety table that served as a desk until it shivered and slid part of his papers off onto the floor. He plunked himself spitefully in the wheezy swivel chair, and started to make an entry in his notebook. The inkwell was dry. He snatched it up and slung it at a picture of Patrick Henry on the wall.

He was angry at himself. A rather unusual state of mind for a young lawyer, especially right after winning a case. But what disgusted Craig was the failure he had made of his speech before the jury. He had a good argument, but his brain balked and his tongue bucked until his string of ideas hung out as ragged and conglomerate as a negro family's wash line.

They had laughed, of course. They always did. Craig had got almost used to the grins and nudges and gibes and guffaws of the oratory-drinking, courtroom sitters when he made a speech. But the laugh that cut, the one that made him writhe and see purple spots, came from inside the rail, among the members of the bar. It was a clear, mellow laugh of such immense superiority it seemed to float across a gulf fixed. He had been hearing that laugh all his life. It seemed to him he had never made a blunder, never got a fall, never had a conspicuous patch on an awkward spot of his pantaloons that he did not hear that laugh—and it always set off other laughs like a torch in dry leaves. The first time he heard it was eighteen years ago, when a boy of seven he stood on the stage at the country-school exhibition, dressed in a pair of cut-down overalls, and a new shirt his mother had made of flour sacks; his tawny hair standing out wildly, his heart beating smotheringly, and tried to recite the "Sailor Boy's Dream." When he reached, "His hammock swung loose at the sport of the wind," everything went blank. The frozen horror that followed was broken by a high, delighted snigger from the smooth, shiny, betied, and becuffed boy in the front seat—Lawrence Morton.

Craig kicked the leg of his table again, and began to jab holes in the ink-splotched blotter with the little blade of his knife. Lawrence was now the best-known lawyer, except Sam Pope Grivin, in the Southwest, and was a prospective candidate for Congress. While Ray, after hammering his own way through high school and shoveling his way through the university, had had in the two years of his practice eight cases; one the first year and seven the last.

It was all because Morton was a born orator, and Craig never could make a speech. Everybody knew it before he tried, and he always knew it afterward. That was why everybody from Windy Jim Davis, the coon hunter, to Lawrence Morton, the candidate for Congress, advised him to let the law alone and get a span of mules and try to raise potatoes and sorghum. For in Cedar Hill honor and oratory were synonymous. A preacher or a lawyer was judged solely by his flow of words. If his stream of oratory was smooth and wide and bedecked with flowers, it did not matter a darn why or where it went. Law and justice and religion pure and undefiled were matters of minor importance.

There was Sam Pope Grivin, for instance, who had the big suite of offices down the hall from Craig. Grivin was famous from Bull Creek on the Arkansas line to the Missouri River valley for his jury pleadings. He was a barrel of oratory that any sort of a case would tap, and he always convinced everybody but the judge and jury, and sometimes fooled even the jury. He lost more cases than any man in the Southwest; but no matter, he was a great lawyer. And there was Lawrence Morton—Craig gritted his teeth in a way to help some future dentist buy an automobile——

"That counterfeit of a man," he said savagely, "could stand on a slippery-elm stump and make a speech that would rattle the bark down. While I—dog-gone it!—could not speak if the whole Mexican frontier was on fire, and I was standing on the bridge at El Paso with the United States flag wrapped around me."

He got up and put on his hat. He would go over to Judge Bankhead's library and read up on Lem Rogers' case. He had to borrow about all the books he used, for his own library could be put in a kraut barrel. And he usually borrowed at Bankhead's—for the judge was nearly always away from home and had a very accommodating secretary. Her name was Irene, and she was the judge's daughter.

Craig could talk to Irene Bankhead. The twinkle in her eyes was distinctly stimulating, and he loved to hear her laugh. It was a merry laugh, but discriminating, and somehow readjusted his sense of values. Then, too, she knew more law than any man in town except her father.

"If she thinks I can be a lawyer," concluded Craig as he went down the littered, mud-stained stairs, "I'll be one in spite of all the pool-hall, billiard-bucking joshers this side of kingdom come, old Pope Grivin, the devil, and Lawrence Morton included." Lawrence Morton always followed the devil in Ray's mind. "I wonder what she really does think about it?" he speculated anxiously. "She seems to treat me like I might be some pumpkins—sometimes.

"But, dog-gone it," he said, hitting the dingy plastering beside the stairs with his fist, "I wish she hadn't heard that fool speech." He had seen Miss Bankhead in the courtroom taking his hog-stealing case down in shorthand. "I wonder what she was doing that for?" he reflected as he went toward the old judge's office.

Craig was quite sure he was going for law and not consolation. He must read up on the Rogers case. It was the biggest thing he had had and there was real money in it. Winning it would go a long way toward wiping out the jokes and gibes that had been pushed at his speeches. It would help his reputation for luck; and an established reputation for luck is accounted unto a lawyer as righteousness. Even if he can't make a speech, if he has the "luck" to win most of his cases he is going to get some business. For, after all, the man who pays the fees in court likes to get some results besides motions, objections, and oratory.

II.

Judge Bankhead's office was an ancient, one-story brick structure on a side street a half block off the square west of the courthouse. It was built when the law was considered a dignified profession, instead of a mercenary trade not governed by union regulations. There was a grassplot in front shaded by two dignified elms.

He started to cut across the courthouse yard in the center of the square, but changed his mind. Leaning against one of the trees was Lawrence Morton talking earnestly to Lem Rogers.

Suddenly Craig's spirits dropped to zero. He knew how unstable was Lem Rogers.

On the opposite corner of the square he ran into Buff Rollins, and his temperature took another handspring toward the bottom of the glass. Rollins, whom he knew slightly at the university, was building the new fifty-thousand-dollar high-school building at Buck Prairie, just down the line. In three years, so he had heard, Buff had made fifteen thousand as a building contractor; and Craig had made—something less than sixty-six and two-thirds. It made him blue merely to see Rollins.

Irene Bankhead was going through the afternoon mail when Craig entered. She looked up, smiled, and nodded briskly. She was a very businesslike young person, but had a very unbusinesslike dimple at the right corner of her mouth, and her smile seemed more suggestive of daisy chains than legal rigmarole. But she had understanding gray eyes that saw straight.

"I want to borrow a book," he said.

"Help yourself." Already her eyes were rapidly scanning another letter, and her pencil making notations on the margin.

Craig put Kelly up and looked through several different volumes; and between each look he watched Irene. She was good to look at. Her hair was a soft brown, and her complexion clear and healthy. She wore a cool linen dress, and was altogether attractive.

"I wonder what she really does think of my 'tries' at being a lawyer," Craig speculated. "I wish I really knew."

"What sort of lawyer are you?" The girl had finished her work and turned to him with a little wrinkle of severity between her eyes.

He visibly jumped. It was as though she had guessed his thoughts.

"No sort of a lawyer at all," he replied gloomily.

"You won that hog-stealing case." Her statement gave it significance. "And"—she was frowning—"you saved the fellow from the penitentiary. Then you refused to take the five-dollar fee he offered you. I saw you."

"Didn't I make an awful speech?" he evaded uneasily. He wished she hadn't been there.

"Yes—it was pretty bad," she admitted seriously.

"I can't make a speech to a jury to save my life."

"No, I guess not," she assented. "You show a sense of humor to know it. Lots of lawyers never find it out. But you are getting away from the case in hand. Why did you give that five back? You had done a hundred dollars' worth of work on the case."

Ray again stammered and blushed. "He—he's got six children—and only one mule——"

"And five hounds," she added.

Craig laughed. "Yes, but that's all right. A man needs some amusement. Really the fellow was too hard up to spare a dime. I just couldn't take his money. I didn't expect anything in the first place."

"What I don't see is how you managed to clear him. It looked like a plain case."

"Yes, it did, but I was sure he was innocent. You have to judge more from the sort of man he is than on the evidence. A certain type of man will do some things, and there are some things he won't do. There is one sort that will shoot craps and bootleg that would die before he would steal a hog. And there is another sort who would collapse if he found a whisky bottle in his boot, who will steal his brother-in-law's last milk cow. I know Logan is onery enough; but he is not the hog-stealing type."

Miss Bankhead smiled. "If you are such a keen observer of types tell me what you think of Lawrence Morton."

Craig did not reply at once. What he thought above everything else was that Morton hung around Judge Bankhead's office entirely too much.

"Well," he replied slowly, "for one thing, he is never wrong, and he knows all about every subject from Greek roots to Burbank berries."

Irene looked at him searchingly a moment, and then smiled enigmatically.

"Is he the sort of fellow to make a woman happy?" She was looking at the point of her pencil again, very serious.

"Y-e-s," answered Craig, "if he goes off and leaves her alone."

She laughed speculatively.

Craig took a volume on contracts under his arm, and started for the door. This was not a pleasant subject.

"Do you really want to know what I think of Morton?" He stopped halfway to the door.

"Yes." She looked at him really in earnest.

"I think of him," he said, "just what his wife will after they have been married ten years."

III.

Craig was still thinking about Lawrence Morton when he got back to the office.

"He's got a silver tongue," Ray said bitterly as he sat knocking his knuckles against the pine table, "and a brass front and an asbestos lining. He's presumption personified, and has a patent on glibness."

He grinned. "That's pretty good. Dog-gone it!" And he kicked the table leg vexedly. "Why can't I ever think of a thing like that when I am making a speech?"

He sat for fifteen minutes thump-thumping the toe of his shoe against the table leg, calling himself names and demanding why in thunder he couldn't do this and couldn't do that. And wondering uneasily what Irene did think of him—as a lawyer. Did she despise him for giving that five back? Did she think he would ever succeed? Or did she secretly laugh at him as the rest did openly?

The door pushed open, and Lem Rogers came in with that ingratiating, apologetic air a fellow wears when he wants you to trade back.

"Lawrence Morton came to me to-day and talked about that suit," said Rogers, after fidgeting uneasily in his chair and looking steadily away from Ray. "He says it's going to be a very difficult one —lots of fine points involved. I told him I had talked of getting you; and he spoke mighty high of you; said he'd knowed you always, and you was a feller that always tried hard; and he said while you was all right on a case before a justice of the peace where no oratory was required, it seemed to him on a big case like this I better get a more experienced lawyer——"

"Him, for instance," said Craig bitingly.

Rogers grew red. "Well, I did hire him. He's given up to be the best lawyer in this part of the State unless it's Sam Pope Grivin; and lots of fellers say he's got Grivin beat. I'd really wanted to give it to you, Ray, to help you out, but, as Morton said, it's too risky to break a colt when you got a wagonload of eggs." Rogers grinned propitiatingly, but the humor did not appeal to Craig.

"That is perfectly all right, Mr. Rogers," he said. "Whom you employ to handle your case is solely your affair."

When Rogers left, Craig addressed his mind to Lawrence Morton. "Snitch!" he said fiercely. "He's yellow clear to the whites of his eyes."

That evening on the way to supper he passed Jim Sager's tobacco shop just as the bandy-legged, flat-nosed proprietor stood in the door talking to Bill Scott, the town marshal, on the sidewalk.

"Say, Bill," said Sager, "you must get Morty to give you Craig's hog-thief speech. It's funnier than a negro show." Jim was one of these small-caliber toadies who try to be hail-fellow well-met by calling well-known men familiar nicknames, and by laughing uproariously at any vulgar story.

"Funny, is it?" said Scott, grinning at Ray, who had just come up. "How about it, Craig?"

"Haven't heard it," said Craig shortly.

"Oh, he's got it straight," said Jim. "Irene Bankhead took it down for him in shorthand, and he can take off Craig just to a dot."

Craig passed on. He thought he was boiling before, but now he knew it had been a mere surface simmer. And that was the sort of friend Irene Bankhead was! Go to the trial and take his speech in shorthand to give to that—that—to make sport of all over the congressional district.

At the corner of the square he glanced vindictively down the side street toward the judge's office.

Although it was nearly six o'clock Lawrence Morton was just backing from the door, hat in hand, a pink rose in his buttonhole, bowing and laughing. Irene Bankhead followed him down to the elm trees, holding out her hand for something he had, both laughing and bantering. Craig shut his teeth, and walked on, hitting the sidewalk jarringly with his heels at each step.

Shakespeare certainly at some time in his life was behind with his board bill. That remark about misfortunes never coming singly was too pat for an unexperienced man. When a fellow is in arrears with his landlady, misfortunes have to come double or triple or quadruple. For sure as fate when he gets a thump during the day that makes his knees weak and his head ache, that evening his boarding-house keeper will corner him in the hall just under the stairs by the umbrella rack, and insist on his explaining to her how a poor widow woman can run a boarding house without money. How can she buy meat at twenty cents a pound, and butter at thirty, if the boarders don't pay up?

Craig had that experience, He also had the pleasure of hearing the frowsy-headed female racket store clerk remark at supper that "Everybody says Mr. Lawrence Morton and Miss Bankhead are to be married this fall. Ain't it a lovely match?"

Ray went to bed at eight o'clock. He had surely had enough for one day. The night was about equally divided between the hours when he was awake kicking the lumps in the shuck mattress, and those when he was asleep fighting the goblins on the wall paper or plowing sorghum cane with a one-eyed mule.

The week following was the worst Craig ever put through. The failure of expected good luck often hurts worse than actual bad luck. He was walking the grim valley where every elusive shadow and falling leaf seem an omen warning him to turn back and seek some other way, lest more terrible things overtake him.

But if he had been a quitter he would have quit before. In that week of agony and self-abasement and fierce resentment he lost his taste for frills of oratory and his ambition to hear handclaps. He emerged with one concentrated desire—to be a lawyer who won cases—and, above all, won them from Lawrence Morton.

"I don't care a green persimmon," he announced to the mutilated countenance of Patrick Henry, "what they say or think of me—if I win the cases—and I'll win 'em. And I'll show her—and I'll make her sorry."

Friday afternoon Craig was bent over his desk diagramming an imaginary case wherein he faced Lawrence Morton as the opposing counsel, and just when he had Morton hemmed in a corner and whipped to a frazzle there was a thump on the door.

"Come in!"

It was Buff Rollins. The contractor was a sinewy, alert young man of quick movements. He dropped into a chair with only a nod of greeting.

"Craig, I'm in the deuce of a mess."

Ray saw that he was. There were lines of acute worry all over his face.

"In fact," said the contractor, "I guess I'm done for. That is what they say over at Buck Prairie."

"What's the trouble?" Craig's heart beat like a candidate's waiting for the election returns when he sighted a case.

"I bought ten thousand dollars' worth of stone from the Belmont Stone Company. I had never dealt with them, but the rock looked good and was a little cheaper. To guarantee my acceptance after the stone was cut, I gave them my note for the full amount, due in six months.

"Last week a whole string of cars arrived, with the entire order—a very inferior grade of stone—not what I ordered at all. It seems this company operates two quarries of entirely different formation. The school board, of course, refuses to accept the job if that stone is used. And there I am."

"That is easy," said Craig. "Refuse to accept the shipment, and let them sue on the note. You can beat it with your eyes shut."

"But they have sold the note to an innocent purchaser—the People's National Bank."

Craig whistled. "That is bad."

"And what is worse," said Rollins gloomily, "I'm worth it. It will clean me out—and sell my machinery; but they can collect every cent of it."

"There is only one possible hope," said Craig. "If we can prove the bank did not really buy the note, but is merely acting as agent for collection, we can beat it."

"Go after it, then," said Rollins.

"But the chances are not one in a thousand that we can. Even if true, it will be very difficult to prove. It will probably be merely wasting money; but if you say so I'll do my best."

"I say so." Rollins nodded positively. "I'd fight those weasels if there was only once chance in ten thousand."

"All right," said Ray. "I'll go to Belmont and investigate."

"What will your services be worth?" asked Rollins, taking out a pocketbook.

"Fifty if I lose—and——"

"And a thousand if you win," finished Rollins. "Here's your fifty. Now you are already paid to lose."

The two young men shook hands heartily, and the contractor left.

## V.

Craig went to Belmont. The first man he questioned was the bank cashier. He had not talked with him five minutes before his hopes suffered a relapse. He was on a hopeless quest. He saw at once the cashier was giving a perfectly straightforward account; the bank had actually purchased the note.

The cashier said they bought a good many notes from the stone company; that they had investigated the credit of Rollins, found him financially responsible, and had bought the note outright July fifteenth, three months before it was due.

"To convince you," he said, "I'll look up the deposit slip. Here it is——" The slip was dated July fifteenth and gave the stone company credit for ten thousand dollars.

"Do they keep a large balance?" Craig asked.

"Always a pretty good balance," answered the cashier.

"What was their balance August first?"

The cashier consulted his books. "Twenty-four thousand six hundred and forty-five dollars and twenty-five cents."

"And what is it now?"

"Twenty-two thousand five hundred and ninety-seven dollars and sixty-six cents."

Craig asked a few more questions, and then called on the president and the treasurer of the stone company. All their testimony corroborated the cashier's. The bank had actually purchased the note as a piece of good commercial paper; purchased it before it was due, and therefore were innocent purchasers.

Rollins was at Cedar Hill anxiously awaiting his return.

"They are innocent purchasers all right," said Craig. "No doubt in the world."

"That fixes me," said Rollins desperately. "Puts me back to nothing—it'll even take my tools. I guess we may as well drop it, then. There seems to be no possible hope. All the lawyers say so. And the bank has employed Sam Pope Grivin and Lawrence Morton to make it doubly sure."

"We'll go to trial," said Craig. "If it will skin you to pay the note, the extra costs can't take any more hide."

"All right," said Rollins, and left.

Craig had just the glimmer of an idea—it came to him while talking with the cashier.

Confound it—why did the whole world have it in for him! If Irene had only proved trustworthy, how much he should have loved to talk this case over with her. But she had lined up with his persecutors and he was going to treat her accordingly—no matter how much it hurt him.

That very afternoon he had occasion to carry out his resolve. He met Irene Bankhead on the street. She gave him a warm, sunny smile; he returned a freezy, acidulated stare; and, to her breezy, companionable "Good afternoon, Mr. Craig," he replied with a stiff nod. As he passed on he carried with him an impression of a surprised, puzzled look of rebuff.

That evening a messenger brought a note to his office. It was a straightforward little inquiry as to what had happened to him, what was the matter with him? Was he mad? If so, about what? Why had he not been around to the library for days?

In any other mood he would have seen it was a very appealing little note, full of concern and unexpressed loss. But when one is offended and feels half in the wrong, nothing seems so desirable as to hurt one's former best friend as deeply as possible.

He sent a frigid, formal reply, saying that he was busy and had no occasion to call at the library.

But when it was gone he kicked himself two or three times on the left shin with his right heel. "Dog-gone it, what in the world is the matter with me! It was a ridiculous speech—and anybody has a right to laugh at what is funny." He could have forgiven anything—if she had not given that copy to Lawrence Morton.

VI.

Rollins' note fell due September fifteenth. The bank brought suit immediately, and the case was set for the second day of the October term of circuit court.

Rollins came down Saturday. He showed marked symptoms of worry. It is pretty tough to earn ten thousand by hard thinking and diligent work, and lose it all at once.

"I guess we've no chance in the world," he said, sitting on the corner of Craig's desk and swinging his right leg. "All the lawyers at Buck Prairie say we haven't. An innocent purchaser, they say, can collect even a fraudulent note."

"Yes," Craig nodded.

"You still think the bank an innocent purchaser?"

"Am sure of it," replied the young attorney.

"Then we are in bad. We'll just get the guffaw from the crowd for our pains. Hadn't we better confess judgment and let her slide?"

"No," Craig said positively. "I'm going to put up some sort of fight."

"All right," assented Rollins. "You are the doctor—and I'm a dead goose, anyway. I wish to the dickens that fool bank had stayed out of the game. By the way, I guess they are not figuring on taking any risks. Lawrence Morton, our candidate for Congress, and Sam Pope Grivin make a pretty strong team against one beginner, don't they?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Ray, nettled. Why couldn't even his clients forget he was a beginner?

The case was set for Tuesday. On Monday Lawrence Morton dropped into Craig's office, took the one chair with sound legs, and nonchalantly put his right thumb in the armhole of his vest, and carelessly curled a puff of smoke into the air.

"Say, Craig," he began lazily, "if you've looked up the law on this thing at all you know there isn't any more chance for Rollins to win that suit than for a mosquito to bore a well—or for you to make a speech." Morton laughed jovially at his own pleasantries. He was merely meaning to be a hail fellow; but Craig manifested no symptoms of being well met. He made dots on his blotter with a carefully sharpened pencil, and looked noncommittal.

"Is that so?" There was both acid and nonchalance in the tone.

"Sure." Morton was always sure. "It is the dead-surest shot I ever had in my life. You haven't a leg to stand on. You'll be blown out of court in thirty minutes. It is just giving the crowd one more chance to—to laugh at your speech. Why don't you dismiss it and confess judgment—and we'll not go to trial at all.

"Come, do it, Craig, and be a good fellow. I've got a speaking date tomorrow and don't want to have to stay over for this thing."

"No," said Craig, and shut his teeth like he was cracking a hickory nut, "the case will have to go on. But you might leave it with Grivin."

"Grivin!" Morton laughed. "Grivin is merely an ornament. I've got to supply the brains. All right, if you insist on going to trial—go ahead—I'll stay over, and I warn you I'll be in the devil of a temper for having missed that date; and, believe me, I'll hand you a few that will blister for years." He laughed threateningly as he left the office.

VII.

The case of the People's National Bank of Belmont vs. B. F. Rollins was called at two o'clock.

The courtroom was full. Anything involving ten thousand dollars would draw a big crowd in Cedar Hill. And then Samuel Pope Grivin and Lawrence Morton both being on the case made it equal to a barbecue and a free show in one; with Ray Craig to furnish the amusement. Half the crowd came to hear Craig try to make a speech.

But for one time in his life Craig had no desire to make a speech. He did not intend to try. He felt perfectly cool. All his purposes and desires were focused into one silent but terrific intent, a concentration that blew upon his one point like a tube of oxygen upon a flame.

The case was called. It was so one-sided, so dead certain, that the fifteen or twenty lawyers in attendance at circuit court sat around inside the railing, sharpening pencils and whispering about their own cases.

Lawrence Morton arose for the plaintiff to outline what he intended to prove. It was so simple and certain that even he could not find any excuse for a display of words. But he did manage to bring in a few sarcastic remarks about the "brilliant and fluent attorney for the defense." That raised a laugh. But Craig did not even grow red in the face. His teeth ground into each other a little harder, but his hand kept steady and his eye never wavered from Lawrence Morton's face. Craig for once did not care a blueberry what the crowd thought. They could laugh and jeer all they liked—they were mere dead leaves to him being blown about by every puffy wind—that is, all but one. In an aisle seat halfway back sat Irene Bankhead with a pencil and notebook. And Craig's occasional glances that way told him, for some reason, this trial was of tremendous importance to her. She was watching and listening like one who has everything at stake, and her mind was searching for a clew to the outcome.

The gist of Morton's statement, robbed of its inevitable little flowery twirls, was that B. F. Rollins had signed the note for ten thousand dollars; that the People's National Bank had purchased it before it was due, and were therefore innocent purchasers, and that no defense whatever was possible against an innocent purchaser.

Samuel Pope Grivin, of course, had nothing to say. He never shook the oratorical tree until the persimmons were ripe. He wanted things mellowed up before he waded in on our "Great Commonwealth," and "the Principles of American Stability in Business Being the Inviolability of the Promissory Note."

The judge asked Craig if he had any statement to make, and Craig shook his head.

Morton leaned across the table and whispered in a loud aside to Sam Pope: "He's got the buck ague so bad already he can't trust his knees. Shame to pluck a horseweed like that from the cornfield."

"Call your first witness," said the judge to Morton.

He called the secretary of the stone company, who testified positively he had sold the note to the bank.

"That is all," said Morton.

The judge turned to Craig and nodded for him to proceed with the cross-examination.

"No questions to ask," said Craig.

A smile went around the members of the bar and spread over the courtroom. A lawyer who would let a witness get away without a half hour of senseless browbeating was not worth his job. Craig was surely badly scared this time.

Two other witnesses were called with the same result. Each time that Craig refused to cross-examine, the courtroom gathered interest. If he was that scared now, his effort to make a speech would be something to repeat throughout the coming years.

Then Morton called his last witness, the cashier of the bank. He testified, as he had when Craig questioned him in the summer; they had positively bought the note in good faith on July fifteenth. And to make assurance doubly sure produced the deposit slip that showed he had given the stone company credit on that day for ten thousand dollars.

The examination was finished; the judge, supposing Craig would pass up this witness also, said perfunctorily: "No questions, Mr. Craig?"

"One or two," said Craig. The crowd picked up its ears and got ready to grin.

"How much money did the Belmont Stone Company have on deposit July fifteenth?"

The cashier referred to a memorandum. He had expected that question because Craig had asked it in the summer.

"Twenty-four thousand six hundred and seventy-five dollars."

"Is this company a good customer of yours?"

"Yes."

"Do they always have a good deposit with you?"

"Yes, always have twenty thousand or more."

"What was their deposit yesterday?"

"Twenty-six thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars."

Craig hesitated for a moment, and Morton winked broadly at the group of lawyers who were listening with grins.

"You bought this note in good faith July fifteenth?" Craig asked.

"Yes"—positively.

"The slip you showed to the jury is the deposit slip you gave them at the time?"

"It is."

Craig turned to the judge. "That is all."

A poorly suppressed laugh broke out in the courtroom. The greenhorn had merely asked questions to strengthen his opponents' case. He had emphasized the things Morton and Grivin wanted to prove. Morton looked sardonically sarcastic at Craig, and Sam Pope Grivin puffed out his cheeks amusedly.

"That is all our witnesses," Morton informed the court, with a tone of, "And, good heavens, it's enough!"

"Call your witnesses." The judge turned briskly to Craig. This thing was too simple to waste time over.

"Haven't any," said Craig.

It was too absurd to be properly funny. The crowd, especially the lawyers, felt a sort of pity for the blundering young lawyer. Why had he ever gone to trial without one single iota of proof?

"Your honor"—Samuel Pope Grivin rose to his feet and gave a gentle pull to the bottom of his soiled checked silk vest, and loosened his fat neck in his rolling collar—"your honor, it is scarcely worth while to argue this case——" Nevertheless he had started to deliver his prepared speech, and the courtroom was ready to listen, when he was interrupted. When he got steamed down enough to see what the trouble was, Craig was on his feet addressing the judge.

"Your honor," said Craig, looking steadily at the judge, but speaking with a clearness that carried over the courtroom, "before the court is wearied by a long and useless windy argument"—the corners of the judge's mouth twitched at that—"I desire to make a motion."

The interruption caught the crowd. Anything unusual in a trial fires up new interest. Everybody was listening with a grin handy. Craig was going to make some blunder, and Sam Pope Grivin would blow him out of the window. Grivin's mouth had suspended operations while half open, and he was too astonished at the audacity of the interruption to close it. Morton grinned sarcastically.

"State your motion," said the judge.

"I move the case be taken from the jury, and the suit be dismissed."

The lawyers openly chuckled. The fool youngster was merely repeating a motion he had heard in court without even knowing what he meant.

"State your grounds," said the judge, interested. He was watching Craig, and there was something in his face.

Craig half turned so he could see the jury—and got a glimpse down the aisle of a certain young lady leaning forward with lips slightly parted, eagerness and excitement in her face.

"On the grounds, your honor"—Craig fixed his eyes on Lawrence Morton's sarcastic smile—"that the People's National Bank has never purchased this note from the Belmont Stone Company."

Craig knew exactly what he wanted to say, and his tone was backed by a driving force. The moment's pause stirred the whole crowd with intense interest. Either something was about to be sprung on the two best lawyers in the Southwest, or else this young fellow was going to make the biggest ass of himself in the county.

"No sale is completed," resumed Craig, speaking slowly and looking straight at Lawrence Morton, "until some valuable consideration is given. The People's National Bank did not, nor ever has given, the Belmont Stone Company any compensation whatever for this note.

"They merely gave them a deposit slip for ten thousand dollars, and a deposit slip is not a valuable consideration."

The courtroom stirred and looked at each other with a struggling sort of wonder and amazement in their understanding. Grivin's mouth dropped wider open, and he drew in a huge breath, ready for more oratory. Lawrence Morton had shut his lips, and a tinge of pallor came into his face. But glancing down the aisle for a fleeting second Craig saw Irene Bankhead's face flushed beautifully and her eyes dancing.

"The evidence introduced by the plaintiff," continued Craig, "proves that during this entire time the stone company had a balance far in excess of ten thousand dollars; that at no time have they demanded or received one dollar as payment on this note.

"Therefore the transaction is not complete, and the note has not been bought by the bank. They have merely agreed to take it—and have given a deposit slip as a promise of payment on demand. Hence they are not innocent purchasers or any other sort—and I ask the suit against Mr. Rollins be dismissed."

The judge was strongly impressed. He pondered a moment. Grivin started to speak, but the judge nodded for silence.

"It seems to me," the judge said to Morton, "that is a good point. I never heard of it being raised before. Have you any reports on the case?" He turned back to Craig.

"Yes, sir," said Ray promptly. "In Minnesota Reports 101, page 470."

Craig had the volume, and passed it to the judge.

After a few minutes' reading the judge looked up.

"It is a good point and well taken. Gentlemen"—he turned, with a smile to Grivin and Morton—"he has you. The suit is dismissed; the jury is discharged. Court is adjourned until to-morrow."

It would have been evident to a man with a six-inch wooden skull that in the twinkling of an eye public sentiment had changed. Craig had whipped the two biggest lawyers in the country. It was not luck, after all—but he was a wonder—a regular sharp at the law. They laughed and jostled each other and tried to crowd around him.

Rollins pounced on Craig with the force of a center football rush.

"You blessed son of a gun," he exclaimed, crushing his hand, "why didn't you tell me what you had up your sleeve—and save me three months' sleep?"

"I wanted to be sure it would work," said Craig, smiling.

"Let's go to the bank," said Rollins. "I can't get you that thousand quick enough. Why, I feel like a condemned criminal just reprieved. I'm saved——"

As they went toward the bank Rollins continued bubbling over with exuberance.

"Don't you know, I came up here that day to employ Morton, but I was persuaded to get you instead. A distant relative told me Morton was seventy per cent oratory and thirty per cent law; and you were five per cent talk and ninety-five per cent law and common sense. After reading some shorthand reports of your speeches—she had taken them, she said, to show Morton how to get some law and sense into his arguments—I soon agreed that while they were nothing to sneeze at in the way of oratory, each of them had one big strong point that court could not get away from."

"This cousin of yours?" Craig was tingling all over with excitement.

"Bankhead—Irene—you know her, don't you?"

"I do," said Craig. "By the way"—he stopped suddenly—"you can bring that thousand down to my office after supper. I've got an engagement right now."

He turned at the corner, and walked swiftly to Bankhead's little old brick office.

Irene met him at the door and held out both hands; her face was still beautifully flushed.

"Splendid!" she exclaimed. "That was the finest legal point I ever heard raised. You are going to be a great lawyer."

"I'd rather hear you say it than the judge." He still held her hands. "Say, this would be an awfully nice afternoon for a drive down the river road."

"Indeed it would." Her eyes brightened mischievously. "Is that an observation or an invitation?"

"An urgent invitation," he said, still holding her hands. "I—I—have something to tell you."

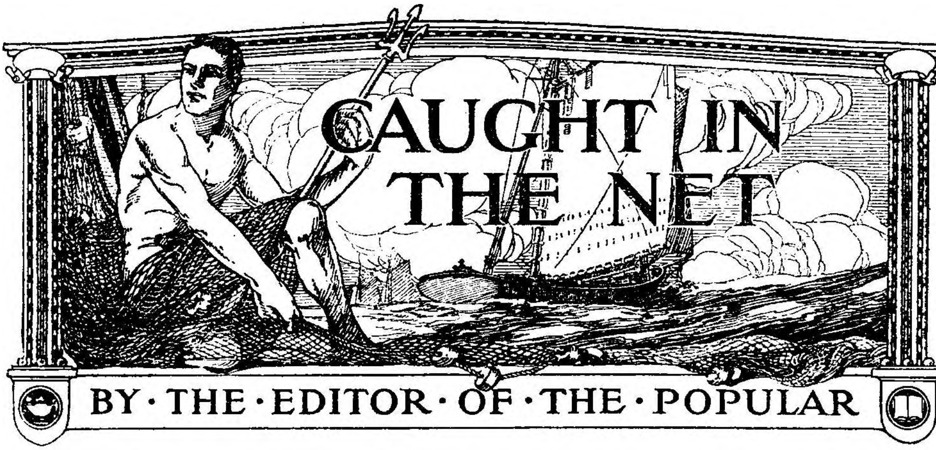
She drew a deep breath and evaded his eyes, while the color came to her cheeks.

"I'm almost afraid to go," she looked up tantalizingly from the corners of her eyes, "for even when you forget your speech you have such a strong case you generally win."

## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION

AT the constitutional convention of Nevada, when that territory was about to become a State, one of the delegates was a wild-eyed, shrill-voiced cowboy who had a lot to say on every question that came up for discussion. If there was no discussion on any paragraph of the constitution that came up, he started one. In the document was the usual, stereotyped paragraph to the effect that the new State should have two senators to represent her in Washington.

"Say! Hold on there!" yelled the cowboy delegate, vibrating with the thrill of a new idea. "What's the use of limiting the number to two? We're overwhelmingly Republican, and we can elect as many as we want!"




## OUR CHANCE

A VAST deal has been printed about America's unique opportunity to get the huge export trade that Europe has had to abandon because of the war. Many persons wonder why we haven't landed it. As a matter of fact, the sordid notion that this trade can be seized is as wrong as it is absurd. It is a trade that must be cultivated—not grabbed.

Let us suppose that there are two general stores in an isolated country community. One—which has burned down—has been giving its customers long credit, and taking a good deal of its pay in their produce. The other has been buying and selling on a cash basis. Before the destroyed store is rebuilt its customers go to the cash store, expecting the same credit and trade accommodations that they have enjoyed so long at the other place. The cash storekeeper is rather puzzled at first—delighted, but dubious. He realizes that he can get a lot of new business, but that he will have to change his methods. He is sure that the new trade is solvent, though slow. Finally he accommodates his new patrons, and supplies them efficiently. When the other store is rebuilt and running again, some of its former customers return; others stick to the one that has been taking care of them.

The average American merchant or manufacturer has always sold his goods on practically a cash basis. The European dealer has always given his foreign customers long credits, and has taken their local products in payment—like the country store's system of barter and credit, though on a gigantic scale. When the war broke out there were thousands of open accounts in Hamburg and London and elsewhere that had been running unbalanced for a generation. When the debtors in South America or South Africa were suddenly called on for money they were unable to respond. Many of the countries in which they lived had been using their credit too freely. Therefore they adopted a moratorium, postponing the payment of debts.

Such is the condition of the countries and the people whose trade we are now seeking. We can sell them at once fleetloads of goods on credit. We know that we will be paid in the end. We would like the business, but such long terms are new to us.

Much of the raw materials that other countries have sent to Europe in exchange for goods cannot be used here in their crude state, because we have not the facilities for manufacturing them. They have gone to Europe first because they could be fitted for our use cheaper there than we could do it ourselves. But after the war those that survive will have so much to do that wages will rise to nearly their level here. There will be no reason why Europe should continue to do this work for us. Therefore, if we have not already done so, we will take the raw materials direct and manufacture them.

Europe's long-credit system with other countries has worked out satisfactorily. If this country adopts it, as it must if it goes into international trade on a large scale, it will yield as fair a profit in our hands. Changing conditions will cause us to build new factories and to bring fleets of ships under our flag.

All this will take time and organized effort. It has taken England and Germany, for instance, many years to build up the trade that they now cannot take care of. We cannot get it and hold it in any other way than by good business methods and honest dealing. Along these lines it is worth making a good, hard try for.

## FLORIDA WATERWAYS

A WATER route across Florida that would shorten the sailing distance between Europe, the Atlantic seaboard, and the ports of the Gulf has been a dream for ages. Now it is near realization.

In the draining of the Everglades, that region of swamp and mystery, work upon which was begun eight years ago, so much progress has been made that the end is in sight. Of the 275 miles of canal necessary to be dug, 150 have been completed and 105 are well on the way to completion. While these canals will drain the Everglades, still other work is necessary to free the region from danger of inundation when Lake Okeechobee overflows its banks. To overcome the Okeechobee menace a big canal is to be dug from the lake to the Atlantic.

When this canal is finished it will form, with Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee Canal and River, a navigable waterway across the State.

The Florida canals were designed to reclaim about five million acres of land. Little was thought of the possibility of their use by the carriers of the commerce of the sea, yet to-day it is considered possible they will serve more in that way if they are deepened and broadened than in the opening of the swamp lands to agricultural development.

## PRIMITIVE

IF a man acts naturally, we are pretty sure to call him primitive. If he laughs always when he is amused, and only when he is amused; if he kicks when he is bit, and eats what he wants in the way he wants it, says what he thinks, and does what he most wants to do, he is a primitive man. The difference between him and what we term a civilized man is, the latter is governed largely by rules and customs. The rules and customs may be excellent, and he may know it is best to obey them; but his conforming is not from a spontaneous inclination to do those things, but in obedience to the law of the accepted thing.

When men of culture and refinement lapse from civilization and follow the primitive impulses and passions; when the civilization of whole nations seems to collapse in a day, we are prone to conclude that all our learning and brotherhood and Christianity is no more than a brittle veneer; and that man at heart is forever the same primitive savage.

But he is not. He is still primitive at heart; but not the same sort of primitiveness. And that change is what counts for permanent civilization. It is what men do when the bonds of custom and precedent are thrown aside that reveals his true state of advancement. In an hour of passion, to-day as always, men's politeness, consideration, moral scruples, sense of brotherhood, may be thrown to the wind, and he plunges into a death grapple—trying to settle, as always, his difficulties by physical force.

And yet in these he is not the same primitive man. Even when he does exactly what he wants to do, he does not do many of the things the original savage did. Even when, as now, the most highly civilized nations of the world are engaged in the deadliest of strife, they are not as were their ancestor warriors. No passions or hatreds ever ran stronger than now; and yet, in spite of rumors to the contrary, to the captured enemy, to the defenseless women and children, to the unfenced city do not come the horrible atrocities of a century ago.

The basic, fundamental impulses of men to-day are not nearly up to the high standards of our civilization; but at the worst he is a much better primitive man than the original primitive man.

## BUSINESS HONESTY AND PRICE CUTTING

THERE was a time when the simplest and most rudimentary code of ethics was enough for honesty in business. Under that code it was a simple matter of bargain and sale when a man contracted with a child to work for long hours and little wages, and a perfectly honest thing for the employer to do. Under a slightly older system any man was free to sell himself as a slave, and it was a perfectly honest thing for a man to buy and hold a slave. About fifty years ago even negro slavery ceased to be good form in business, and at present there are a lot of laws regulating the hours a child is permitted to work which show a higher sense of right and wrong and a higher sense of responsibility. There was a time also when a retail dealer could make what profit he could on an article he bought from a wholesaler, and charge as little or as much for it as he wanted, but it seems that that time must be passing also. Advertising plays so great a part in the manufacturers' campaign to-day that it seems as if he had some moral right to say what the retailer should charge for an article. He tries to fix a price for his article, and one retailer may spoil the business of a hundred others by cutting the price of that one article below any margin of profit with the idea of getting customers into his store and inducing them to purchase at high prices other things on which no price has been put at the factory. Naturally this hurts the retailers who try to sell at the fixed price, and also the manufacturer who fixes a price. The very fact that he makes such a price shows that he is honestly convinced that it is worth that, and that he intends to maintain that price with all. We all know well enough that the best, most honest retailers run one-price stores, and that no amount of haggling will induce them to lower the price for the benefit of an individual. It is this broad, general one-price system affording a square deal to every one which has raised all sorts of retail business to a higher standard of ethics, dignity, and profit.

It seems as if the one-price system were the best, and now that the manufacturer wants to copy the retailer and make one price for his goods wherever sold, it might be well to encourage him. His movement is on the side of open dealing, which means honesty in business. The price cutter may be a good man, but he must make a profit somewhere, and if he loses on the article with the fixed price, he must take a liberal percentage on the things on which prices are not fixed by the manufacturer. The price cutter may help you to save on a few things, but surely the tendency of business evolution is against him, and in the long run the man who helps to maintain a fair price fixed by the manufacturer is helping the public as well.

It is also a good thing to remember that no one is going to spend a lot of money advertising a tooth powder, a piano, a watch, or anything else unless he has something worth while for sale, and something fairly worth the price he fixes for the retailer.

## THE APPEAL OF THE RAILROADS

THE recent appeal of the committee of railroad presidents to President Wilson was as straightforward and manly a statement as we have read in a long time. No matter what the past sins of the railroads, and the past sins of any of us are plenty numerous, there is no denying they have received more than their share of hard knocks the past few years. Perhaps they brought it on themselves, but, regardless of the cause, enough of anything is enough, and fair play never calls for destructive revenge. Furthermore, it has been evident for many months that responsible railroad men have been doing everything they can to get the railroads on an honest, efficient, paying basis.

The railroads have been sincerely endeavoring to cultivate a friendly spirit between their lines and their patrons; and have in most cases merited our good will and assistance.

Vast enterprises are vast risks. The railroads cannot be built, and will not be built and maintained, with the mere possibility of making five or six per cent. The people will never consent again to be exploited by the public carriers; neither should the people exploit the carriers. The railroads should be allowed such rates as will yield them a fair rate of interest, and, in times of prosperity, something over to meet emergencies like the present.

It is not according to the temper of the American people to be satisfied with a small, fixed increase. Whether it is wise or unwise, ninety men out of a hundred in America would rather have a dollar a day, with a chance open to make a good strike some day, than to be assured of a straight two dollars a day for life, with no hope of anything else. We want the way left open to good profits. We demand it for ourselves. We ought not by our votes and outcry take it from others. Not exorbitant profits, nor robber profits; but there should always be the chance for men and capital to earn something more than a daily wage, and six per cent.

The railroads have had their hard knocks. They have learned their lesson. They are trying to do the square thing. Let us meet them halfway with our coöperation and good will. Our prosperity demands it—and, what is more, fair play demands it.

# The Conflict

## A TALE OF THE WAR OF THE NATIONS

### By Colonel Max Desprez

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

As Robert Cameron, diplomatic representative of the United States to Luxemburg, awakes from his midsummer afternoon siesta, he is astonished and delighted to find his friend, Fairfax Morgan, a young American physician and tennis enthusiast, at his château gates. Morgan is in love with the diplomat's niece, Charlotte, who even at that very moment is receiving marked attention from Count Von Hollman, a German army officer of high rank. Cameron introduces the two men who are destined to become deadly rivals. An informal party is held on the lawn at which Von Hollman brews "May wine" and indulges in a sinister toast—"To the 'Day'!" Furthermore, he predicts that Morgan will see no tennis tournament at Nice that summer. Hardly has he spoken when the rumble of distant cannon is heard and German uhlans are seen patroling the peaceful streets of Luxemburg. Germany is preparing for war with France! A telegram causes Von Hollman to leave the Cameron château hastily. Forgetting for a moment these ominous signs, Morgan accuses Charlotte of being in love with the German officer, but she soon convinces him of his folly in entertaining such thoughts. Excitment follows apace. That night a French aviator swoops down upon the Cameron grounds, huge Zeppelins in chase. Etienne Martin, the pursued bird man, begs for petrol that he may reach his country and warn it of its danger. Healy, Morgan's rough but true-hearted chaffeur, gives the needed gasoline to Martin, while Morgan, in his anxiety to help the airman, intercepts a charging uhlan, throwing the horseman to earth and into unconsciousness. Thus Martin gets the precious fuel, and flys into the night sky, the Zeppelins still after him. Von Hollman then appears at the château, furious at the abetted escape of the French aviator, and puts Morgan and Healy under arrest. The indications are that they will be court-martialed for interfering with a German soldier in discharge of his duty. Without delay the arrested Americans are brought to trial before Major Von Graf and a military court. Von Graf is more or less of a toady to Von Hollman, and tries to rush the prisoners to summary execution. But the principal witness, Private Strassman, the man injured, fails to indentify Morgan and Healy as his assailants. His defective memory is due to a talk he has had with Charlotte, in which the girl persuaded him to *forget*. Hence the case collapses. Major Schmidt, a friendly fellow, advises Morgan to leave the country. Charlotte, too, desires to get away. Taking the cloak and busby of Colonel Von Hollman to safeguard them against detention within the German lines, Morgan and Charlotte leave the city in the doctor's high-powered automobile and head for Ostend, through the forest of Ardennes.

***(A Novel in Four Parts—Part III.)***

## CHAPTER XII.

### MR. CAMERON IS TROUBLED.

ROBERT CAMERON was in a most undiplomatic mood the morning after Charlotte's departure. The bundle of unsent telegrams and the package of money which the military telegrapher had returned to him the evening before roused feelings which he found hard to hold within the precise, rigid limits of his official decorum.

Never in the quarter century of his experience in the department had the elderly American such extreme cause to forget the dignity of his station. No provocation, however, justifies a display of temper by a trained diplomat. It is an unwritten law of the service. A minister, in theory, may be astute to an uncanny degree; he may fence with verbal foils like D'Artagnan in his prime; he may juggle history, treaties, international law, move principalities or even crowned heads on the chessboard of his negotiations, but he must never forget his official character by revealing even justifiable anger.

Mr. Cameron entered his limousine,

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therefore, outwardly impassive, although inwardly seething, and was driven to the telegraph office at the corner of the Rue Aldringer and Avenue Monterey. There were few people inside when he entered and confronted the rigid figure of the military censor with a hauteur quite equal to that which the officer assumed.

The censor bowed formally as he took the extended card. Also he peered through the window, scrutinizing the coat of arms on the limousine. A certain civility crept into his demeanor which would have deceived a less experienced man than Mr. Cameron.

The latter produced the delayed telegrams and spread them on the counter.

"May I ask of you why these messages were not forwarded?"

The query was voiced in a level tone not entirely in accord with the flash of the keen eyes behind it.

The censor scanned the documents, all couched in the most idiomatic German at the command of the embassy's secretary. The censor, too, was only a cog in the great military machine which had swept like a tidal wave over the little duchy, submerging its scant ten thousand square miles of territory and every function of its former government to the exigency of the Fatherland.

Consequently, while he abated no whit of his civility, the unyielding automatic obedience demanded by his superiors permitted no reason for any reply other than that given when the telegrams had been returned.

"Military necessity, Herr Cameron," he replied in tones as devoid of curiosity, interest, or sympathy as the bang of a wooden shuttle in a loom. "Those are the orders," he added.

Mr. Cameron held himself firmly in leash. This stolid oaf was only obeying blindly. Nevertheless, it was quite without precedent, at least in his own diplomatic experience, to have the official messages of a foreign envoy shunted aside on such a meager pretext. While nothing might come of it, Mr. Cameron's innate Scottish obduracy impelled him to go farther, especially as his delayed dispatches were in regard to the recent extreme jeopardy of Morgan and Healy.

"I desire to protest against either delay or refusal upon such flimsy grounds. On behalf of my government, I again request that you receive and transmit these messages to Berlin."

He pushed them forward and counted out the amount of tolls with aggravating slowness, consulting the rate book and even pointing to each separate charge in order that no loophole could be found for any later refusal on other grounds.

The censor hesitated. The inflexible policy of the empire, based on Bismarck's epigram, *"Durch Eisen und Blut,"* left him no choice. But "blood and iron" were essentially military, while this personage was a diplomat. The telegraph official disliked diplomacy, of which his ideas were most vague. He heartily wished the problem had been put before his colleague, who had just gone off watch.

"I regret, Herr Cameron," he at length replied as he returned them, "that my orders are imperative and admit of no exceptions."

"Very well," snapped Mr. Cameron, replacing the documents in his portfolio and turning toward the door. "I shall immediately transfer my request to be placed in communication with the German minister of foreign affairs——"

He broke off as Count Otto von Hollman stepped into the office. The young German commander was in a new mood. He carried himself with a jaunty air.

"Ah! The excellent Mr. Cameron!" said he genially.

"Colonel von Hollman," punctiliously returned Mr. Cameron.

"You seem disturbed." Von Hollman's smile was as frank and winning as a boy's. He positively radiated friendliness. "May I be of service to you in any way?"

"I cannot say." Mr. Cameron was as frosty as Von Hollman was warm. "I have not been able to obtain transmission of my official telegrams since Germany has occupied Luxemburg. Have you any idea why?"

If Von Hollman's surprise was simulated he was a good actor.

"My dear friend"—his tone was caressing—"this is most extraordinary. You say your official telegrams have been refused?"

"Twice." The curt monosyllable showed how indignant the speaker had become. "And some of them were of extraordinary importance," he added, after a pause.

Von Hollman turned toward the censor.

"Orders," reiterated that individual, anticipating the unspoken question as he saluted.

Von Hollman's smile broadened.

"You see," said he, turning to Mr. Cameron with a suggestive shrug of his shoulders, which conveyed more of a disclaimer than any words. "These fellows are merely automatons. They do not understand that every rule has its exception." He turned severely upon the censor, who was blinking his dismay. "Accept Herr Cameron's telegrams hereafter for immediate transmission. As an envoy of a neutral foreign power he is especially privileged."

The censor saluted. Von Hollman turned apologetically.

"Military necessity, Mr. Cameron, covers a multitude of inconveniences. May I offer the hope that you have seen the most extreme instance in this unwarrantable delay? I trust you have not been irreparably damaged."

Mr. Cameron unclasped his portfolio. He retained one telegram, handing it to Von Hollman.

"You may best judge of that," said he. "Military necessity is scarcely so plastic or elastic as to exclude the official messages of an accredited minister —ordinarily."

"You are quite right," agreed the other, handing back the telegram protesting to the German minister of foreign affairs at Berlin at the arrest of Morgan and Healy. "Also," he went on more earnestly, "you will, I am sure, acquit me, especially of any desire that such a lamentable delay should have transpired. I was very busy yesterday, you know, selecting the officers for Mr. Morgan's court-martial, and was careful, as the verdict of the military court will bear me out, in seeking unprejudiced men."

Mr. Cameron recalled Schmidt's comment regarding Judge Advocate von Graf, but diplomatically held his peace regarding that phase of the affair.

"It is of no consequence—now," he remarked placidly, "since Mr. Morgan has left Luxemburg."

His casual glance toward Von Hollman caught that officer unprepared. The American was sure that the statement jarred him. His jaw dropped, his eyes widened. For an instant he was disturbed.

"Left Luxemburg!" There was no doubt that Von Hollman had received a surprise, and Mr. Cameron was pleased to see it was an unpleasant one.

"With my niece last night," supplemented Mr. Cameron. "Why not? They are all American citizens and anxious to get out of the zone of hostilities as soon as they could, and they had passports properly viséed."

"No reason at all that I am aware of." Von Hollman recovered his composure. "By the way, my friend, have you heard the news? I am glad I happened upon you, for I am leaving within an hour."

He took the other's arm as they left the building.

"Things have been altogether too snarled for the last week for me to notice much except the necessities of these marooned countrymen of mine," parried the minister. "Not all of them, I regret, are so fortunate as to possess a high-power motor and equipped with funds to finance a journey to Ostend or Antwerp."

Von Hollman ignored the quiet thrust regarding Morgan's flight with Charlotte. Some other thought seemed to engross him. His face glowed with some strange sort of enthusiasm, and there was an indefinable something in his next words which suggested a certainty by no means entirely reassuring.

"You will be tremendously interested, I am sure," went on Von Hollman with almost boyish vivacity. "We have driven the French and English troops out of Belgium and across the French frontier. The Army of the North, according to the previous plans of the general staff, has effected a juncture with this corps at Charleroi. The Belgian resistance will soon be crushed and the remnants of their army sent off toward Antwerp."

He paused, noting the disquieted expression of the minister's face. It was a Roland for Mr. Cameron's Oliver—Morgan and Charlotte had leaped from the frying pan into the fire.

Mr. Cameron was stunned. The German advance had been miraculously rapid, and he fancied beneath Von Hollman's unruffled composure there was repressed self-satisfaction.

Charlotte and Morgan were somewhere out in the Ardennes!

Mr. Cameron pulled his mustache, and turned inquiringly toward Von Hollman. That extraordinary young man seemed to be thinking of much the same thing as himself, although he made no reference to the two people in whose welfare Mr. Cameron possessed so vivid a personal interest.

There was something uncanny about his next words—he seemed to be reading and interpreting the identical ideas in the minister's mind.

"Do you realize, Mr. Cameron," he continued, a dreamy light suffusing his eyes, "what all of this means? *Ach*, my friend, it is a great day—the day to which we have long looked forward. Think you we have forgotten our past humiliations at the hands of these sordid, dollar-loving nations? We had concessions for trade with Bagdad, and who prevented the building of the railway? England, jealous and fearful of trade supremacy in India."

Trained by years of service abroad to recognize sophistry and artistic dissimulation, as well as to probe beneath the surface for the hidden motive, Mr. Cameron caught the trend of the words. The quiet assurance of this purposeful young man chilled him. The main body of the German army was already in Alsace and Lorraine. There seemed that morning scarcely a chance that Germany could be checked before reaching the very gates of Paris.

Their stroll had brought them to the steps of the Hôtel de Ville. There was much flitting to and fro of orderlies, a knot of staff officers were leaning on their sheathed swords, their eyes bent expectantly in the direction of the pair. Their faces were respectful, but suggested impatience to be off. Von Hollman's armored car was thrumming softly, and the deferential chauffeur held wide the door.

"We shall see what we shall see," replied the young man, with another of his brilliant smiles, as he extended his hand. "At any rate, Mr. Cameron, it has been a great pleasure to exchange views with one so well versed in such matters. *Auf wiederschen,* my friend!"

He was gone. Mr. Cameron could only gaze at the cloud of dust in the wake of the car thundering down the Eich Road. Then he recalled Von Hollman's words in the light of other meanings. Fairfax Morgan, his niece, and even the insufferable Healy might be cut off from Ostend. Admitting they could penetrate the French frontier, they would find the Germans already in front of them. Most decidedly Charlotte would see more of the creature she detested, unless—but the chances of escape seemed slighter and slighter.

His hand still tingled with Von Hollman's grip, and he rubbed it uneasily against his rough tweed coat. Had it been his own native courtesy or some magnetism on the part of Von Hollman that had made him grasp the outstretched palm? Mr. Cameron was sorely troubled. He stood there in the sunlight, pulling his white mustache, an erect, dignified, homely figure, strangely in contrast with the martial pomp that filled the duchy. He was thinking hard. Was it his military duty that called Von Hollman in the direction taken by Charlotte and Morgan? Or was it his desire to see the girl again? He was perfectly sure that something disagreeable had happened between him and Charlotte, but he knew her too well to question her. And Von Hollman, gauging her character well, had taken advantage of her natural refinement and delicacy and felt safe in the assurance of her silence.

After all, thought Mr. Cameron, Charlotte could take care of herself, and no matter what Schmidt had said about Von Hollman, he wasn't absolutely insane as yet. He was sorry now that he had told Von Hollman of her flight, but that was too late to mend. And Fairfax was a capable young man, and although Healy was absolutely intolerable, he knew how to drive a car and was resourceful and quick-witted.

Mr. Cameron heaved a deep sigh. He was anxious, but it seemed as if they had done the wisest thing. He had plenty of other cares and plenty of work. Just at present any one preaching peace would have found a ready convert in Cameron. He hated the measured tramp of feet, the drumming and trumpeting. The peaceful, industrious thrift, the atmosphere of good will and content that had made Luxemburg such a delightful, sunny backwater on his river of life was gone forever, so far as he could see. It was an armed camp, full of the pomp of war and the rumor of war. The distant boom of the cannon was never out of his ears. And his niece, whom he loved far more than he had ever said to any one, and Morgan, whom he regarded almost as a son, were dashing along, somewhere far to the west, through unknown perils, and as lost to him for the present as if they were at the north pole. All he could do now was to write messages—and behind all his industry was the feeling that the messages might never be sent and his industry be quite for naught.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE ZEPPELIN.

Only once, before the warming, dew-dispelling arrows of the golden dawn broke through the tree-studded pass up which they were speeding did Fairfax Morgan lean forward to speak to Healy at the wheel. The chauffeur assured him they were on the road leading to Arlon.

His employer wanted to be quite sure that they were getting as far away from Luxemburg as the mountainous character of the country would allow. Under normal conditions, or anything approaching them, the young physician would have scouted the idea of leaving the comparative security of the Château de Herthereaux. But conditions were not normal, and, what was worse, Morgan was growing more and more convinced that Otto von Hollman, either in his civilian or military character, was likewise not normal. Morgan had never delved deeply into mental eccentricities. He much preferred the surgical branch of his profession. But his studies and what experience as had come to him in such matters inclined him strongly to the belief that there were some phases of Von Hollman's behavior that savored of paranoia.

It was, consequently, with considerable relief to Morgan that their dash into the Ardennes had thus far been unchecked. Not once, with the solitary exception of the vidette whom they had flashed past a short distance from Luxemburg, had they seen any sign of German troops.

On the whole, it seemed likely that there was still a slender chance to penetrate to Namur, where, behind the protection of the Belgian line, they could ask to be sent on to Ostend, only four hours by steamer from England. Namur was a fortified town, and likely to prove a further stumblingblock in the kaiser's strategy, if Etienne Martin's prophecy was correct that the main German advance into France could not be made until Belgium had fallen. From the dilatory tactics of the huge masses of troops in and around Luxemburg, piled on the French frontier, but obviously waiting for some other event to transpire before they plunged forward, Morgan, although knowing little of military tactics, concluded that the French aviator had been right.

They drove steadily through the hills, therefore, following the Namur Road. The majestic beauty of the serene dawn filtered over the hills; little beams of grayish light stole through the leaves of the old trees, shifting uncertainly in the breeze, falling in luminous patches upon the road ahead.

Healy switched off the lights as they began a steep climb.

The forest around them broke into song. They crossed a bridge, spanning a tinkling waterfall. No hint here of the bloody feud which had burst overnight; no rumble of passing artillery, no pad of feet of marching soldiers, no creaking of ammunition wagons or hospital trains.

The peace of the forest of the Ardennes, rousing from its sleep with untroubled majesty—as it had roused for centuries, save when the legions of Cæsar or the warring tribes of many men in later years had at rare intervals fought over these same tree-crowned hills.

All the little things along the road seemed to radiate a welcome to the harassed heart of Fairfax Morgan. At that moment he loved the fallen, rotting branches, the tussocks of moss clinging to the gray rocks, and the touch of the cool air seemed filled with an exquisite delicacy.

They passed a house some distance back from the road, perched in lovable loneliness in a tiny cleft between two hills. Flowers bordered the path leading up to it; they nodded to the climbing machine. On another of the foothills, some distance from the road, a deer stared out at them, then plunged into the covert of waving green, whose night shadows might have been populated by dryads and fauns, so very old was this ancient place.

Wilder and more grand grew the scenery as they continued to climb. At last, when only a short distance from the summit and opposite an old tree blasted by some lightning stroke, Healy slowed down.

"That rear shoe is dragging," said he. "I've got to pump up the tire."

Morgan nodded and turned to look at Charlotte.

"I've had a nap," said Charlotte, in

a matter-of-fact tone. "Where are we?"

"A little over halfway to Namur," said Morgan, glancing at the speedometer. "It's about a hundred miles from your uncle's place, and we've come nearly sixty-five."

Healy was studying the tire with anxious eyes.

"On the level I hate to worry you, boss," he interposed, coming around by the side of the car, "but I have to put in a spare tube or I'll be runnin' on me rim in another half hour."

"I'll help you," declared Morgan, springing out of the car.

Charlotte also descended, stretching her arms luxuriously, turning her pink-and-white face up toward the soft beams of the sun. While they adjusted the spare tube and replaced the wheel, the girl walked slowly ahead up toward the apex of the hill.

Both men were so engrossed in their task that they did not observe her hurried return. She was by their sides as they hastily threw the tools into the box and prepared to resume the climb.

As they came around the corner of the machine, Morgan saw the strained look spreading over her face.

"What is it?" he asked.

She pointed toward the top of the hill.

"I'm not sure. Perhaps I'm mistaken, but it seems to me that there's something or somebody over the other side."

"Stay here!" commanded Morgan as he went on toward the crest.

Near the crown of the hill he turned aside into a field. The thick trees shielded him from the view of any one in the highway, but it also concealed whatever was beyond. He wormed his way through the tangle of wild berry vines, grass, ferns, and saplings which grew thickly between the large trunks.

He was sure that he could hear movements floating up from the vale on the other side. Try as he would, however, it was impossible from there to discern whether it was troops or merely a harmless group of peasants working at their usual tasks.

A large birch towered high above the surrounding trees. Morgan crept over to it and climbed resolutely. He wished it were an elm or a maple with lower branches and thicker foliage. Maneuvering as best he could to keep his body behind the trunk, he clambered higher and higher.

He found he had chosen well. The little valley below, one of so many between the succession of hills, was spread out like a map. At first he fancied Charlotte was mistaken. The road was stretching white and peaceful up over the next incline. There was no sign of any one or anything—not even a house.

"Probably some cattle," muttered Morgan to himself, noting a stretch of grazing land farther on.

Still, it was odd that there were no animals in sight if it had been cattle. Cattle would be feeding at such an hour, and the forest offered scant provender compared to the lush grass of the open space.

A leafless sapling caught and held his eye at the very edge of the fringe of the thickets below. It was very slender, very still, and bare. Morgan rubbed his eyes and peered again.

He fancied he saw the tree move slightly.

"I must be going crazy," he told himself.

The tree moved again.

This time Morgan knew that he was not mistaken—although it was not a tree. It was the slender lance of a uhlan, whose soft-footed mount stepped lightly into the clearing like a horse entering the circus ring.

The uhlan glanced around. Another followed him, another, and then another.

Behind the last came still more,

sweeping into a column of four, trotting across the field until near the fence between them and the road. Then, galloping easily, they vaulted the obstruction into the highway.

Farther along, and toward the crest of the next hill, an armored automobile glided out of the trees. It, too, turned into the Namur Road, topped the crest, and disappeared. Behind the machine came a little knot of infantry, swinging steadily along with the precise "march step" of the indefatigable army which had traversed Luxemburg.

It was a scouting party, with cavalrymen out on its flank, apparently bound for Namur. The uhlans were already reconnoitering the other side of the road.

Morgan slid down the tree. He had little thought for the military tactics of the movement he had just seen—cavalry who could screen and protect any advance, the armored auto with its deadly machine gun to support the cavalry or enable them to fall back if they uncovered the enemy in force. He thought only of the bitter disappointment which was theirs as he returned to the machine.

"We must go some other way," said he. "The Germans are already between us and Namur."

"Aw, what do we care?" cried Healy. "We got our passports, doc. And we're not only Americans, but we've taken the oath not to fight against them. They hain't got no right to hold us up, have they?"

"Might makes right in this neck of the woods." Morgan felt that he was speaking the truth. "If it were not for Von Hollman we'd be all right. But if he should telegraph, as he's likely to do, what then? No, we'll have to go around, Healy."

Healy seemed to find the reasoning sound. At least, personally, he had little desire for more German jails. He turned the machine back down the hill until they came on another, less-traveled highway, leading west and into the forest.

"Isn't it exasperating!" said Charlotte as they started climbing again.

"Very," assented Morgan; "particularly in view of the fact that if we had been an hour earlier we should have been thirty miles farther to the north—either in Namur or past it."

"And now?"

"Well, so long as we can keep out of the scrap itself, I think we'd better aim for the French frontier, either by way of Givet, Chimay, Beaumont, or even at Mons—as a last resource. These fellows can't be everywhere, you know."

They topped the hill and coasted down the long incline beyond, Healy prudently conserving every drop of gas. The road was not paved, but surprisingly good for one so little traveled, and, since taking it, they had not caught sight of a house.

"Are you hungry?" asked Morgan.

"Ravenous!" retorted the girl.

"Well, as soon as we've put a few miles between us and that detachment, we'll turn into the woods along here, and have breakfast. I have some concentrated coffee, some tinned biscuits, milk, and meats."

"It's your turn to sleep," observed Charlotte as Healy purred steadily west and north.

Up and down the wooded heights, in the solitude of the remotest chain of hills making up the Ardennes, now and then flying past some open-mouthed peasant who blessed himself at the fantastic death's-head the girl was wearing, or shrank back in fear at the gruesome omen, they reeled off the miles.

But Morgan had little inclination to sleep. The strain of reaching the frontier only seemed to make him more alert. He suggested, instead, as they plunged farther and farther into the thickly wooded hills, that it was high time to gratify Charlotte's appetite.

"Three quarters of an hour since we turned off, and we done twenty miles—not bad for this kind of a road," announced Healy as they drew up before an ancient ruin, whose moat had shrunken to a grass-grown ditch and whose crumbling masonry warned them not to come too close.

A spring bubbled up near it.

They were all glad to leave the machine. Motoring in the picturesque Ardennes has charms, but one grows less conscious of them when a harrowing fear is just behind. Notwithstanding the fortunate way they had avoided the troops on the Namur Road, there was something in the incident which depressed all of them. Even Healy, usually ready with some quaint remark, was becoming taciturn if not actually moody. A dim realization of the grim, relentless tragedy skirting Luxemburg settled down on Morgan particularly. He had, of course, realized that actual war was on. Hitherto, however, the fact had been an abstract one. It was apart from him. Now it seemed to be creeping up, nearer and nearer, and becoming more concrete and tangible.

All three, nevertheless, found in the homely task of preparing a meal a sort of relief. Each was anxious not to be a "kill-joy" to the other two. Healy uttered a few sarcastic plaints regarding the superiority of the New York water system over a spring whose approach made it hard to negotiate without muddying the contents.

The breakfast was a success, and as they were concluding Morgan smiled over his final cup at Charlotte.

"It's a feast," he averred. "Not a detail missing—even to the classic death's-head."

"Oh," remonstrated the girl, clapping her hand to the busby of Colonel von Hollman, "I'd forgotten all about it. What shall we do with it?"

"Chuck it on a pole and leave it standing in this old ruin," suggested Healy. "With that long cloak, it'll make a perfectly good ghost. Every ancient castle ought to have a good ghost," he judicially continued, draining the coffeepot to the dregs. "On the dead level, this place needs a ghost."

"Here's the death's-head!" Charlotte held the hussar's busby in her hand.

"I don't know," said Morgan thoughtfully. "Of course you can't go on wearing it in daylight. Suppose we tuck it under the seat, with the cloak. It might come in handy again some time, especially the cloak, which is a good protection against the night air."

Charlotte, who had camped out many times, rinsed and wiped the dishes with deft fingers, Morgan watching her from the machine, where he was aiding Healy to replenish the gas tank from one of the extra containers. They were flying from the Germans, but there was a lot of the German about Charlotte.

The presentiment of evil had departed. Morgan and Charlotte chatted over the prospects of the voyage back to America as they kept on. The trees were thinning out a bit, and signs of civilization grew more numerous.

Their detour, after all, did not seem to be so much of a disappointment as they had been led to believe, when they came upon a fork of the highway, with a signboard shaped like a fist, pointing ahead and labeled "Givet."

The road, too, was much better, but this, too, might have other than favorable compensations. They were far more likely to encounter troops upon the solidly built and well-kept highways than in the hills. Still, there was virtually no choice open to them. They could not turn back to Luxemburg; the chances were that north they would surely encounter difficulties, especially as Ostend and Antwerp were the only available seaports—and Antwerp was also likely to be cut off—more likely than Namur or Ostend because of its greater harbor facilities.

There was nothing for it except to keep on toward Givet, and Healy sent the car along with all the speed compatible with safety.

He drew up abruptly, and without apparent reason after they had motored steadily forward for a half hour.

"Did you hear anything?" he demanded of Morgan.

"Not a thing," said the physician. He was, in fact, surprised. They were now approaching the last crest of the more westerly Ardennes. Morgan was sure that only a few miles away was the valley of the Meuse River, here practically a part of the frontier.

The road ahead was visible for some distance, and it was smooth and clear. Not even a donkey cart intruded upon the field of their vision.

Healy's face showed that he was perplexed.

"I was sure I heard somethin'," he announced. "It sounded like a kid poundin' the head of a barrel after he's spread a tablecloth over it."

"I heard nothing," said Charlotte.

"Aw, I guess I'm dreamin', then." Healy threw in the clutch.

But he was not satisfied. He peered into the woods on each side of the road; he even twisted to look back along the way they had come. He opened his own muffler to save power on the next ascent, and when he cut it off at the summit, he slowed down, listening like a man who hears the stealthy footfalls of some night intruder in his house, yet cannot locate the cause.

Then he stopped dead.

"I knew I heard it," he said, turning to look at Morgan.

Morgan listened again. This time he could hear something which reminded him of a partridge drumming against a log. Only there seemed to be a whole flock of partridges—and they evidently had taken to drumming as a very serious pastime.

"It can't be cannon," said Charlotte.

"Nix," said Healy. "It hain't guns—but what is it?"

"I have no idea," said Morgan. "Anyway, so long as it isn't fighting, we'd better keep on toward Givet."

Healy started, but seemed more apprehensive than before. The mysterious throbbing, dulled, but growing more distinct, made him vastly uneasy. The road here was lined on each side by splendid trees. The science of forestry, entailing severe penalties for those who destroy arboreal growth without permission, was evidently respected in this part of the Ardennes. The trees were very tall, carefully trimmed, and their boughs almost interlaced above the road.

Suddenly Healy uttered an exclamation and pointed out toward the south. Charlotte and Morgan followed his finger.

Not two miles away, and perhaps a thousand feet in the air, a tremendous Zeppelin was gliding lazily along. But the slowness of its movement was only apparent, as they immediately discerned. At the height and without stationary objects by which it could be compared, it seemed sluggish. Only the constantly increasing size of the bulk indicated that it was approaching with the speed of an express train. The mystery of the far-off throbbing was solved.

The throbbing was the explosion of its motors—a half dozen of which propelled it through the air, from side to side, or up and down.

As they watched, a cage was being swiftly lowered at the end of a long, slender cable. It swung rhythmically in long, sweeping undulations, while the great war bag itself seemed to be rising higher.

Absorbed in the magnificent, although ominous, spectacle, Healy had permitted the machine to go steadily onward, until reaching a gap in the great trees in the road. Awakening then to a sense of their imminent danger of discovery, he threw in the reverse, with a shout of warning.

The big automobile leaped back under the precarious shelter of the arched trees as if it, too, divined with dread its formidable rival, plowing its way through the intangible element overhead.

At almost the same instant a flash of fire burst from the swinging cage. A shell screamed over the trees and exploded with terrific force against the wooded hill on their right. Healy, without waiting for instructions, whirled the automobile and drove it into the thicket alongside the road.

It seemed to the three that the screaming shell was the cue for which unseen actors innumerable had been waiting. The tumult which followed the discharge had something theatric in its terrible suddenness. One moment it had been peace and solitude. The next the furies were loosed. The echo of the flying projectile reverberated from the hills. Then, while the great war balloon swept past over their heads, the echo was utterly drowned in an answering roar.

Stunned, deafened, they could only crouch like rabbits in the scant protection of the undergrowth and wait.

There was still no sign of troops upon the highway itself—the very place where he had expected to meet armed men, if at all. Morgan could only account for it on the theory that the Zeppelin, coming up from the south, had discovered an ambuscade ahead of an advancing German column, probably on the other side of the hill along a road parallel to that on which they had been driving.

He was partially relieved, for his first thought was that perhaps Count Otto von Hollman had sent the air craft in pursuit of Charlotte and himself. That idea, however, was palpably absurd. With all allowance for Von Hollman's hatred and jealousy, he could hardly find a way to employ such extreme measures. Germany had more enemies than three inoffensive tourists. At the same time, aside from the immediate menace of their position, Morgan fervently wished they had been a few miles farther along and well behind the French line. It would be particularly trying to be enmeshed by another German detachment, after having once so narrowly escaped from Von Hollman's clutches.

Having done their utmost, however, they must now wait the issue.

The firing grew slightly less. Also, from the sound, Morgan judged that some one must be getting the better of the argument. The discharge of the nearer guns over the hills on their right was still vigorous, but the replies seemed feebler.

Presently conversation was again possible.

Morgan's fingers closed down on Charlotte's. The girl seemed to divine his anxiety on her account, and there was something sweet and reassuring in her clasp.

"We cannot be far from Givet," he said. "Maybe it's only a skirmish. We'll know in a little while. It's lucky we were on this side of the hill. That German column this morning must have kept traveling west on another road north of this one."

Healy's only reply was to jump out of the machine. Their rear wheels were sinking in the soft mud alongside the road. In the presence of the greater menace none of the party had noticed that the treacherous marsh into which Healy had blindly driven was now almost to their hubs.

Morgan went to his aid. They procured branches, pried, lifted, and tugged. Several times Healy started the engine, but for some minutes all their efforts to extricate themselves were unavailing. The chauffeur especially found this newest complication most annoying. The firing was now more distant, and as the road ahead was still without any visible occupant, Morgan worked harder to extricate the automobile before some other catastrophe closed down on them.

"Drat the bloomin' luck!" exclaimed Healy. "Doc, we've got to build a regular corduroy road to get out of here. See, I can wiggle her loose, but what's the use? We'll only get into another hole."

"Can't you back out?" asked Morgan.

"Not on that grade. We've got to take it head on, and I'll have to give her all the gas she'll stand. Let's get some more wood."

"I hate to ramble too far among those trees," said Morgan, pausing. "There's no telling what we'll run into or what kind of a welcome we'll get."

"That's so." Healy scratched his head. "But what we going to do? We can't stick around here."

"Listen!" exclaimed Charlotte.

There was a muffled rumbling along the highway in the direction from which they had come. It was a new and mysterious note in the symphony of war—loud but not penetrating, ominous but indefinable.

"Look!" muttered Healy, pointing the opposite way along the stretch of road leading over the rise toward Givet.

A solitary horseman, whose brilliant uniform was topped with a cuirassier's helmet, rose cautiously above the crest. The sun shimmered back from his saber and the gleaming helmet of his headdress. The gray horsehair plume hung gracefully motionless in the still air. He checked his horse and peered sharply up the road.

"He's French, all right, all right," exultantly whispered Healy, as if fearing his voice would carry over the two hundred yards which intervened between them.

The clamor behind them grew louder. The Frenchman spurred his horse.

The next instant the crest of the hill two hundred yards ahead was swarming with other and similar figures. The column poured up and over the slope, swiftly deploying into battle line across the road, leaping the low walls on either side, and spreading out along the fields. With uncanny swiftness their blue jackets, white crossbelts, and waving plumes blotted out the grayish trunks through which they emerged, and it seemed to Morgan that the green branches above were already dripping crimson, although he knew the eerie feeling was merely the sight of the red trousers the soldiers wore.

The muffled thunder up the road behind them was now prodigious. Charlotte, looking back in its direction, reached out and clutched at an overhanging branch. Morgan, following her gaze, and at last comprehending this newer and nearer danger, leaped into the tonneau, followed by Healy. Both men threw their weight on the limb. Under their combined efforts the leafy boughs above them bent lower until they masked the tonneau of the mired machine from view in the highway.

Absurd and pitifully inadequate as the expedient seemed, there was grave need for even this scanty protection.

Less than half a mile up the road along which they had been traveling in fancied security until the appearance of the Zeppelin, coming at a trot, was a body of German cavalry. A trumpet sounded, shrill and penetrating. They broke into a gallop.

The horses filled the highway, running like thoroughbreds in the stretch, bellies low, feet far out. Low on their outstretched necks with black lances poised, with faces set and tense, crouched the grim riders.

The roar of the hoofs was comparable to nothing except, perhaps, the roll of a great cataract. The firm, hard road, with its slight layer of powdered dust, burst upward like spray when water meets granite from a far height. It curled and eddied around the hoofs of the vanguard, rising higher and higher, until it cupped over the column like a husk around an ear of corn.

With straining eyes, peering through the scanty foliage that served to screen them from view, Morgan, Charlotte, and Healy watched the head of the squadron thunder past.

The dust cloud, made up of infinitesimal particles finer than flour, floated over them through the shrubs, coating the green leaves, settling down upon their garments in an impalpable powder, filling their eyes and nostrils.

They could no longer see the road, much less the crest of the hill beyond.

Then, amid wild, hoarse shouts, the indescribable, piercing cry of wounded horses, and the thudding impact of desperately fighting men, the German column struck its opponent on the grassy slope beyond. It was a hideous, rasping, grinding crash—a chaotic clamor, punctuated now and then with a bugle's strident note, raging yells from the living or anguished screams from the dying, the ring of steel on helmet, the discharge of carbines or pistols, oaths, commands, imprecations.

Charlotte hid her face in her hands, and half turned away, but the other two watched, spellbound.

The clamor of artillery broke out afresh on the hills to the right, and the acrid fumes of powder from the incessant discharges drifted with the dust down the wind.

The stream of horsemen continued to pour along the highway. It was impossible to estimate their number—the column was endless and the impetus of their mad advance, Morgan guessed, had swept their opponents over the crest of the hill. They kept to the highway. Their war maps had scheduled even this remote section of the Ardennes—at any rate, none of them attempted to detour through the miry ground.

The three watchers lost all sense of proportion as the battle raged on. It seemed an eternity before the last horseman, invisible in the dust, clattered along the highway and the charge had passed. Charlotte clung blindly to Morgan, whose arm ached with the strain of holding the branch down upon the machine. He peered at Healy, likewise engaged, dumb with the fearful spectacle of the charge and the horrid tumult of the engagement.

Although utterly ignorant of military tactics and unable from the very nature of things to do more than guess at what was transpiring, Morgan's straining ears caught less and less of the din of the conflict and more and more of its aftermath.

The sounds of fighting were giving way to moans and groans. After a time even their own heartbeats were almost audible. Morgan judged that the Germans had won the hill, and perhaps passed over its crest. Yet he feared to move. Death lurked behind every leaf in these woods and hills.

The dust cloud began to settle. Save for an occasional groan from a fallen man there was again comparative silence. The physician knew that they must extricate the machine and get out of that locality somehow with all possible speed.

When he finally released the limb his arm was numb with the long strain. The sun, shining red through the haze, was already near the tops of the trees on their left.

When the moon looked down upon the Givet highway where had occurred the "first clash of cavalry patrols of the real combatants," in the dim light the heaps of dead were being combed for men still animate.

In a charcoal burner's hut near the fringe of the forest, Morgan, Charlotte, and Healy were answering the questions of Colonel Fernbach, the officer in command of the German cavalry division. The rear guard had discovered and detained them for examination.

"Your destination?" curtly demanded Colonel Fernbach.

"We were en route to America," quietly replied Charlotte Cameron in German, "when the troops overtook us."

"You have passports?"

Charlotte handed them over with a smile. "Herr Morgan," she explained, "is a physician. The automobile is his, and we were so unfortunate as to run off the road and found difficulty in getting the machine out of the mud."

"S-o-o!" drawled Colonel Fernbach, twisting his military mustache and scrutinizing Morgan and Healy closely as he read their descriptions and looked at the photographs that accompanied them. Evidently he found nothing amiss with the papers, which he returned with more kindliness than he had received them.

"A doctor, eh?" he repeated. *"Ach!* We have need of many."

"I shall be most ha,.py to do what I can for a while, at least," volunteered Morgan, at which the commander brightened visibly.

"My men will bring in the wounded to this clearing," said he in passable English. "Our owr hospital corps is behind somewhere——" He waved his hand vaguely to the east. "Perhaps they are on the other road—our detachment came this way to protect the left flank."

Morgan sent Healy to the machine for his kit of instruments. In a brief time Charlotte had water boiling, the physician had sterilized his hands and instruments, and, presently, he was bending over a mere lad, whose pallid face showed he was near the edge of the dark river so many of his comrades had already crossed. Colonel Fernbach watched with discerning eyes Morgan's technique as he applied artery forceps and stitched up the gash which a lance had made when driven through the boy's sword arm. He nodded his approval, and spoke in an undertone to an aid as they left.

Charlotte, pale-faced, but firm-lipped, was already sacrificing lingerie for bandages. Farther away, under the tall trees, whose spreading branches gave the clearing and its dim aisles beyond the aspect of some great cathedral, the survivors of the brigade were reforming.

Sentries were posted, horses picketed; a few small camp fires over which pannikins of coffee were brewed twinkled among the trees. But, once the demands of appetite had been supplied, these were carefully extinguished, while the men, who had marched forty miles before fighting, sought rest. Down the same Givet Road, later on, rumbled other motor-driven vehicles; in the front ammunition wagons; next baking vans, whose cooks forgot sleep while they labored, and at last, some time after Charlotte had retired within the hut utterly worn out, the long-awaited ambulance corps.

It was the German war machine from behind the scenes, and a swift inspection of such work as Fairfax Morgan had been able to do with the meager facilities at his command was made by the surgeon in charge. He stepped over to confer with Colonel Fernbach, after his examination of the men Morgan had cared for. The colonel left the little knot of officers with whom he had been dining and personally accompanied the surgeon back to where Morgan was sitting on an old log.

"I am told that you have been most expert, Herr Morgan," said he. "The Fatherland is not ungrateful. It is a sad time and I deplore the interruption of your journey. Perhaps it was, however, fortunate that you met with your accident when you did, else had my men ridden over your car."

He spoke slowly and with the careful precision of one using an alien tongue, but the kindly and wholesome smile was most welcome to his listener.

The chief surgeon introduced himself after Colonel Fernbach returned to his conference, and over their pipes, while the dead were being decently interred in the moonlight, they chatted. The chief, it appeared, had been in America and spent some time in Bellevue.

Healy, who had meanwhile busied himself in looking after the car and preparing a little food for Charlotte and his employer, strolled back and listened.

"America should be our friend," declared the German doctor. "If we have her kindly thoughts, we shall win. See that man?" He pointed to a desperately wounded soldier of middle age who was being carefully lifted into an ambulance, which, almost immediately, rumbled to the rear. "There is the German spirit. No man, high or low, shrinks his duty in this deplorable war. He is one of the greatest synthetic chemists in Europe. It was his brain which gave us camphor from turpentine. And on the same cot with him lies a farmer boy. We are a united people, our cause is just, and we shall die to a man, that the Fatherland may win."

The talk drifted to New York, its magnificent harbor, the great civic organization, the assimilation of alien people, its future destiny.

"We envy you," vigorously declared the surgeon. "Compare your vast country with ours. Germany is doubled back upon itself. You have millions of acres, capable of supporting ten times your present numbers. Also you have no menace from enemies on all sides—save only in your colonial possessions. *Ach!* If America could only understand what we of Germany must endure! And how will it end? Why, even Japan has leaped upon our back in the Orient. The kaiser's prophecy of the yellow peril is realized—and by Germany, isolated, hemmed in, first of all. You are privileged to go on to your country—to peace and plenty. Life and love wait for you. But for us"—he swept his hand around the circle of the trees—"who knows what lurks in the shadows?"

"Say, doc," whispered Healy, as the surgeon bade them good night and went back to his corps, "I've got the car out of the mud, 'nd begged ten gallons of gas from a kid on one of their supply wagons. I take back a lot I been sayin' about these Dutchmen. They're better'n I thought—at least this bunch is. Are you goin' to sleep here?"

Morgan decided that he would. Sleep was the most desirable thing in the world just then. The strain of their flight from Luxemburg, the harrowing peril of the day, and his unremitting work until the arrival of the German field hospital tired him utterly.

He grunted his thanks to Healy as he accepted a robe the thoughtful young man had brought over from the automobile, and was asleep before Healy could follow his example.

Charlotte was smiling at him from the door of the hut when Morgan woke. He shivered a little, for the morning was chill with the breath of coming autumn. Healy was already awake, and Charlotte soon had a pot of coffee ready over the alcohol stove. The chauffeur had driven the automobile to the hut, explaining that he feared it might be commandeered, unless near the tent of the division officer.

Watching for a favorable opportunity after their hurried meal, Morgan strolled over toward Colonel Fernbach's quarters. He was quite cordially received, considering the multitude of duties occupying that officer's mind.

"If my request is one which may

properly be made under such circumstances," began Morgan, after exchanging greetings, "I would be glad to have a safe-conduct through the German lines from you. Our position, as you may imagine, is very hazardous, particularly Miss Cameron's."

"With all my heart," returned the officer. He scribbled a few words on a piece of paper and handed it to Morgan, who thanked him.

"I cannot, of course, guarantee your safety," returned the colonel, "but I have certified that you are noncombatants and requested all German officers to extend you whatever aid is in their power to get out of the zone of hostilities. Good luck to you."

He watched Morgan aiding Charlotte into the car. He twisted his mustache to hide the mist which came unbidden into his stern gray eyes. Charlotte was much like his own daughter, and his heart ached for this German *madchen*.

Morgan explained to Charlotte, as Healy drove back toward the highway. They had no alternative but to keep on toward Givet. The detachment of cavalry under Fernbach's command was not the main column—merely a screen thrown out to protect a larger body of troops farther north, as they had suspected.

At the same time, they were compelled to proceed cautiously. As Fernbach had declared, he could not assure them of safety. War is uncertain at best, and Morgan realized that precipitate action might involve Charlotte in even more terrible hazards, should he rush blindly forward into some mêlée similar to that of the day before.

Had it not been for the nearness of the French frontier, he would have turned back toward Ostend. With Fernbach's safe-conduct and their passports, they would be likely to experience few delays from German troops. Still, all officers were not as humane as this one had proved, nor as considerate of the rights of noncombatants. So Morgan, on reaching the road, gave Healy orders to proceed slowly in the direction of Givet, and Healy was about to comply when a shout rang out behind them.

Morgan turned, wondering.

A knot of officers in a field to the right were scrutinizing them. All were mounted, and one of them, with no helmet and a bandaged head, somehow had a familiar look to Morgan.

"Drive on, Healy," said he. "I'll explain to this fellow."

The solitary trooper galloping in their direction was brandishing a pistol, but as he was undeniably German, Morgan, impatient to be off, merely waited for him to come abreast of the slow-moving automobile.

"Halt!" roared the trooper, now much nearer.

"Halt nothing!" growled Morgan, feeling for his papers. "Who is that fellow, anyway?"

Charlotte's reply was lost in a loud report.

The galloping orderly had deliberately shot into one of the rear tires, and the machine skidded. Had it not been for their moderate pace, they would have left the crown of the road. Healy set his brakes hard.

An instant later the hoofbeats behind them drew up alongside.

"Why do you not halt when ordered?" demanded the orderly, brandishing his pistol dangerously close to Morgan's head.

"Why should I halt?" angrily shouted Morgan, as Charlotte translated the question.

He thrust his papers out to the waiting man.

That worthy grunted. Suddenly Morgan saw other men closing around the machine. One of them was the figure who had been so closely scanning him through field glasses.

He looked up into the cold eyes of Major von Graf. Von Graf, with a bandage about his head where Major Schmidt's sword had left its mark—but Von Graf otherwise well, able, and malevolent.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN WHICH IT APPEARS THAT COUNT VON HOLLMAN HAS A LONG ARM.

There was something in the slow, appraising look which Von Graf bent upon Morgan and Healy that reminded the young physician of a torpid snake.

Morgan, thoroughly angry at the injury to his machine in the face of his neutrality, recalling his oath not to bear arms against the Germans taken in Von Graf's presence, and his rights as an American citizen under the safe-conduct on which the ink was hardly dry, waited quietly.

"So!" drawled Von Graf, "it is the young Englishman who was tried by the military court at Luxemburg."

"And acquitted," said Morgan, holding the officer's hard eyes with his own unwavering gaze.

"And he's not English," said Charlotte.

"You should have been convicted," dryly retorted Von Graf, without hesitation. "You were guilty."

"I am not interested in your opinion," said Morgan, his face reddening in spite of his self-control. "The verdict of the court is on the records. By what right do you instruct your men to fire on my car? It strikes me that you are assuming more authority than your government may care to sponsor!"

Von Graf ignored him, motioning for the passports which Morgan produced and handed to the orderly, who was still holding Colonel Fernbach's safe-conduct.

He handed them back to the orderly, who likewise mechanically returned them to Morgan.

"Well, sir! Are we at liberty to proceed?" tartly demanded Morgan.

Von Graf's effort to force him to face a firing squad came back, and with it an anger which he found hard to hold in control. This disagreeable friend of Von Hollman's was about as unpleasant as a man could be, and Morgan was one of those uncertainly dangerous individuals, slow to anger, but, once aroused, likely to run amuck. He realized that he was at a terrible disadvantage, but the first flame of his righteous anger was deepening into a deliberate ferocity.

Von Graf, watching him, gathered something of what was passing in the American's mind. For all of his authority, the major would find it difficult, if not impossible, to find a colorable pretext upon which to detain these three. Their papers were in proper form, they were citizens of the United States, and it was one thing to shoot down a harmless peasant in the fields or villages because of some imaginary resistance and quite another to find a suitable excuse for an injury to an American citizen—evidently of some consequence in his own country.

He made no reply at all, but watched the Americans with his cold, dead eyes.

"Healy," peremptorily ordered Morgan, "get out and put on a new tire. Then we'll be on our way, unless Major von Graf has some well-founded and urgent objections to the contrary."

Healy descended from the car and jacked up the rear axle, indifferent to the nearness of the horses. The little Irishman was very quiet and cool, but he was evidently in a temper himself.

There was a jingle of accouterments in the rear of the group. The other officers of Von Graf's escort were all subordinate to him by virtue of their rank. Military discipline forbade them to interpose, but Morgan, quietly scrutinizing their phlegmatic faces, realized that Von Graf was not receiving even a tacit support from his own men.

"Hello! Have you met with an accident?"

Colonel Fernbach's voice was almost solicitous. He saluted Von Graf perfunctorily, and rode alongside the automobile, peering down at Morgan and Charlotte. There was genuine concern in his face, and Morgan noticed that Von Graf frowned.

"You might call it that," said Morgan indifferently. "I do not know whether the shot which was fired was aimed at my head or not. It happened to hit the wheel instead. Are you still in command of the cavalry here?"

"Certainly." There was a note of hauteur in Colonel Fernbach's reply, and his glance toward Von Graf had a little more than mild inquiry.

"Then," interpolated Morgan, quickly following up his advantage, "I am right in assuming that your safe-conduct and permission to proceed toward the frontier are still in force?"

"Why not?" said Fernbach, this time more acidly than before.

"That was my own idea, colonel," smoothly replied the physician. "I merely wished this gentleman"—he indicated Von Graf—"to receive the same assurance from you verbally that you gave to me in writing. I am, it seems, stopped here by his instructions."

Von Graf flushed.

"I desire that these people be detained," said he to Fernbach.

The colonel of cavalry shook his head.

"Then it must be upon your own authority," he replied obdurately. "They are citizens of a neutral nation. They do not bear arms against the Fatherland—in fact, Herr Morgan gave our wounded very material assistance yesterday. Their papers are correct in form. I am aware of no accusation against them, unless you desire to prefer one. Otherwise, they are free to proceed."

Von Graf beckoned to Fernbach, and they stepped aside.

"I must again request that you detain these people," said he. "It is the wish of His Excellency Count von Hollman——"

The other made a gesture of decided dissent.

"Pardon me, Major von Graf, I am attached to the Army of the North, and my military instructions are from others than Count von Hollman. I repeat, these people, so far as I am concerned, are free to proceed toward the frontier."

Von Graf glared. The unexpected refusal served to incense him the more.

"You are an officer of the line," he persisted. "I am of the staff——"

"Of another army corps," cut in Fernbach. "Major von Graf, there are certain regulations governing war between nations which my oath to my government compels me to respect. One of them concerns neutrals. The American minister at Luxemburg has viséed passports for Herr Morgan, his chauffeur, and Miss Charlotte Cameron. I would have you remember that Colonel von Hollman——"

It was Von Graf's turn to interrupt.

"Brigadier General von Hollman, if you please, colonel. He has been breveted for gallantry."

"I had not heard of it," coldly returned the other. "But, major, in spite of what you say, I must still insist that the wishes of Brigadier General Otto von Hollman are of no military significance to me. My orders are from my immediate superiors, and these, in turn, are transmitted from the Board of Strategy at Berlin. I must say to you that I do not care to discuss the matter further. My duty is with my men. If you wish to detain these people, it will be upon your own responsibility, and I shall so inform Herr Morgan."

He turned his horse back toward the machine. Von Graf, speechless with chagrin, followed. Morgan was groping under the rear seat for a tool which

Healy desired. The spare tire only needed some adjustment to the rim and the car would be ready to proceed. Von Graf turned back to them, still muttering protests. Morgan was pawing among the litter of their baggage, and Healy stood waiting impatiently for the special wrench his employer was seeking.

"They are spies, I tell you," repeated Von Graf, turning his heavy face full upon Colonel Fernbach's indifferent one. "If they are allowed to proceed through our lines, there may be consequences of the gravest character. We tried both these men for aiding a French aviator to escape from Luxemburg the very night of our occupation. Through the inability of a private of uhlans to recognize them, we were unable to convict them. But they were guilty—that I know," he affirmed.

Colonel Fernbach hesitated.

"Doctor Morgan was acquitted at a court-martial," said Charlotte.

Von Graf was growing impatient, in his cold, heavy way.

Like all bullies, he was an arrant toady to those above him. The exigencies of war meant for him the hope of promotion which he had coveted for years. He was attached to Otto von Hollman's service, and the count's wishes were his law and military necessity.

Beside all of this, Von Graf knew what few other officers of the German staff knew—although Von Hollman's rapid rise gave them ample reason to believe that there were other influences than mere bravery or ability behind the young colonel. Major von Graf knew more about Von Hollman than most.

Von Hollman's personal request that Von Graf keep a sharp eye out for the whereabouts of Charlotte Cameron and her two friends when the major had been sent from the Luxemburg corps to confer with the staff officers of the Army of the North, was the secret of the officer's insistence upon the detention of the three Americans.

He had in him a heavy persistence, and the refusal of Colonel Fernbach to acquiesce with his plans simply stirred it into action. If that officer persisted, one of the very things Von Graf was most anxious to achieve would be left undone—and Von Hollman, as the major knew, was not entirely engrossed in matters military.

Yet he had no choice but to defer to what Colonel Fernbach had so quietly enunciated. He had not the slightest proof that Morgan and Healy were enemies of the Fatherland—no scintilla of evidence to back up his assertion that they were spies. He blocked the path of the motor car, still determined.

Morgan, already angry, and growing hotter with his failure to find the wrench he was looking for, gave a vicious jerk at a mass of carefully folded material in the far corner. He thrust his hand under it unthinkingly. His groping fingers closed over the tool he was seeking. At the same instant that Morgan drew back and started to rise, Major von Graf and Colonel Fernbach were directly abreast of the tonneau.

"Here it is, Healy," gasped Morgan, pulling the tool from the farther corner and starting to hand it over the edge of the tonneau.

As he pulled it out, he noticed that something was caught in its jaws. But, intent only upon getting the tire properly set and hastening with all possible speed toward Givet before progress in that direction was again cut off, Morgan did not notice what it was that he had unwittingly dragged out into the view of the two German officers.

Von Graf, however, peering intently down into the machine, and still racking his brain for some clew, however slight, that would back up his assertion regarding Morgan's true character, grunted.

"So!" he said. His extended hand pointed toward some object in the bottom of the machine. Morgan, amazed at the repressed triumph in Von Graf's voice, turned and stared stupidly down in the direction of the major's finger.

He saw the busby that Count Otto von Hollman had left hanging on the hall rack the night he had insisted upon taking Charlotte Cameron for the automobile ride—the same night the girl had fled from his noxious presence. There was no gainsaying the damning character of Von Graf's accusation with such evidence before his own eyes. Morgan was chilled and dumb. A more superlative fear than he had experienced the night of his arrest in the château for aiding Martin's escape swept over him. He was speechless, motionless—staring blankly down upon the ghastly skull and crossbones gleaming spectrally white against the dark background of the headdress.

With a swift motion, Von Graf swung himself sidewise in the saddle and dragged the busby and the cloak from the machine. He dangled them triumphantly before Colonel Fernbach's eyes.

"If these people, colonel, as you have several times assured me, are merely noncombatants, peacefully proceeding from Luxemburg toward the nearest frontier, and if their papers are in proper form, can you explain why it is necessary for them to be carrying such a disguise as this?"

There was no reply from the commander of the cavalry force.

"Especially," went on Von Graf deliberately, "when it happens that these identical articles are the personal property of General von Hollman, and were in the Château de Herthereaux, where the general had been dining the night these three surreptitiously left Luxemburg."

Colonel Fernbach's face was very stern and cold. He glanced at Morgan with an expression which made the American wince. Although conscious of the utter falsity of Von Graf's accusation and the malign character of everything which, thus far, it seemed, had conspired to prevent his getting Charlotte Cameron out of the pit of hell which the war had dug for them, Morgan knew it would be useless, especially with the damning record of the previous court-martial behind him, to offer any explanation.

"This, as you say, Major von Graf," replied Colonel Fernbach, "is sufficient proof to justify your assertion that Herr Morgan may have some ulterior motive in his haste to reach the frontier. However, I can only offer you my apologies for my seeming blunder. My place is with my regiment, and I have tarried too long, I fear, as it is. You will have these people thoroughly searched, and, as you suggested in the first instance, I see no reason now why they should not be detained to await the arrival of General von Hollman. As the offense occurred in territory under his jurisdiction, the matter of dealing with it is, of course, out of my hands."

He saluted, and was gone.

Major von Graf turned to issue an order to his men.

Healy spat out a muffled oath as he tossed the wrench which had caused all of their newest and gravest trouble back into the tool box. If he had only followed out his hunch and left the busby and cloak in the ruined castle the morning before, there could have been not the slightest pretext for Von Graf's second trap. As it was, they had walked into it like children. Healy knew that they would not so easily escape a firing squad a second time; for Robert Cameron, in spite of his crusty ways and his personal umbrage at the free-and-easy relationship existing between Healy and his employer, was of the right sort. Had it been Luxemburg where this exasperating event had occurred, Mr. Cameron would certainly know how to protect them. At the most, probably, they would be compelled to endure another more or less prolonged period of confinement in German durance vile.

But this was not Luxemburg—worse luck. They were in Belgium—maddeningly near the French frontier. And Von Graf's face, now set in stern, rigid lines, showed both the chauffeur and his employer the quality of mercy which they might expect at the hands of his subordinates. The court-martial this time would be drawn with an eye single to conviction. There would be no generous-minded, forgetful witnesses whose failing memory would upset the swift, ruthless plans of this tool of Count Otto von Hollman's.

"Military necessity" would be written opposite the death warrant which the court-martial would sign. It would, as a mere matter of form, be forwarded with their passports and more trivial personal belongings to Mr. Cameron. Healy wondered if they would use red tape on the papers and sealing wax, and, if so, what particular one of the grim circle of helmeted figures around them was intrusted with such occasionally used articles, and where he carried them.

For the first time since he had known Fairfax Morgan, the chauffeur saw a look of unutterable despair settle down over his employer's face. It confirmed his own horrible forebodings—that fixed, desolate expression, coupled with the dull, sodden face of Major von Graf.

The German whose insistence had precipitated their latest dilemma was issuing a command. Healy, again in a daze, descended from the machine. His clothing was searched. The lapels of his coat were torn open. He stood in the road, feeling very cold. It was odd, for the day was warm. He heard the orderly directing Miss Cameron and Morgan to descend.

Charlotte needed no invitation to descend. She jumped to the ground and advanced on Von Graf.

"I took that hat and cloak," she said. "I wore them. Not as a disguise, but to keep warm."

A grunt of astonishment from Von Graf was the only answer.

Charlotte repeated her statement, this time in German—and now Von Graf and several of the other officers laughed aloud.

## CHAPTER XV.

### HEAVY ARTILLERY.

The ridicule which followed Charlotte's statement was natural. Neither Von Graf nor the members of his staff could appreciate the freedom and independence of the average American girl and her custom of doing whatever she pleased.

Their faces said very plainly: "This is a clever attempt on the part of this young lady to shoulder the responsibility. It is too transparent for belief—or else it is a sample of American humor."

Charlotte was more annoyed than alarmed. The whole thing was so simple—to her. But Von Graf's uncompromising demeanor brought her back to a half realization of things as they were. Morgan and Healy were facing a very ugly situation.

"I am very sorry, Miss Cameron," said the major, "but I will have to detain this car and these others."

The girl did not seem to understand.

"They are under arrest," continued Von Graf, as he started to ride away.

"Wait!" cried Morgan imperatively. His face was pale, but it was the livid white of rage.

Von Graf turned haughtily toward him. Even Healy was alarmed. Morgan looked as if he would leap upon the German and drag him from the saddle.

"What about Miss Cameron?" demanded the young physician. "Is she under arrest, too?"

"No. She is not under arrest."

"But what is to become of her?" shot back Morgan. "You take away the car, you arrest the driver, and you leave an American woman in the middle of the highway—without any protection whatever. I protest against such treatment—regardless of your pretended authority."

There was a barely audible murmur of approval from the other members of the staff. Von Graf turned his cold, expressionless face toward them. They grew suddenly still.

"There is a house yonder," said Von Graf. "Miss Cameron will be cared for, and as soon as military necessity permits she will be allowed to proceed."

"Very well," said Morgan. "Another question, if you please: How long do you propose to detain us here? I would remind you that we, too, are Americans."

"That will also depend," evaded the major, fixing his dull eyes on them, "upon military necessity. Your cases will be brought before the military tribunal in due time. It may be necessary for me to detain you until Count von Hollman arrives."

Morgan thought it well not to press the matter further. From the speaker's tone, the alternative he had in mind before Von Hollman's appearance was not pleasant to contemplate. Despite his emotionless manner, the German staff officer had made himself plain. They would be summarily dealt with unless his superior should first happen upon the scene.

They were wedged back in the car, a soldier sitting between Morgan and Charlotte. Healy, with another alongside, was ordered to drive to a little cottage some few yards up the side of the hill. Here Charlotte was escorted to the door by a staff officer. His imperative rap disclosed a very frightened old woman. Judging from her decrepit appearance, she had not been able to leave with other members of the family.

The terse commands she received appeared to reassure her, and she smiled kindly upon Charlotte, as the girl, with a last, longing backward look at her friends, reluctantly went inside. The machine rumbled away, regained the road, and turned back toward the charcoal burner's hut where they had spent the night.

They left the automobile here. Both were permitted to retain a little food and a few articles of clothing, all of which was probed for papers or concealed weapons, with true Teutonic thoroughness. Morgan's case of instruments was confiscated. A squadron of infantry had poured in since they had been turned back. The faces were all new—even to the omnipresent physicians of the staff hospital, and, as Healy pointedly whispered, they were "a fierce-looking bunch."

There was a long and earnest colloquy between Von Graf's aid and the infantry commander. It was in German, a little distance from the hut, and neither Morgan nor Healy could understand the words.

The staff officer came back.

"You will remain inside," said he coldly. "If either of you come out until directed to do so, the sentry has orders to shoot you."

"Thank you," said Morgan. "And when we get orders to come out, I suppose we will be shot just the same. The matter is quite simple, is it not? Will we be permitted to send word to our relatives or friends?"

Von Graf's underling did not deign to reply. A moment later they saw him galloping back toward the road. Their automobile had disappeared.

"Well," said Healy, half cheerfully, "they might give us a couple of decks of cards, doc. Wonder if we'll have time to learn how to play pinochle? I've always wanted to wise up on that game. Mebbe if I could get this Von Grafter into a red-hot session at a quarter a corner he'd forget the two of us."

Healy had never uttered a complaining word since first their troubles began. Even now, with this new menace gripping them fast, he could jest at their unenviable situation.

"We're not dead yet," smiled back his employer, his heart warming toward the loyal little fellow.

"No, glory be!" ejaculated Healy. "And we got a chanst—if some of them French ginks should take it into their heads to like this particular piece of woods, mebbe they'll come over. The chestnutin' looks to me like it's gettin' fine!"

Morgan shook his head. There might be fighting—and quite some of it—in and around the place where they were. War is made up of waves of advances and retreats. But the mettle of the German fighting machine looked formidable enough. The men were automatons. Death, to these soldiers, was only an incident of duty. There was little likelihood of their being driven back.

All of which he told Healy quietly.

"There's Napoleon," obstinately averred Healy. "And the Duke of Wellington. The French licked all of the country oncet. And the English came along and whipped the French afterward."

"In a way you are probably right," conceded Morgan, a little surprised at the stout-hearted manner Healy persisted in "coming back" at him. "But you overlook one thing. This isn't a skirmish line to-day. It is the headquarters of a ranking staff officer. Major von Graf has probably come over here on military business. His running into us was a piece of the same hard luck we've been playing into all along. That indicates that this section of the country is believed to be held securely, and also that it has been selected as the place to plan the next move in the big game. We have no way of knowing how far out in front the German troops are already. That brush yesterday was nothing compared to the big event."

"It was a pretty lively preliminary," insisted Healy. "Well, if they get the main heavyweight event goin', we got a better chanst than if it was only a couple of try-outs. Everybody'll be sittin' as close to the ring as they can git."

There was a rattle of accouterments outside the building. The infantry were falling in line. The door of the hut had been wrenched off, and from their position on the little knoll, they could see the "goose step" of the various battalions as they filed down into the Givet Road. Likewise, now and again, at quite a distance from them, but not too far to be clearly heard, the sullen boom of big guns broke forth.

A galloping orderly met the head of the advancing column. He delivered his dispatches to the first officer he met. The infantry broke into a double-quick, and moved rapidly up the little knoll toward Givet, debouching into the woods.

Another and another regiment followed the first. Other masses of troops deploying through the fields, past the hut in which they were confined, and on all sides of them, moved hastily forward.

A group of engineers emerged into the clearing and strung a portable wireless telegraph between two great trees, the motor car in which they had ridden up thrumming steadily, furnishing electric power from its dynamo to the storage batteries. More artillery came rumbling down the road—long, slender field-pieces, mostly motor-driven, although some of the lighter guns had horses. All vanished over the crest of the hill.

Something that snorted and puffed laboriously rumbled into view. It was a traction engine, dragging one of the enormous Krupp guns that make the German attack so formidable. Slowly, methodically, but steadily it rumbled past, keeping carefully to the crown of the unusually good road. Just at the foot of the hill it halted.

Behind the monstrous piece of ordnance proper came other vehicles—supernumeraries to the stellar attraction. There were huge, motor-driven wains, and wagons filled with gray concrete blocks.

At the word of command, a troop of sappers and engineers demolished the fence on the south side of the road, placing the stones in a sort of a pavement, on ground which was carefully tested. The siege gun creaked out upon this cautiously, its caterpillar sectional wheels halting at almost every stone, like an elephant testing a bridge. Then it stopped. Other men, meanwhile, working with top speed but in so efficient a fashion that they did not hinder each other, were already at work building a base for the gun.

The surface earth of the hill was scraped aside until it was as level as a floor, and the rocky ledge beneath was quite bare.

With the aid of the traction engine the monster gun was coaxed, nursed, swung about upon the improvised foundation, its great muzzle pointing skyward. At last the helmeted figure waved back the mechanics and the bronzed artillery officer stepped up to the breech. Other men, bearing bayonets with one edge serrated and with short-handled axes, who, with fine sense, had darted into the woods, now returned, dragging a slender pole.

This was placed about a dozen yards at one side, and, after a stout steel pulley and fine steel cable had been threaded to its upper end, the lower one was thrust into the deep hole already waiting for it, and the earth rammed about the base. In a trice a slender youth was in the loop of the cable, and being hoisted aloft.

He did not, however, seem to be interested in what lay beyond the crest of the hill just below which the orifice of the siege gun was gaping at a menacing slant toward the gracious sky. His glasses leaped to his eyes, and he looked, instead, back in the direction from which they had come, sweeping the air with long, slow circles.

A tiny speck, hovering above and miles to the rear, flashed into the field of the watcher's vision. He wigwagged a signal, in abrupt, jerky movements. Then he was lowered to the base of the pole. The traction engine puffed back to the highway; neat mounds of ammunition were taken from the wains, piled in conical heaps under steel shields; the wains followed the traction engine; the engineers and sappers started across the field, where, farther along, another traction engine was puffing and straining across the rocky slope with a second gun of the same character; and while the crew of the first were oiling bearings, swabbing out firing chambers, testing the breech-locking apparatus, and grooming the great death dealer with final touches, a monoplane drifted down upon them like a giant dragon fly.

The same instant the wireless operators in the knot of men nearest the hut conferred in excited tones; an officer ran over from the gun; the Ruhmkorf coil spat viciously; an answering puff of smoke spurted in jerky dots and dashes from the tail of the circling monoplane; it scuttled to the rear, swung in a circle, climbing higher and higher, and dashed out over the tops of the trees, flying at an elevation of a mile and a half toward Givet.

As it disappeared, the men on the platform where the gun was now resting became more active. Some of them saw to it that the semicircular track on which many small-diameter, broad-based wheels were resting was lubricated. These stuck their bodies far under the circular steel disk on which the men in charge of the gun were moving about. The follows beneath carried long-nosed oil cans, like those used by locomotive engineers.

As they, in their turn, reported to the commanding officer, saluting as punctiliously as if on dress parade, and then fell back to the trucks carrying the properties for this "headliner" act in the drama of war, two other groups advanced with long steel levers, which fitted at either side into sockets. The gun carriage swung for several degrees to the right, then to the left, until its muzzle had swept an arc of ninety degrees in either direction.

Four motor-cycle riders took up their station near the field wireless, the operators of which were sitting with intent faces, oblivious to all except the ticking in their heavily padded transmitters. Over by the gun the men were stuffing their ears with cotton, binding it in place with adhesive bands around their heads; also they turned their visored caps around.

Another monoplane fluttered into view, circled, and shot off to the south; the little knot of officers and men around the crackling coil seemed to become suddenly energized; one of them wrote rapidly and passed the slip of paper to the officer in charge, who hastily unrolled a small chart and began making computations, using a pair of dividers and a small steel scale.

In turn he, too, scribbled a message. One of the cyclists received it, pedaled away, straining against his handlebars, riding recklessly through the gap in the fence to the first gun station. The captain of the piece received it, scribbled a few memoranda, returned it, and the rider shot across the fields and was lost to view.

There was a hoarse command. The officer behind the gun stood close to the slow-turning carriage, hand uplifted, until the Brobdingnagian cannon had swayed into place. His hand dropped. The men at the levers removed them; the piece lowered ever so little, and now stood firmly upon the massive foundation; four other figures came running up from behind; the enormous breech swayed open; the projectile was thrust home; the men fell back.

A man wearing the chevrons of a sergeant, arm extended, gripped a long steel ribbon, and stood with his knees bent, his eyes fixed on the gun captain's hand.

The crackle of the wireless coil was lost in the terrifying belch of echoing gases. Morgan and Healy, each with hands clasped over their ears, in the first instant following the stupendous reverberation, thought they would never hear again.

The back swirl of the displaced air and the expansive gases which had hurtled the gun's great projectile miles beyond the crest of the hill was hardly less frightful. It boiled, whirled, sucked, and eddied up, down, and around the little clearing.

Right behind the first cyclonic swirl and before the earth had ceased to tremble, another discharge burst from the gun farther along and out of the range of their vision. Then the hosts of hell seemed to volley up and wrench at the elements—the earth rocked, the trees bent hither and yon, the acrid stench of smoke filtered down in the back draft of each succeeding discharge.

The artillery duel was on.

But in the interim between the deafening blasts from their huger brethren, other guns were now sometimes discernible—their more frequent discharges like the notes of a saxophone in the ensemble of an orchestra where the great basses are playing fortissimo.

And while the roaring grew until hearing became a lost art, lithe figures of armed men were creeping in hordes through the woods, crawling on their faces across the fields, sometimes carrying boughs of trees or wisps of grass to mask their advance.

Under cover of the incessant rain of shells, the first line of infantry were taking their final positions for the moment of the charge.

Morgan, who until now had been watching the placing of the monster gun with eyes so fascinated that he forgot the rest of his surroundings, saw, with some surprise, that a field-hospital tent had been stretched near the brook between them and the road. An ambulance came in, rolling leisurely, and one of the knot of surgeons who had been sterilizing their instruments in the pot of boiling water over the fire they had kindled, began to care for the first wounded. They were cavalrymen, members of a party on scout duty, "feeling out the enemy." Another ambulance came in, and the interval between its arrival and that of the third was somewhat shorter. The general advance, however, was not yet begun—all of these men were skirmishers. Another aëroplane flitted back, but so high up that it was impossible for the officer scrutinizing it with glasses to tell whether it was friend or foe—an audacious mite of a thing, supreme in its security—scorning any weapon of earth to even disturb its pilot's equanimity.

Now the trickle of ambulances was more frequent; another brigade of infantry was passing, the men deploying through the woods, or taking every advantage of whatever cover was afforded in the open places—like boys who have raided an orchard and are fearful of being discovered.

These were the reserves.

Still farther to the rear were yet other waiting men—each full panoplied in the regulation equipment, carrying rifle and bayonet, intrenching tool and clothing, food and ammunition, identification disk and first-aid kit. Slowly but steadily they advanced, and behind them poured yet other thousands and tens of thousands—an endless procession of automatons, each ready to die for the Fatherland.

The ambulances were now flying up, discharging their loads, and whirling madly back again toward the front, the red cross glaring from their sides or waving from the hoods of their motors a pitiful apology, it seemed to Morgan, for the real needs of the stricken men when the battle proper began.

Came at last a trumpet's peal, and the massed men in the woods were running instead of walking. Out somewhere in front, the first division was crashing into the enemy. But back here, aside from the occasional drone of a vagrant bullet, the great flag which had been hoisted over the field hospital warned away the missiles that were falling thick and fast in other sections of the forest—the symbol of mercy interposing in this isolated place where all around them was raging the relentless lust of men bent on dealing death ere they met it themselves.

The sickening, acrid smoke drifted groundward, as if it were determined to stifle those whose shattered bodies yet strove for breath while they waited the surgeons who were now working hard and steadily.

Stunned with the incessant discharges, choked with the smoke which grew more dense with every shot, Morgan and Healy forgot even the presence of their stolid-faced guardian, whose remorseless walk to and fro in front of the hut was all that remained to remind them of their own danger.

It was incredibly more ghastly and horrible than either had been able to imagine. As Healy had remarked, the brush of the day before had been only a "preliminary" to this main event. It was obvious that the two great divisions of the German army were in touch at last, and both thrusting at the entire French frontier.

The number of the wounded continued to increase so rapidly that the surgeons and their assistants could scarcely continue their work. They littered the whole space between the road and the forest. Already it was evident the capacity of the field hospital was taxed far beyond its resources. Some of the injured were trying to dress their own wounds from the field kits. Others, too badly injured to move, could only wait their turn. Morgan absolutely forgot his own invidious situation in his sympathy for these hapless, helpless hundreds, stricken down in the prime of life, shattered, maimed, dying.

An officer came over toward the hut. He presented an order to the sentry, who saluted and stood aside. The officer entered.

"You are a surgeon?" he curtly asked Morgan.

"In America, yes."

"If you care to aid us for a while it may be that your services will be considered when your case comes before the court-martial."

Morgan flushed.

"Not on those terms," said he, raising his voice to make it audible in the horrid din. "As a surgeon, I shall be glad to do anything in my power. As an American citizen, I stand upon my rights. You may so inform your superior, Major von Graf."

The officer hesitated. "Major von Graf is with the staff at the front," said he. "It is not possible to reach him now."

"Very well," said Morgan, "I will do what I can. My instruments were confiscated."

"I will get them," said the other. "You will please understand that you are still in custody. This sentry will accompany you. Your servant may go with you."

In the hours which followed, Fairfax Morgan saw more of surgery than the average physician in many years of practice. Likewise he lost forever the illusion that modern warfare is more humane than the barbaric battles of ancient peoples.

Until now, in common with many other physicians, Morgan had been under the impression that the modern, high-speed, small-caliber bullet was more merciful than its predecessors. His first patient showed the folly of the theory. The soldier had been struck in the shoulder by a French bullet—a long, slender affair, made of copper and zinc. The missile had glanced from the soldier's rifle barrel, ricocheted, and entered the tissues in the shape of a hook. Fragments of clothing had been forced into the wound.

Morgan did all that he could, and hurried to the next man. Healy aided him, passing instruments and bandages. The poor chap's back was torn by a bursting shrapnel shell—Morgan removed five bullets beside the fragments of the missile itself. The other doctors were also working like demons. They did not even see this tall, athletic American in civilian garb. If war had become "humane" with the progress in science and arts, it was strange that none of these gasping victims of the conflict bore any evidences of it.

Rarely had the men stricken by French rifle fire the privilege of being wounded or killed by a bullet flying as it left the barrel. Most of the fighting had been done at long range, as one slightly wounded patient told Morgan. But even at five hundred yards the terrible missiles had not only great penetrative power but an explosive effect that splintered bones so terribly as to almost justify the charge that "dum-dums" were being used. Other wounds incurred at still greater distances not infrequently ground bones to powder.

Terrible as these effects were, however, they were comparatively "humane" compared to those from shrapnel, "the devil's watering pot," or the shells from the Creusot guns of the French batteries. The larger shells not only cut like razors, but they amputated, crushed, and even seemed to disintegrate portions of the bodies where they struck, so utterly appalling was their destructive force.

The agony of the wounds was heightened by the high temperature of the fragments the instant after the explosion. No sedative could give surcease from such superlative pain—except the merciful morphia—shrouding the last moments of men hopelessly injured.

Morgan wondered why some examples of the stories he had heard of men shot with high-velocity bullets through the chest, and who walked to the rear without aid, did not appear. These were never in evidence. The unbelievable character of the injuries recalled to his mind the historic siege of Constantinople by Mohammed. In those days war made no pretense at humanity. Mohammed hurled granite cannon balls from brass guns. Many of his projectiles weighed more than a thousand pounds; some close to a ton. Yet they could scarcely have had the destructive effect of the modern gunfire, certainly they could never have spread over an area of from thirty to a hundred square yards, like the shrapnel.

They went back to the hut to gulp down a little black coffee and munch some of the food they had taken from the automobile. A brief period of rest, and Morgan, still closely guarded, was back at his merciful task.

So passed the long afternoon—hours crammed to overflowing with the endless procession of wounded and dying—interminable, desolating hours, without parallel in the history of the world.

Men's lives were nothing in the titanic struggle. Fresh troops from time to time poured past along the Givet Road—indifferent, from their dogged, stoical demeanor, to the ghastly stream of ambulances which turned aside to give these fresh regiments the right of way. The living could fight—the wounded could wait.

There was one compensation in it all. The little brook behind the field hospital, purling peacefully along its rocky bed, furnished water in abundance. From time to time Healy went farther and farther up the source, for the stream below was now as red as if it flowed from the hearts of the numberless victims of the ambitions of monarchs.

The soldier guarding them, however, relaxed none of his vigilance. He narrowly watched Healy on each of his journeys, and the chauffeur knew that any effort of his to escape would have ended in a shot.

Utterly engrossed in the task he had voluntarily assumed, Morgan toiled on through the waning afternoon, oblivious to everything except the demands upon his professional skill. He was brought back to a sense of other things at last, as he noted that the number of arriving ambulances was growing fewer and fewer; the roar of the battle out in front was muffled, and the fire of the great guns on either side was slackening. The sharp response of the Creusot artillery came thinly, at rarer intervals, and from increasing distances; and, with a last gigantic bellow, the enormous siege gun which had squatted nearest them ceased firing.

Instantly a swarm of men poured over and around it—inspecting, cleaning, readjusting various parts, like solicitous stable hands grooming a thoroughbred after an exhausting race.

Finally the last wound was dressed.

Peace settled down over the little clearing.

The German advance had rolled back the Allies, and for some time only the crackle of the wireless came intermittently to the dulled ears of the two Americans who returned to their hut.

The breeze was sweeping the space around them free from the smoke. Morgan filled his pipe and sat down to a well-earned rest. Healy, who fortunately also still possessed "the makin's," followed his example. They watched a large tent rising a little beyond the wireless station; Von Graf and his staff galloped back and dismounted in front of it. An armored auto rolled up, another group of distinguished-looking officers left the machine. There was an exchange of salutes; a conference under the trees in which maps, occasional wireless messages, and arriving orderlies all took part.

In the hush of the battle's aftermath, the solitary soldier pacing back and forward in front of the hut brought back to them their own desperate situation. Presently Von Graf and his associates might begin to consider them.

It mattered nothing that their guardian had seen Morgan alleviate the agony of scores of his countrymen; the soldier was only a cog in the German war machine, and he would answer with his own life for their appearance before their judges.

The prospect, however, was not nearly so threatening as it had been in Luxemburg. On that occasion they had been confronted with a most serious offense—interference with a soldier in the performance of his duty in time of war. Now the charge was theft of an officer's cap.

Such an offense, even if proven, was very trivial in comparison to the other—absurd, in fact. There might be enough in the accusation to enable Von Hollman to detain the two Americans, but there would scarcely be sufficient excuse of summary action by his associates. The other staff officers were concentrating all their knowledge and energy on winning a great war. Von Hollman had certain personal ends in view—he wanted Charlotte Cameron, for one thing, and was determined to have her. It was likely that he would try to induce her to return to the Château de Herthereaux. Once this was achieved, Morgan and Healy would likely be allowed to go on to America, especially as Robert Cameron would be rather averse to permitting his niece to expose herself a second time to such hazards if she was once back in Luxemburg.

So Morgan did not take their own position as seriously as he had first regarded it. He even glanced half contemptuously toward the group of officers, now scrutinizing the hut.

Presently a figure detached itself, and, followed respectfully by another, came over in their direction. The sentry stiffened, his heels clicked together, he saluted, and then came to a "present arms."

Count von Hollman paused in the door.

"Good evening, Doctor Morgan," said he, with the easy manner both listeners so well recalled. "It is most regrettable that you are again in military custody. Major von Graf, however, assures me that he had no alternative, under the circumstances, as you had German uniforms concealed in your automobile."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SENTIMENTALITY OF CHARLOTTE.

The engaging and courteous tone in which the young German general spoke left Fairfax Morgan at a loss for a reply. He had rather anticipated a much more hostile attitude—a stern, uncompromising, and possibly wordless scrutiny. Before he could readjust his chaotic ideas and answer in kind, Von Hollman came in, tapping his leg with the slender cane he carried, walked over, and sat down beside him.

His extended hand rested on Morgan's shoulders in a most friendly fashion.

"I'm awfully sorry, old man," he said. "But you must admit it isn't any of my doing. If you were going to leave Luxemburg, why didn't you tell me, and I would have helped you out."

Morgan looked his bewilderment.

"Would you have helped me out of Luxemburg?" he asked.

He felt that there were many very good reasons why Von Hollman would have done nothing of the kind, but it was hardly the time nor the place to express such sentiments.

"Certainly I would have done so," warmly returned the other man. "Why not? No one has any higher regard for you than I—certainly no one would be more willing to serve Miss Cameron or her uncle, who is an old friend of mine."

Morgan clamped his lips tightly together. He was too astonished to reply. Von Hollman went quietly on:

"Your own distrust of me, and your own headstrong and impetuous way of going about things has brought down upon you all this new trouble. We Germans find ourselves at a loss to know how to deal with you Americans. That is where we are terribly handicapped—you do not understand the German point of view, the necessity that lies behind many inconveniences we are compelled to permit and unable to relieve. Therefore you criticize and distrust the Germans. You Americans are like the English in that respect. England distrusts Germany—otherwise why did she declare war upon us?"

The young physician made a gesture of dissent.

"I am very sorry that I have given you such an impression," he said. "Certainly I had no such intention. You can certainly appreciate the situation which confronted both Miss Cameron and myself. We never dreamed of the outbreak of war—least of all with such terrible suddenness. I do not see why we should be, even inferentially, suspected of any distrust, because we were trying our best to get to Ostend or any other port we could reach in order to sail for America. If you will pardon my speaking frankly, general, I should say it is you who distrust us—not we you."

Von Hollman did not appear to take umbrage at the rather pointed way Morgan was turning his own argument into a weapon against him, nor the American accent upon the word "distrust." He merely waited, polite, inscrutable, and gently administering in his attitude.

"Certainly," went on the physician, "you must admit that you Germans, engaged in such tremendous military operations, do not desire to be impeded or annoyed by noncombatants. On the contrary, I should imagine you would be glad to see every one of that character safely out of the country—instead of interfering with their departure."

Von Hollman laughed softly.

"You are nothing but a boy, my dear fellow, like all Americans! Everything that is done must be done your way and without delay. You cannot wait the regular course of events—your hopes, wishes, desires come first. This is serious business, Doctor Morgan. You are not playing tennis now—this is the 'kriegspiel!'—the war game. The wishes of individuals are of no consequence—everything must be subordinated to the fixed and unalterable purpose of the Fatherland."

He unostentatiously withdrew his arm, and his tone was colder than before. The air of personal solicitude faded.

Morgan, however, was growing angry. The assumption that he was a child was distinctly irritating. It was the sheerest sophistry—this paternal bosh—and behind it he realized that Von Hollman was inflexibly set on carrying out his purposes with regard to himself and Charlotte.

Goaded more and more by the suave, contained manner of his antagonist, realizing the futility of attempting to fight back under such overwhelming odds, he resented bitterly both the situation and the way in which Von Hollman was maneuvering every circumstance to his own advantage.

"You make me sick with that sort of talk!" He jumped up as he spoke. "Why, if it were not for the interference of your subordinates, we would not be in this country at all. What are you holding us for? If Major von Graf had not stopped us this morning, we might have been sailing for America by this time! The purposes of the Fatherland are nothing to Miss Cameron—nor to my chauffeur, nor me. We are Americans—citizens of a neutral nation. And I would have you remember that we were proceeding peacefully toward the French frontier under the implied protection of the American flag. Why, under such circumstances, did Von Graf detain us? We had committed no offense!"

"But you have," cut in Von Hollman. "You were carrying disguises—German uniforms—concealed in your automobile."

"There was only one—your own busby," said Morgan. "And an explanation of how it came there was made at the time. But even so, what of it? If a man may be court-martialed by you and your underlings for taking your cap, isn't it just as logical to take him out and shoot him for stealing the cane you were carrying when you came in here?"

Von Hollman rose. He showed neither anger nor embarrassment. He shrugged his shoulders, and his tone was even deprecatory as he replied:

"I can only say, my dear fellow, as I have already said, that I am very sorry. But what has happened has happened. Had you sought my advice, I am quite sure that things would not be in so lamentable a condition."

"You've said all that before," said Morgan, "but you have evaded the point at issue. Whether I sought your advice or not has nothing to do with it. I certainly had no cause whatever to believe you would help me out of Luxemburg—that is too transparent to need any discussion. You were the moving cause of my being brought before that court-martial. You did not intimate to me in any way, after I was found not guilty, that you thought it a part of your military duty or your personal obligation toward Miss Cameron, her uncle, or myself to assist us to reach the nearest seaport.

"You have referred to me as a child; you have harped upon my impulsiveness—you have plainly hinted that my personal wishes to return to my own country are of no consequence in view of the military problem Germany faces. All of which, like everything else you have said since coming in here, is beside the issue. The issue is this: Miss Cameron, myself, and chauffeur are Americans. None of us are guilty of any crime. We are detained on a pretext which is self-evidently absurd. Permit me to remind you that none of us have ever made any claim to clairvoyant power. If the offense against us is leaving Luxemburg without asking your aid, the answer is that none of us were mind readers, and so did not know your burning solicitude for our personal welfare. Now, as an American citizen, I demand my immediate release, and that of my servant."

Von Hollman shook his head.

"There is no reasoning with you, doctor," he said. "But I cannot permit you to go on toward the French frontier after what has occurred. As I said before, it is very serious business."

"If you meant what you said a few minutes ago, there is no reason whatever why we should not be released. You declared that you would have done all that lay in your power to aid Miss Cameron and myself to the nearest seaport. What I propose is a test of your sincerity. If you were speaking the truth then, you will do what I ask now—without quibbling. That busby is yours. So was the cloak. And you know as well as I that motoring through these hills at night is chilly business. You have my request—as a citizen of a neutral country. I grant you I cannot compel you to release me—but my own standing and Miss Cameron's make that request not only reasonable but eminently proper. In denying it, you lay yourself open to the suspicion of an ulterior motive—perhaps one unworthy of a German officer."

Von Hollman gently tapped his boot with his cane.

"You Americans!" he softly smiled. "I am very sorry that I am not permitted to do what you demand. There are limitations, much as I regret them, even to my authority. What you ask is impossible."

Morgan had much the feeling of a man driving a rapier into a huge pillow to encounter a sheet of steel behind it. He had played his last card. Von Hollman's silky deference mattered nothing. The significance of things grew upon him. Charlotte had frankly avowed her detestation of this baffling, recondite, but purposeful young man. It was not only his own danger which Morgan must consider—Charlotte was in more peril than either Healy or himself.

He stifled his anger. Von Hollman was slowly walking toward the door.

"Just a moment," said Morgan. "I have another request to make of you."

Von Hollman turned.

"Anything in my power, my dear fellow, I shall be most pleased to allow."

"Thank you," dryly returned Morgan. "It is surely within your power, and I do not see how it is possible for it to interfere with the movement of any army corps under your command. I desire to have a little chat with Miss Cameron. Major von Graf specifically stated, at the time we were turned back, that she was not in custody. When may I see her?"

The other seemed taken aback. For the first time he manifested symptoms of uneasiness. Morgan's clear, challenging eyes made Von Hollman's waver, then he dropped them. He had been outflanked. There was no reason, such as he had given for Morgan's detention, which would serve to refuse this direct, simple request. Morgan was a friend of Miss Cameron's—a very dear friend evidently, for she had left Luxemburg with him. And, as Morgan had so pertinently remarked, Miss Cameron was not in custody—nominally.

The young German grew very thoughtful.

"You do not think Miss Cameron is a spy, do you?" demanded Morgan.

"Why, my dear fellow"—Von Hollman looked up with a sudden smile—"of course not. Certainly you may see Miss Cameron. I will arrange the matter at once."

He turned abruptly and walked through the door, then turned back for a moment.

"I want to thank you, doctor, for the good work you did this afternoon. The chief of the hospital corps says that you are an excellent surgeon. It is a pity we cannot attach you permanently to the German army."

He smiled and stepped quickly back toward the big tent, vanishing in the gloom among the trees. Morgan gazed after him. He could not understand Von Hollman at all. He was not an ordinary man. Ordinary men are not difficult to analyze—this fellow baffled all attempt to comprehend him.

It was almost dusk when Charlotte appeared in the hut where Morgan was confined. Healy had long ago been commandeered to act as a chauffeur for some German officer, and Morgan had been served with a meal of coffee and soup and bread from one of the motor-mounted cook wagons. He had a clear view of the glade about him from the door of the hut. It was evident that the engagement was over, and that the rapid German advance was being continued.

The ambulances with their freight moved northward, but regiment after regiment, foot and field guns moved south. During that afternoon, Morgan saw the passage of an entire army corps with all its transport and ammunition wagons and on a war footing. He saw the big gun dismounted from its platform, set up again on its carriage, and at length move slowly off down the dusty and rutted roads.

Instead of a scene of feverish activity, the place had become an idle backwater in the current of the German advance. The tents were struck and disappeared, the firing rumbled farther and farther away.

Save for the sentry who passed steadily to and fro before the open door, and for the fresh scars left upon forest hillside by the German engineers, the little plateau in the mountains was much as it had been when they had first looked upon it. A hum of insects arose from the weeds by the side of the road, but there was no song of birds as there had been that morning.

Morgan had almost given up hope of seeing her when Charlotte appeared. A noncommissioned officer accompanied her to the door, pointed, saluted, and disappeared. The sentry saluted as she passed him, and Morgan rose to meet her.

As has been said, he had known Charlotte from childhood, and in all that time had known her as kind, warm-hearted, but rather undemonstrative—certainly not of the clinging type, and never given to displays of emotion.

He was considerably surprised, therefore, when Charlotte, instead of greeting him in her usual fashion, came straight up to him and put both arms around his neck. It was like a dream, but Charlotte's arms were warm and substantial enough. There was something bewilderingly real in the fragrance of her presence, and one stray curl of hers tickled his cheek.

"Charlotte!" he said.

"Don't be silly, or get mushy," whispered Charlotte in his ear, in rapid sibilants. "I don't like this any more than you do, and I'm not going crazy. I want to talk to you, and this is the only way. That sentry at the door can understand English, or Count von Hollman wouldn't have put him there. I want him to think this is a love scene so that he won't be too curious and won't hear what I have to say. Now put your arms about me and walk me over there and we'll sit and hold hands on that sofa."

Morgan did as he was told. A man is never as good an actor as a woman, and Morgan's wish that it wasn't all acting did not make him any better in the part. He had the satisfaction, however, of seeing the sentry move his beat a little farther from the door and avert his head so that they were left in comparative privacy and seclusion. He might be an eavesdropper for military reasons, but his sentiments were too sound and his heart too soft not to respect such a scene.

"Listen," said Charlotte, still rapidly and in a low tone. "That French aviator, Martin, the man you helped to get off, is near here."

"How do you know?"

"I saw him—and talked to him. I

was free to go and come as I pleased. During the battle I climbed up a path up the hill among the trees—I was hoping to get up somewhere where I could get a view of things; there were no soldiers up there—and I came upon him. He frightened me half to death, but he knew who I was and had seen us detained by the Germans. He's been hiding up there since before the Germans came. His machine is up there in a little clearing, and he wants to take me up in it and off to Ostend."

"He can't do it and dodge the Germans," said Morgan.

"Yes, he can." Charlotte emphasized her words by squeezing his hands which she held. "He says the German army is away south now. The rear guard has passed, even. They are moving faster than any army ever moved before. Count von Hollman and a few officers are all that are left behind."

"But you can't get back to him."

"But I can. There's no sentry at my door—no soldiers there at all—just an old lady, and she speaks French, and she likes me. Count von Hollman thinks I'm pefectly safe where I am, and has no idea there's a French aviator in the woods above. I smuggled him some sandwiches this noon. He says he owes his life to you and Healy, and he swears in three languages that he can land me safe in Antwerp if I go with him. He can't take you, but he can take me, and from Antwerp I can get in touch with the secretary of state, and it won't take long to get you out of Count von Hollman's hands. There will be no interrupted cablegrams there."

"I can't have you risking your life in an aëroplane." Morgan drew her toward him, and there was no acting at all now in his attitude of trouble and concern. Charlotte's eyes softened a little.

"Fairfax," she said, "I don't think there's any risk. Martin says not. He's sure there are no air scouts north or east of us."

"The army has gone south," said Morgan, "and I suppose he would be safe enough, as their scouts and aëroplanes are all moving ahead of them—but, Charlotte, it's a risk."

"I'm not afraid to go up in that machine with that Frenchman—but I am afraid here."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid of Count von Hollman."

"Surely Von Hollman is a gentleman."

"He may be. But I've heard queer things about gentlemen before now. And really, Fairfax, I think he is crazy. That last automobile ride in Luxemburg was too terrible. I won't talk about it. I don't think about it when I can help it, but I'm not going to stay an hour longer than I can help in a place where Count von Hollman is absolute master. Don't, Fairfax—don't, please don't lose your temper."

Morgan was gritting his teeth. He rose, took a step or two, sat down beside Charlotte, and caught her outstretched hand once more in his.

"If I killed him——" he said slowly.

"If you killed him, you'd be killed—and I wouldn't have a friend left." Charlotte's voice broke a little. "Oh, dear Fairfax, please let me go with Mr. Martin. I'm not afraid. There's no risk, and it is dangerous for me to stay here. And"—after a little pause, and with a smile breaking through the tears—"if you don't advise me to go, I'm going anyway, without your permission."

"When?"

"To-morrow morning early. Mr. Martin doesn't want to steer by compass. He wants to see his way. He says he's one of the best aviators in the French army."

"And if they fire shells at you?"

"His machine cannot be distinguished at any height from one of the German planes. He's a spy—not a soldier—and it's his business to fool the Germans; and if he's caught, he won't even be shot—he'll be hung, right away."

"So I believe," said Morgan. "He said something of the kind to me."

"And I'm to tell him to-night."

"How are you going to see him?"

"The woman in the house is really a sort of Frenchwoman—a Walloon she calls herself, and speaks some queer sort of old-fashioned French. But she fools the Germans. And she knows Mr. Martin quite well. Mr. Martin knows a lot of people in Belgium. He was here a lot before the war started."

"Yes," said Morgan, "so I understand." He was thinking hard, and the surges of feeling that swept over him at each new glance of Charlotte's eyes, at each new and lovable inflection in her voice, made it hard to think clearly. To the sentry at the door, this couple made a pretty and touching picture of two devoted lovers parted by the stern laws of war. Whatever the ruthless power of the German war machine may bring about, there is still in almost every German heart an unplumbed depth of tender and homely sentiment—the love of a mother for a son, the love of a man for a maid, touched a responsive chord somewhere beneath the gray-green jacket of the pacing sentry. Save for an occasional sidelong glance, he kept his eyes away from the couple and hummed under his breath that Thuringian folksong that we call in English "How Can I Leave Thee?"

To Morgan himself the touch of Charlotte's soft hands in his, her blue and trusting eyes, the soft rise and fall of her bosom—all the intangible things that went up to make the fragrance of her presence were inexpressibly thrilling. To trust such a fair and radiant being to the guardianship of Etienne Martin seemed an awful thing. Martin was brave, of course, to recklessness. And whatever high motives of patriotism were his, he was a spy, and Morgan liked neither the word nor the occupation when he thought of the man as a companion and guardian for Charlotte.

"Fairfax." Charlotte gave his hands a little squeeze, and her eyes seemed tender and luminous in the gathering dusk. "I know just what you are thinking. But it would be worse, much worse, for me to remain here with Count Hollman. I dread him more and more, and however sane he may appear to you, he's crazy—just crazy. And I've talked to Mr. Martin, and although he's a little excitable, I can trust him, and he's safe. And you don't know how grateful to you he is for saving him that night. It's not on his account alone, he says, but on account of France. And the old woman clasps her hands and weeps when he says it."

"I know," said Morgan. "I've heard him talk."

"Well, I'm going." Charlotte rose and smoothed out her dress. "I know I shall be safe, and when I get to Ostend it won't be long till you hear from the state department. Say good-by to me, Fairfax, and please, please don't worry."

Her arms were about him, and then he saw the flutter of her skirt in the gathering darkness. She was gone. The door which had been torn off by the Germans had been replaced and stood open. A chill had come on with the night, and Morgan shut the door on the pacing sentry. He lit a candle and looked about the little hut. A cot in one corner, a table and chairs, a fireplace with an iron pot and a picture of the Virgin and child above the mantel—that was all.

Only a few nights ago he had been imprisoned thus in a very different room in Luxemburg. That night he had been in terror of his life—the rope was at his throat. And now he felt that he was safe enough personally—but it was Charlotte's risk that worried him.

That night in Luxemburg had been noisy with the sound of blaring trumpets, the rattle of drums, the tramp of marching feet. Now, this night, as the moon rose, the Ardennes were as silent and peaceful as when Cæsar first passed through them. The battle line had rolled away far to the southward. A few still sentinels, a few white tents under the moon, a scarred hillside where the great gun had been—and silence. And yet on this night, when Morgan blew his candle out and threw himself on the cot, he found it harder to sleep than on that disturbing night in Luxemburg. It was well toward daybreak that he sprang from his cot, too restless to lie still longer, thinking any action better than none and full of a new resolution.

The hut was built on much the same lines as many a little Adirondack mountain camp. A single room with a door and window was the ground floor. A rickety ladder led to an attic formed by the rough-board ceiling. Morgan's eyes had accustomed themselves to the dark, and it was easy to climb the rickety ladder in his stocking feet without any sound that could possibly have been perceptible to the sentry without.

Once in the attic, Morgan had to crouch on hands and knees to avoid hitting the timbers of the slate roof. At either end of this attic was a window, and from the western one, which was unglazed, a broad shaft of light shone from the setting moon. Morgan approached the other window, which was directly above the door and looked out. Below, clear of the shadow of the house, stood the single sentry, his bayonet gleaming in the moonlight.

Morgan could see the tents of the staff officers, and the sentries before them. There were only a few; they were well behind the German lines; the Allies were in full retreat far to the south, with the great war machine in pursuit, and there were few soldiers and little danger of a surprise here. Across the creaky attic floor Morgan moved to the other window. There was no sentry and no tents on this side of the hut; nothing but the wide sweep of the highway, the wooded slopes of the mountain, and the pointed gables of the house to which Charlotte had been taken. The moon was far down in the west. It lacked but a short time of sunrise, and Morgan had taken his resolve. It was too much for him, too unbearable to lie quiescent while Charlotte ventured off into the airy spaces above the hilltops with a reckless Frenchman for a companion, and a hostile army beneath. If his shadow were seen moving in the trees, he knew well that there would be no words, no parley, nothing but the sharp report of a rifle and a bullet through his heart, but it was better to die thus than to lie quiet while Charlotte was in danger. He forced his big bulk through the little, unglazed window, hung for a moment by his hands, and dropped lightly on the soft turf beneath. The serene moonlight added to his disquietude. Perhaps, since it was so light, Martin had started without waiting for the sunrise. He was anxious and impatient, but cautious nevertheless. He must reach the house of the Walloon woman and wait for Charlotte to leave. Then he could accompany her to the spot where Martin had hid his plane, and if there were danger for Charlotte he would be there to share it.

Crisp autumn days of still hunting in the Maine woods and in the Adirondacks made it seem not at all strange to be slipping through the forest with nothing on his feet but a pair of white woolen socks. All Morgan's physical training, in spite of what Von Hollman had said, had not been of the impractical kind. He slipped from shadow to shadow watching for the gleam of a bayonet or the dark shadow of a lance amid the trees. As he passed through the woods, he could look down to the road and see a little group of soldiers near the gates of the house that sheltered Charlotte. To the rear of the house the forest was thicker and denser. Once, as he threaded his way through a clump of undergrowth, he was startled by the crash of a partridge as it sprang up among the trees almost from under his feet. Twice he heard the hoot of an owl, and once the long howl of a wolf deep somewhere in the timber, but that was all. The trees grew close down near the little lawn that surrounded the house, and from bole to bole Morgan slipped noiselessly, ever in the shadow. He could see the gleam of moonlight on the windows in the rear of the house, the dark bulk of barn and well house, the sweep of a little orchard, but there was no sentry there, and when Morgan had finished his reconnoissance he was sure.

Within twenty feet of the back door of the house, a little path led up among the timber, and near this path, sheltered in a copse of hazel surrounded by sturdy oaks, he crouched and waited. How long he was there he did not know. The shadows cast by the moon grew longer, the moon sank and it was all shadow. Then, after an age-long period of waiting in the darkness came a soft orange glow above the eastern hills and the twittering of birds from the treetops.

As Morgan half rose and stretched himself, the door of the cottage swung open, and Charlotte appeared, wrapped in a long cloak, and walking quickly up the white path toward him. He was on the point of rising and greeting her when something he saw behind her made him drop back in the shelter of the hazel copse. It was a man's figure, following Charlotte stealthily. A moment later Morgan recognized it. It was no sentinel, but Von Hollman himself, hatless but in the black uniform of the Hussars of Death. He, too, had been watching Charlotte's resting place, and he, too, was rising with the dawn. Could it be possible that he had some knowledge of the near-by presence of Martin, and of Charlotte's plan of escape? And if so, why had no sentries been posted on the slopes above the house, and why had not Martin been brought into the camp under arrest?

Scarcely breathing, Morgan lay still while Charlotte passed him. An outstretched hand would have touched her garments. He could see the white of her face, the tendrils of her hair, the little hand that held the skirts back from the briers and bushes. He could hear the soft and hurried intake of her breath.

A moment later Von Hollman was abreast of him, and one glance at his face was enough to show that it was no official duty that brought him there. His odd countenance was at all times expressive enough, and now there was a sort of madness in it. Eagerness, determination, disappointed but still persistent will were written on those features. The eyes were fixed on Charlotte's dark form as it sped up the hill, but his booted feet without spurs kept the path well enough and noiselessly. His arms were outstretched before him. If ever a figure expressed set purpose, desire, determination carried to the length of madness, it was Von Hollman's. The pale-gray light showed him plainly enough, and now that he thought himself all unobserved his emotions were written for any one to see on his face. A sense of repulsion, and then an odd throb of pity stirred Morgan. There was something pathetic in such a man, with such gifts, absolutely carried away and dominated by such a reckless and desperate passion. Morgan once at Bellevue had tried to save the life of a man who had shot a girl and then himself because she refused to marry him, and now Von Hollman seemed such a man and capable of such insanity. He followed him at a distance of ten paces or so, hiding behind the tree boles and moving noiselessly on his stockinged feet. He might have cracked a thousand twigs without causing that dark figure to turn. At that moment there was only one thing in the world for Von Hollman, and that was Charlotte Cameron.

Thus moving, the three climbed higher and higher up the wooded slopes, and presently a clearing, recently made, was visible with the shadowy form of Martin's machine in the middle of it, the figure of Martin beside it, and empty gasoline cans scattered about. Martin, in his work of Belgian espionage, had evidently been using this roost in the hills and adapting it to his purpose for some time before the war broke out.

As they reached the clearing, Von Hollman paused in astonishment and straightened up. The clearing, the aëroplane were evidently a great surprise to him, and he halted. At the same instant, Martin, who had dashed forward to meet Charlotte, was helping her into the machine, and almost at the same second the sputter of its exhaust broke the silence.

Morgan was close behind Von Hollman now. The count was a tense, crouching figure, one hand at his belt. Presently the hand swung up, and in it was a black automatic pointed at Martin. It was at this second that Morgan struck, and before he could fire Von Hollman fell heavily and Morgan threw his weight upon him. He did not look up, but he heard the roar of the exhaust, the whir of its flight, and knew that the monoplane was passing above him, westward and to safety. And he himself was struggling with a madman. Twice and three times he struck at Hollman, but the blows took no effect. Again and again he tried to twist the pistol from Von Hollman's grasp, but the fingers seemed made of steel, and Von Hollman himself a thing of wire and steel springs. They rolled over and over on the grass. Then there was the barking report of the automatic, and Morgan fell limp. Von Hollman stood up, panting, looking down at the face of the doctor. A stream of blood ran across his forehead from a wound some place beneath his thick, blond hair. There was a sound of rushing feet, and soldiers appeared among the trees with fixed bayonets.

"Swine!" said Von Hollman, panting heavily and speaking in German. "You have allowed one prisoner to escape, but I have caught the other. Carry him to my tent."

An officer appeared and pointed in the direction the plane had taken. Von Hollman shook his head.

"You cannot fire at it," he said. "There is a lady in it—a German princess. We have been outwitted by a Frenchman and a fool of an American."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

*The fourth and last installment of this war novel will appear in the next number of the POPULAR, on sale December 7th.*

## WHEN THE LIGHTNING STRIKES HOME

J. ADAM BEDE, the wit of Wisconsin, was on a hurry-up trip to New York. "I had one of those lightning lunches at the railroad station," he confided to a friend, "and then I had thundering pains."

# The Peacemaker

By A. M. Chisholm

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**The God of Nature is a God of Battles. He has decreed that every creature that has life must fight and fight hard or it dies. There is play, and happiness, and occasional peace; there is also conflict and plenty of it. This story has to do with the brown bear whose armament lies in the huge forepaws fringed with five-inch claws, slightly curved and nearly as hard as steel. There are some men in the story, but you will be interested most in the fighting grizzlies.**

HIGH up on the eastern slope of the mountain range it was dim dawn. A faint, pale light was beginning to touch the peaks, where the snows of the vanished winter yet lay deep; but below, down in the valley, all was dark. Only in the greater altitudes, the topmost places in the curve of the world, the shadows were vanishing.

Though it was spring on those heights the nights were bitter with frost. By day the snows melted a little, sank a little; but by night they hardened and iced, and the trickling streams from their bases solidified. In the dawn the air was keen, and the mountain wind, blowing unchecked through space, seemed edged and hard. Save for its ceaseless sighing, the silence was utter—the grim silence of gray rock and snow and lifeless, barren solitude.

And yet there *was* life, both old and young, fierce and hungry. As the light moved downward from the topmost peaks, something stirred behind a windfall which concealed and almost choked the narrow entrance of a small cave in the rocks. And presently, around the fallen top, merged a she-grizzly, followed by a cub.

The old bear was very large. In her then condition, though lean from the winter and the drain of suckling, she weighed nearly six hundred pounds. Her coat was a dull brown, shot with gray, thick around the neck and shoulders, thinning along the flanks. Her head was unusually broad at the base, but the skull was flat and tapering, producing a peculiarly sinister effect which was heightened by the heavy, rufflike fur of the neck and the "roach," or short mane, that ran backward over the shoulders. Her teeth, still unworn and perfect, were formidable enough; but her main armament lay in the huge forepaws fringed with five-inch claws, slightly curved and nearly as hard as steel. Wielded by the giant, muscular forearms, these were capable of delivering a ripping blow which would tear a foot-wide swath of flesh from the bone. The buffet of the paw itself would break the neck of a bull or the back of a moose. Thus armed, with her enormous weight, tremendous strength, and a swiftness and activity on occasion which was equaled only by that of the felines, she was invincible to every foe but man. And of man she had seen but little, since from choice she ranged in the remotest fastnesses and by luck and wariness she had never come within the range of rifle.

The old bear was very proud of this her latest cub. Others had preceded him, all large and shapely, but he promised to be the flower of the flock. His sire was a great, bald-faced grizzly, the undisputed overlord of three mountain ranges; and the cub had bred true, the hair of his face being a dull, whitish gray. Just then, in his babyhood, it produced an effect clownlike and ridiculous, but later, when he should have attained his full growth, it would be sinister and daunting, a mark of caste and ferocity.

This was the cub's first invasion of a land which, if all went well, he might some day be range lord. And because everything was new, and because he had not yet found himself, he made rather heavy weather of it.

For there were so many things to distract a little bear's attention—so many strange and wondrous sights and noises and smells to be tested by bright little eyes and round little ears and sharp, piglike nose! Their analysis, and, much more, their synthesis, was quite beyond the little baldface. He was confused by the myriad wonders of the mountain wilderness, as a toddler clinging to his mother's skirts is bewildered by the rush and traffic of a crowded street. And, like a toddler, he clung to the old bear's flank nervously, whining now and then at the steepness of the way and the strangeness of it all, and the terrifying living things which, as the day drew on and their downward way continued, his baby eyes beheld.

The roaring flight of an old blue grouse which took wing a few feet away from the swinging bulk of the old bear threw him into a panic; the springing chatter of a squirrel filled his little heart with awe; and the spectacle of a huge, very black, and very dignified old-man porcupine made him whimper and crowd closer to the dingy, fiercely loving mother bulk which typified and embodied to him all strength and protection and warmth and sustenance.

And yet his wondering eyes saw but little of other life; for the life of the hills withdrew itself from the path of the hungry old grizzly, yielding her the right of way without dispute, prudently desirous of prolonging its own life yet a while. It faded away to right and left as she progressed. A pair of whistlers dived for their rock crannies as they caught sight of the dingy shape; an old goat, surprised in his feeding, trotted off hastily; and even a big mountain lion, lean and fierce from a hard winter, sprang away among the rocks lest his too-near presence should arouse the uncertain temper of the mother bear.

Just once they saw one of their own kind, a scarred old warrior with a coat sadly the worse for wear, who, having winded their approach, half arose to survey them with reddened, wicked eyes as trespassers on his domain. But, seeing that the intruder was a lady, of stature larger than his own, and moreover accompanied by her offspring, he uttered a deprecating, coughing grunt and gave his entire attention to his own affairs.

With this wondrous cub to guide and guard, the old bear was very wary; and because of this wariness and the limited physical powers of her offspring, her progress was slow. She tested the air of her advance continually; not that she feared anything on earth, not even man, for herself, but because for a while not even the suspicion of peril must shadow the cub.

She was making for her favorite feeding ground where, in other years, she and her cubs had fattened and gained strength. There were slides and heavy timber and a creek from which by patience and cunning a bear might occasionally scoop a trout, or now and then, when an ursine providence was very good, come upon an iridescent-sided monarch of some pool floating enfeebled or dead in the shallows. There were edible roots, and rotten stumps and logs crawling with insect life, and there was much game. Of this choice range she was lady paramount, by right of conquest if not of discovery, and she had proved her right to sole possession on the hides of other bear who had thought to share it with her. For she was solitary and morose by nature, and, save in the mating season, the companionship of even her own kind irked her.

The way, though she picked it carefully because of the cub, was rough and toilsome. It wound along the face of the mountain, sometimes descending and reascending deep gulches in which the snow was melting and the water atrickle, but ever trending downward. It held through old brule where the dried, fire-killed skeletons of crowded trees still stood branchless, bone-white save for fire scars, a forest of straight poles, lonely and desolate, and through areas where the mountain winds had broken and uprooted trees and piled them in heartbreaking tangles apparently impassable to man or large beast. But for all her bulk, when she could not go around, the old bear wound through and under and over these with comparative ease and patient slowness; and the cub, his lack of size and inherited instinct serving instead of experience, followed closely.

But in spite of its obstacles, the mother bear preferred cover. When she was forced to leave it, to traverse bare areas of mountainside devoid of trees or vegetation, she hustled her offspring across such places at speed, along narrow, rocky ledges where the cliffs uprose steeply and fell straight down, and plunged, with a grunt of satisfaction, into the friendly shelter of trees and tumbled rocks and bushes.

This unwonted and prolonged journey made the little bear hungry. He endeavored to nurse, but his mother pushed him aside, at first gently, and then, as he persisted, with an admonitory cuff which, though the gentlest in her repertoire, tumbled the little fellow heels over head. He sat up and bawled sadly, more pained of spirit and amazed than hurt. But the old bear paid no attention. She kept on her way. Whereat her son suddenly ceased his wailing and ran after her, thus learning a first lesson in obedience.

But having given this lesson and allowed it to be driven well home, and having moreover found a spot which promised good foraging, the old grizzly halted and allowed the cub to nurse. Thereafter she sought food for herself, and had the luck to come upon a fool hen upon her nest. She killed the slow bird with a light stroke of her paw and ate it with relish, following it with the eggs. The cub, by luck, obtained a fragment of wing, which he ground between his sharp teeth, growling ferociously, challenging the world to take from him that which was his food. And after they had fed, the old bear lay down in the deep of a thicket and slumbered lightly, while the cub curled up beside her mighty flank and slept profoundly, what of his weariness and his mother's milk and the tension which his young and untried nerves had undergone.

Thus they journeyed down to the land of promise, where the old bear had established her nursery for future kings of the ranges, and they began to fatten on the bounty of the land.

Soon the cub lost much of the baby timidity which had distinguished his first venture into the world of living things. For, as all living things gave place and much room to the old grizzly, and indeed to the cub himself, recognizing his species and knowing well that the mother was near at hand, the little baldface came to feel a contempt for life other than his own; and he lorded it much after the manner of a pampered young princeling, his native courage and insolence far outpacing his physical growth. He learned the taste of red meat, for his mother killed a doe, breaking its back with a single blow of her terrible paw. On the carcass they fed largely, and vulgar and disreputable wolves finished it.

Just once the old grizzly found it necessary to protect the integrity of her range. Foraging one day upon a slide, the cub at her heels, she found a particularly choice and rotten log, the erstwhile home of luscious grubs innumerable, ripped open and scattered, and the occupants gone. And about and upon the riven log hung the scent of one of her own kind.

Growling in wrath at this flagrant outrage, she sniffed along the trail of the daring vandal. And in an hour she came upon the intruder near a pool in the creek, which was her own favorite resort.

The poacher was a she-grizzly but little smaller than herself, and the fact that she, too, was a mother with two cubs at her heels should have established a bond of maternal sympathy. Sad to relate, it did nothing of the sort. The old bear charged instantly, with a ferocious roar. The newcomer, somewhat startled, but firm, stood her ground, and, with a stroke of her chisel-shod paw, ripped the shoulder of her assailant to the bone. But instantly she was overborne. They fought, closely locked, while shredded brown fur strewed the ground, and hot blood steamed and reddened the bushes, and their deep, harsh roars of crazed fury insulted the calm of the mountains.

Never before had the little baldface seen his mighty mother in action. For a moment he stood amazed at the temerity which enabled another living thing to await her terrible onslaught. There was no doubt in his mind that she would inevitably destroy this marauder. Evidently, too, these two little bears, not quite so large as himself, were particeps criminis in the offense, whatever it was, and so deserved extermination. With a vicious squeal which he intended for a heart-shaking roar, he charged down upon them.

But the two little grizzlies, amazed and terrified at the sudden overthrow of their hitherto redoubtable parent, did not await the coming of this bald-faced limb of an evil beast. They fled, squeaking and bawling. And at that moment their mother, extricating herself for an instant from the grip of battle at the cost of much fur and flesh, and realizing that she should not have joined it in the first place, wheeled and incontinently fled on the track of her offspring.

In so doing, and quite unintentionally, she ran over the little baldface, rolling him down a steep bank into the creek. And this, in all probability, was the salvation of herself and her cubs; for the old grizzly, attracted by the outcry of her son, whose courage had suddenly evaporated in icy water, sprang down the bank to his assistance.

But when he emerged, dripping, her solicitude vanished and she cuffed him soundly. For a moment she was minded to take up the trail of her enemy and finish the combat. But, having followed it a little way, she desisted, with a farewell menacing and contemptuous roar, and sought a quiet place in dense spruce and rocks, where even noonday was a semigloom. There she fell to licking her hurts, or such of them as she could reach with her tongue, no doubt congratulating herself that it was yet too early in the season for flies. The wounds, however, were merely superficial to her enormous bulk, strength, and vitality, and the next day they troubled her but little, manifesting themselves principally in her temper which, always short in the grain, now became decidedly friable.

On that next day the pair were foraging near the creek. The ground was partly open, partly covered with clumps of bushes. Trees were scarce and at wide intervals. The cub knew the ground well. He had been there before many times. And so he ventured, now and then, to stray fifty yards or even a hundred, from his mother.

On one of these brief excursions, a strange and unknown scent struck his curious nostrils. It was the smell of a living thing, but of one with which he was unacquainted. Nevertheless he found it hostile, inimical. He shrank from it, disliking it, fearing it instinctively. He desired to run to his mother, but the dreaded scent was blown from the direction in which he knew she was ranging. And so he waited.

Suddenly, very near and making directly for him, a strange animal appeared. It walked upright upon its hind legs, and its forelegs, which seemed short, held what looked like a long, black stick. Never had the cub seen the like. The scent, at first alarming, was now, when stronger, terrifying. He had never seen man, and it is very doubtful if an old bear is capable of imparting information to her young as to anything absolutely unknown. But instinct warned him that here was an enemy to be dreaded. He feared, and, fearing, cried for his mother precisely as a child might, and, yielding to panic, ran in the opposite direction.

At the first sound from the cub, the man wheeled swiftly, the rifle, which he carried in a position of readiness, half leaping to his shoulder. He saw the cub scurrying away, and stopped dead in his tracks, his eyes instinctively and methodically noting the distance and location of the nearest tree.

But instantly the cry of the cub was answered by a harsh roar and the crash of brush, and out of the bushes burst the old grizzly. As the man turned to face the greatest peril of the mountains, she was almost upon him, leaping with the lightness of a cat, with the speed of a quarterhorse.

He fired twice, as fast as a watch ticks, the last shot as a roar beat upon his ears and the froth from her throat blew in his face, with the rifle muzzle almost touching the brown hide, for he had no time for aim. But the dynamics of that crazed rush were irresistible in that short distance beyond the stopping power of bullet. He went down, crushed, bleeding, broken, with the rank bear scent in his nostrils and the dingy bulk smothering him and stifling his despairing cry.

## II.

All things considered, Joe Dow and Archie Lish should not have gone into the hills together in the spring. For this there were several reasons, but the chiefest of them was a woman.

She was rather good looking, in a large, brunet way. And she was the wife of a man who was neither Dow nor Lish, to wit, one Gabriel Lajorde, a gentleman of mixed blood who, by reason of his occupation which was that of mail carrier to outlying places by means of dogs and sled, was greatly absent from his hearth and home.

Dow and Lish, being average men, hard and healthy, with a winter hanging heavily on their hands, were attracted by the Lajorde woman. Which was as indefensible as it was natural. The woman was not especially bad, but she was a thorough coquette, and they took her at the value which she seemed to set on herself. It is painful, but true, to state that they indulged in no soul-searchings, nor did they struggle to resist temptation. The moral side of the question did not enter into their considerations at all. What did, however, was the reputation of Lajorde, the husband, as a rather hard citizen of a revengeful disposition. But Dow and Lish themselves were somewhat indurated propositions. And so each came to the individual conclusion, without consultation with the other, that the ante was not too high for him; and each sat into the game with his eyes wide open, quite prepared for any consequences which might ensue.

Now in this doubtful game, each was playing for his own hand exclusively. They had prospected together for some years, and their friendship, up to the discovery of the frail Susie Lajorde, approached the standard set aforetime by David and Jonathan. They were partners. But this was not a matter of partnership. It was rivalry.

It is said that when Want comes in at the door Love flies out at the window. And it might be said, with more truth, that when Love—or Desire, which is sometimes indistinguishable therefrom—enters the door, Friendship is promptly kicked into the cellar. Dow and Lish began by joking each other, somewhat brutally, about Susie Lajorde. But as time went on and her attraction and the uncertainty of her increased, they joked no more; and finally her name was not mentioned between them at all. For the rivalry of the male for the favor of one of the opposite sex, worthy or unworthy, is an elemental thing, common to man and beast, a serious matter beyond levity as it is beyond reason.

Susie Lajorde was neither very good nor very bad, but she was essentially feline and feminine. When she found herself blessed with an absent husband, plus two men obviously in love with her, the situation was much too piquant to be spoiled by showing decided favor to either of the latter. She reveled in it. And so she kept the scales level, and as neither was sure of her attitude toward the other, each was bitterly jealous and grew to hate the other and all his works.

There was nothing open and aboveboard about this hate. It smoldered just below the surface, beneath the thinnest sort of crust, with continually increasing internal pressures, but never coming to an eruption. They did not quarrel. Outwardly they were partners and friends; in reality they were rivals and enemies.

The eruption, however, was only deferred, and both knew it. There must come a time when the internal fires, fed daily, would break through. But each preferred that the inevitable outbreak should come from his partner, who would then be in the position of forcing a quarrel and so deserving of whatever he might get. And that was their position and mutual mental attitude when spring came and the ice went out, and greening bark and starting buds and northing birds stirred the desire of the hills in their hearts.

Late in the preceding autumn they had found, prospecting together, what promised to be a paying placer ground high up in a creek tributary to the Klimminchuck. Winter and lack of supplies had driven them out before they had tested it thoroughly; but they had beaten a forced retreat in the firm determination to return early in spring before the water rose with the melting snows of the upper range.

Now neither desired the companionship of the other; but neither saw how it could be avoided. If one did not go, the other might. And the one who remained behind, though he would have a clear field for his love-making, would miss the chance of staking the pick of what might prove to be rich placer ground. Also it was not improbable that the possession of gold might influence the uncertain affections of the lady in the case. In fact, though neither wished to go with the other, neither wished to go himself and leave the other behind; nor to remain himself and allow the other to go. There could be no satisfactory solution.

Meanwhile time went on, and at last Lish, who was the more impulsive of the two, said to Dow:

"You thinkin' of takin' a look at that placer ground we found last fall?"

"You thinkin' of it?" Dow counter-questioned, for he was a firm believer in the policy of allowing the other fellow to show his hand first.

But Lish avoided direct reply.

"Well, the water's goin' to rise right soon," he said. And he added impersonally: "Any one that wants to go better get a move on."

"That's so," Dow agreed. "If you're thinkin' of goin'——"

"We may's well both go," said Lish, taking the bull by the horns. "If we don't, somebody else may find it, and if it's any good we'll kick ourselves."

Thus it was settled, and they set out together precisely as they had been accustomed to do in other years, but with an utter disgust at the enforced companionship. Which, as has been pointed out, was most inadvisable, all things considered.

For there is no stiffer test of friendship than the sole companionship of one man for weeks and months at a stretch, especially when physical discomfort and hard exertion form part of the daily routine of such a period. Small things are apt to be magnified into great, and inadvertences construed into deliberate offenses. And so it often happens that two men who have gone into the woods or the hills on the best of terms emerge from them holding about the mutual estimate of certain arctic explorers. And it therefore follows that to attempt such companionship when there is original bad feeling is merely tempting an already overworked providence.

Theretofore Dow and Lish had passed that test with a safe three-hundred average. But times change, and men change with them. Now there was not a single ungrateful incident, from a poor, choking fire to an uncomfortable root beneath the blankets, that one did not lay silently at the door of the other and with it an unspoken curse, storing it up against him to be settled for with usurious interest later on. But, as has also been pointed out before, they held the spoken word close behind the teeth, not that they wished to avoid open quarrel—which, indeed, they rather desired—but because each wished to have the other place himself in the position of the aggressor.

They reached their objective point, high among the hills where a glacier-fed creek rushed through miniature cañons and brawled turbulently over sand and gravel bars. It was among these bars that they had found the colors and occasional grains of gold in the preceding fall.

But now results were disappointing. What they panned scarcely gave them day's wages, which was not at all what they desired and expected. At first they worked together, but soon they split, seeing nothing of each other all day, an arrangement quite satisfactory to both. At night, beyond a perfunctory remark or two, they kept silence. And in the strained silence evil bred in their hearts.

The inevitable break occurred in this wise:

One morning, after breakfast, Archie Lish pulled forth pipe and tobacco, and with them a small nugget which, falling, clanged against a tin plate and lay on the ground. Joe Dow's eyes were upon it in an instant, and afterward sought the face of his partner in a cold stare.

"Well?" he queried simply, but his tone said much more.

"I find that yesterday," Lish said.

"Why didn't you say so last night?"

"Because you didn't ask me," Lish

replied, with truth. "You didn't say two words all night."

"No more did you," Dow retorted, with equal truth. "And I guess if I hadn't seen it you wouldn't be saying anything now."

"You don't hear me saying much now, do you?" said Lish.

"No, I don't." Dow replied. "And I'll tell you straight what I think: It's a durn poor way to use a partner!"

"Depends on the partner," Lish retorted nastily.

"It does, hey!" Dow exploded suddenly. "You listen, Archie Lish. I've took about all I'm goin' to from you! You've been givin' me dirt all winter, and all this trip, and now you're holdin' out on me!"

"You're a liar!" said Lish flatly and deliberately. He outweighed Dow by nearly forty pounds, but he was quite aware that the smaller man, when aroused, was thoroughly dangerous. He expected an instant outbreak, but it did not come.

"That looks as if I was lyin', don't it?" Dow retorted, with bitter irony, pointing to the nugget.

It did not look like it, and Lish, realizing that appearances were against him, vouchsafed explanation.

"That nugget," he said, "was all alone. I couldn't get even colors where I find her. I was goin' back to-day to try again, and if I found anything I was goin' to tell you. You can come along with me if you want to, but don't you call me no hold-out. I won't take it from you twice."

"You'll take what fits you," Dow stated coldly. "You outsize me, but don't let that worry you. It's up to you, Archie Lish. I ain't crowdin' you to show me nothin'."

Lish glared at him, but held down bitter words by an effort. "Come along, and I *will* show you," he said.

He picked up his gold pan. Dow took his, and also his rifle, though as a rule neither carried a weapon unless meat was required, having mountaineers' confidence in themselves and contempt for wild animals.

Lish cast a quick, suspicious glance at him. Then he, too, secured his own gun.

He led the way without looking behind. Dow followed silently, scowling at his partner's broad back. For nearly three miles they kept the course of the creek, arriving at last at a stretch of shallows where sand and gravel bars, bared by the low water, lay invitingly with placid pools between. It seemed a series of natural catchbasins for the detritus of strata higher up.

Lish paused at a bar where were three stones set together with a fourth on top of them. He indicated the stones with his hand.

"That's where I find that nugget," he said. "The ground's wide open. Go at it and see what you get."

Dow went at it, still scowling. For an hour he panned, up and down, while Lish sat on the bank, idle, smoking and watching him. Finally he desisted.

"Find anything?" Lish asked.

"No," Dow replied.

"Satisfied—are you?"

"I didn't say so."

"All right, pan some more," said Lish. "But there ain't no gold here."

"No," said Dow, "you're dead right about that. There ain't no gold *here.*" He accented the last word heavily.

"What do you mean?" Lish demanded sharply.

"You know mighty well what I mean," Dow stated grimly. "If you want it straight, I don't believe that nugget come from here at all."

Lish rose swiftly.

"I told you I wouldn't take bein' called a hold-out twice," he said. "Now you——"

Dow interrupted him. Usually repressed, his dangerous temper suddenly flared forth.

"Now!" he shouted. "Now what are you goin' to do about it, you liar, you hold-out, you big, sneakin' thief! I ain't afraid of you. Keep your durn pay dirt, wherever it is. It won't do you no good. When this gets out—and I'll see it does—no white man will take a drink with you. You——"

The phrase that followed stung Lish to madness. Between them the pent-up hate of the winter burst the thin crust and roared into flame. Lish struck, swift and hard, and the blow, landing fair, staggered Dow and cut off further injurious speech. Instantly Lish followed up his advantage. He struck again, and, catching his dazed partner by the throat and crooking his leg behind him, threw him heavily, falling upon him and choking him till his eyes protruded and his tongue lolled out like a hot dog's.

For the time being he was beside himself, blind with rage, in the grip of a homicidal mania which seized and shook him even as he seized and shook Dow. But in a moment this passed, and his fingers relaxed. He got to his feet, glaring down at the prostrate man.

Dow, drawing the grateful air into his lungs, glared back, his eyes deadly. He sat up.

"You outsize me," he croaked from his constricted throat, "but you won't get away with it. I give you fair warnin', Archie Lish! It's you or me. One of us stays in these here hills."

"I could kill you if I wanted to," said Lish.

"Then you better do it," snarled Dow, "for the first chance I get I'm goin' to kill *you!*"

With a sudden, swift lunge, before Lish realized his purpose, he possessed himself of his rifle, which lay on the ground a yard away, and brought the muzzle to bear on his partner's belt. Maintaining the alignment of the barrel, he got to his feet.

"Now," he said, "I'll fix you plenty."

"Goin' to shoot me—are you?" said Lish. "I might have expected it."

"Sure you might—when you started to hold out on me," Dow agreed. "But I ain't goin' to beef you cold. I ain't that kind. You've done me dirt for months, and held out on me——"

"That's a lie!" Lish interposed.

"And pounded me and choked me," Dow went on, unheeding. "You're bigger and stronger than me, but a gun will put us on a level. You ain't got nothing on me with a gun, and I ain't got nothing on you. So I'm goin' to give you a fair chance. I'm goin' up this here creek far as I can go in half an hour by my watch. Then I'm goin' to turn around and come back lookin' for you. At the end of half an hour you start up it lookin' for me. We shoot on sight. That's fair, ain't it?"

"It's fair," Lish acknowledged, "but I don't want——"

"You'd *better* want!" snarled Dow. "I'm goin' to kill you if you don't kill me. Time starts now. Look at your watch!"

He turned his back squarely on his partner, climbed up the bank, and disappeared.

Archie Lish, left alone, looked at his watch. Then he picked up his rifle, made sure that the magazine was full, looked at the rear sight to see that it was not accidentally elevated, and, filling his pipe, sat down to wait.

Though this grim duel had been forced upon him, he would have done little to avoid it, even if there had been a way, for his heart was bitter against the partner who had added the weight of the last straw by the unjust accusation. But there was no way. He knew Dow, his temper, his determination. Dow would do exactly as he had said. And so he accepted the situation philosophically. For half an hour he sat, quietly smoking. And at the end of that time he knocked out his pipe on the heel of his boot, lay down and drank from the creek, and, climbing the bank, began to walk cautiously upstream.

Joe Dow, during the half hour, maintained an even, unhurried gait which covered almost two miles, for the going was good and the country fairly open. When the lawful time had elapsed, he turned, and, with the change of direction, his manner of progress changed also. He went slowly and carefully, without noise, taking advantage of every bit of cover. Occasionally he paused and listened intently, cursing the ceaseless sound of running water.

Dow's heart was more bitter than Lish's, if that were possible. As he saw it, his partner had attempted a barefaced fraud, and when detected had sought to bluff it out. He had struck and choked him. Pile all this upon jealousy, and you get some idea of Dow's feelings. He was eager to kill Lish, but that eagerness was governed and controlled by caution and method.

"I've got a shade on him because I've just come over the ground," he reflected. "If I was in his place, I'd cache myself and wait it out. Like as not he'd get me that way. But he never did copper no bets. He always played 'em open. So he's due to Injun along about the way I'm doin' now. He's square enough not to start before time's up. The way to beat a man is to outguess him. So what I'll do, I'll hit the high spots for a piece, and pick me a good bit of cover and wait for him to slide along."

Following this thoroughly murderous plan, he trotted swiftly for half a mile, and then, finding a spot where rocks and bushes afforded concealment, conjoined with a fairly open view in front, he sank into it to recover his wind and steadiness of hand.

"I'll stay here," he muttered to himself. "He's pretty near *got* to pass one side or the other. And when he does, I'll sure get him."

Five minutes passed, then ten. They grew to twenty, and Dow, peering from his concealment, caught sight of a moving object at the fringe of a patch of bushes something over a hundred yards away. Apparently it was low down, near the ground.

"If it's him he's crawlin' onto me," said Dow to himself. "Foxier'n I thought. But then it may not be him. I don't see how he'd know I was here." The next moment he got a better view. "A bear cub," he muttered. "Durned if it ain't a little bald-faced grizzly!" His lips pursed into a soundless whistle. "I wonder where the old lady is."

But there was no sign of the old lady; and the cub, after that momentary showing, disappeared.

And then he caught his first glimpse of Lish, and chuckled grimly at the correctness of his guess. For Lish was doing exactly what he had expected him to do, following the line he had expected him to follow. He was moving forward from bush to bush soundlessly, his body bent forward in an attitude of keen attention, rifle ready.

"Don't quite expect me yet, but he thinks he's playin' it safe," Dow thought. "I'll let him get closer, by them berry bushes. He'll stop there a minute to look around—and he'll stay there for keeps."

As Lish approached the clump of bushes, Dow cuddled up his rifle to his cheek. He drew the sights fine, following his partner's slow progress with them. When Lish stopped, he would kill him.

But before Lish reached the berry bushes others interposed. For a moment Dow lost sight of him. In that moment came a strange sound, resembling a squealing bawl.

"That blasted cub!" Dow exclaimed involuntarily. "And now——"

The roar of the old grizzly cut his reflections short. He heard the crash of her rescuing rush, heard two scarcely spaced reports, and a stifled, despairing cry. And that cry worked a marvelous transformation in Joe Dow, crouching in his hiding place, a potential murderer. Suddenly the jealousy and bitter hate and desire for revenge were wiped from his brain. He bounded to his feet.

"All right, Archie!" he yelled. "Hold her off a minute. I'm a-comin'!"

He covered that hundred yards with the speed of a sprinter, and rounded the bushes, where he had a clear view.

His partner lay on the ground. Above him stood a huge grizzly, half turned to meet this new enemy. Blood dripped from the rip of a bullet along her dingy flank. Her roached mane bristled and her little eyes glared. As she caught sight of Dow, she uttered a tremendous roar which bared every gleaming tooth in her head, and charged him instantly.

The distance was scarcely forty yards. For all her apparently ungainly bulk, her rush was as swift as the getaway of a trained cow pony. She came in great leaps, roaring, reddened foam on her lips, the personification of crazed fury.

But Dow, when he emerged from his hiding place, knew exactly what he had to expect from a mother grizzly which was in all probability wounded by his partner's shots. Instant and swift as was the rush, he was not taken by surprise. All his life he had used the rifle, and he had confidence in it and in himself; and so he was not rattled.

Scarcely was the old bear in motion when he began to pump lead with swiftness and certainty. The smacking, spiteful reports echoed and reëchoed in the hills and blended with the hoarse roars of the old grizzly, as the soft-nosed bullets drove through her vitals, shattering bone and tissue in the path. No flesh and blood could long resist those terrible, successive shocks. She fell and rose, and fell and rose again, struggling on in the face of that storm of nickel and lead, intent on and caring but for one thing—to kill before she herself was slain. And when she fell for the last time and coughed and roared her life away, biting and tearing the ground, a scant six feet separated Dow's hot rifle muzzle from her ringing jaws, and his last spent shell had been flirted from the breech.

Hastily he shoved in fresh cartridges, backing away, but the roars had died to feeble moans, and the last tremors shook the mighty frame. Paying no further attention to her, he ran to his partner.

Archie Lish lay where he had fallen. His rifle was snapped off at the stock by a paw stroke which he had partially warded from his head. A long, bloody furrow was in his scalp. His left arm and shoulder were bitten, but Dow's coming had been prompt. When the latter had brought water from the creek in his hat, and slushed it on his face and chest with liberal hand and nearly strangled him by pouring it down his throat, he opened his eyes.

"Where's the bear?" he asked.

"I got her," said Dow. "Lie quiet a minute, Archie."

"Am I hurt much?" Lish queried. "She had me down. I yelled, but I didn't expect you'd hear."

"You're chewed a little and shook up, but I guess you ain't bad," Dow replied.

Lish was silent for some minutes. Then——

"Joe," he said, "you and me had a falling-out. I ain't goin' on with it—not after this—you understand? I'm sorry I hit you. I wouldn't of—only for what you said. I never held out on you—honest, I didn't. And then things ain't been with us lately like they used to be. I'm sorry for that, too."

Dow looked down on him and suddenly choked, and swore to hide it.

"I dunno what got into me," he said gruffly. "I knowed all the time, right at bottom, you wouldn't hold out on me.

I reckon it was that woman—blast her! Archie, she ain't worth it—ain't worth bustin' up our friendship over. No woman is."

"That's so," Lish agreed heretically. "Let's both quit her, Joe."

"Shake on it," said Dow.

They shook gravely, and Dow assisted Lish to his feet. Together they inspected the dead bear.

"She's a whale of a big one," said Lish. "I dunno's I ever seen a bigger. Game clear through. She's all shot to pieces."

Dow shivered slightly.

"When she horned into the game," he confessed, "I was lyin' in among them bushes over there with my sights on you, waitin' for you to come a little closer."

"Then I owe her everything," said Lish.

"I owe her more," said Dow. "If it hadn't been for her——" He did not finish.

"Never mind that now, old sport," said Lish. "The main thing is she made peace between us." He was silent for a moment. "I sorter remember something in the Bible—a long time ago," he added hesitatingly, "about 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' I wonder if that goes for bears?"

"I'll bet the old lady don't think so—if she's got any thinks now," said Dow. "Say, look over there! There's her cub that started the trouble."

The little baldface, encouraged by the quiet, had come back. He sat up, half concealed by bushes, a hundred yards away, regarding them fearfully and wistfully. Dow raised his rifle. But Lish stopped him.

"No," he said, "don't kill him, Joe. Let him go. I sorter feel we owe it to the old lady."

And presently, as they watched, the little baldface, with a whimper which held a note of almost human sadness as if his brain at last interpreted the tragedy before him, shuffled down the bank and was gone; a young and lonely thing, to face as best he might his destiny among the hills.

## LOVE AND THE MORSE CODE

IF you must love by telegraph, better have the message repeated to avoid error. "I love you forever," was the four-word message that a young man handed an operator not long ago. It was marked "Rush," and one of the sympathetic telegraphers at the start or finish mixed his Morse. The message that the girl got was: "I leave you forever." The engagement was broken, and the young man sued the telegraph company for alienation of affection. The company's defense was that in telegraphese "love" and "leave" are so much alike that in a hurry one might be taken for the other, and that such an important message should have been repeated.

Now, when that young man has any burning messages to send, he does not have them ticked off by profane operators to be delivered by unlovely messenger boys. He puts his feelings in a stout envelope, and sends them by registered mail.

It is even safe, when so much is at stake, to follow the methods of Napoleon. He never sent an important message to his Josephine or to a general without dispatching three copies by three separate messengers. All was not lost so long as one reached its destination. Like some of the fussy great men of to-day, Napoleon was a strong believer in everybody else's capacity for carelessness or stupidity.

# On the Atoll

By Morgan Robertson

*Author of "The Pirates," "Uncharted," Etc.*

**The strategy of one man pitted against a crowd of cutthroats who were ready to take his life on a desolate bit of coral rock in the South Pacific**

IT was before Captain Swarth had acquired Angel Todd as mate and Yank Tate as carpenter that this occurred. Yank, with his broadax, or Angel, with a handspike, was each equal to three men with knives or cutlasses; but, without these uplifters, his mate a malcontent, his crew rebellious at the long pumping out the scuppers of the Pacific Ocean that came in through a shot hole under the water line, and himself so weary and worn that he could do no more than keep them at the pumps, the mutiny took place.

Swarth went to sleep on his feet, sagged down on the quarter bitt, and when he wakened he was pinioned and disarmed, while the crew were mustered around the main hatch dividing up the treasure. It consisted mainly of gold and silver coin, jewelry and bric-a-brac. They ignored the bales of cloth, packages of spices, and other heavier merchandise in the hold as too cumbersome to take into the boat. They also ignored Swarth in the division. There were sixteen men, including the malcontent mate, and they made sixteen piles, each of which went into a receptacle convenient to carry—a deck bucket, a clothes bag, and, in case of the negro cook, a coal scuttle. Then, while the crew rigged tackles to hoist over the longboat, the mate came aft and spoke to Swarth. He was a tall, lanky New Englander, with only one ear.

"I s'pose you know you're deposed," he said sourly.

"So it seems," answered Swarth calmly. "And what are you going to do about it?"

"Quit the ship. Why didn't you let us board that Frenchman?"

"Too many men, too many guns, and too many good gunners. They'd have got us, only we had a clean bottom. Why didn't you thrum that to'gallant-sail and stop the leak as I told you to?"

"Just 'cause you told us, I guess. We're all tired o' you and your methods. We've talked it over. I'm skipper now, and we've shared up the stuff, leavin' you out. All you get is your life, and your chance with the rest if you navigate the boat to some land where we can live and wait and rest up."

"And what then? When we land do I lose my life?"

"No, I promise for myself and the rest. You get nothing, though, but your life and your chance. But you may get a few kicks and cuss words. The men are dead sore, and I can't answer for what they'll do to you. Only, as I said, you'll not be killed if you navigate."

"I promise," answered Swarth promptly. "This spun yarn hurts. Turn me loose, and I'll steer you to the nearest land. We're on the hundred and seventy-first meridian. Steer due south about a hundred miles and you'll hit an island. Watch out for the glimmer in the sky above. That's the reflection of the lagoon."

There is honor among pirates as well as among thieves. Swarth accepted the mate's promise, and the mate accepted Swarth's. Yet, as Swarth arose to his feet and shook the blood through his tingling extremities, there was a somber glitter to his dark eyes and a slight uplift to his black mustache that would have told something to a better student of physiognomy than Long Joe, the mate. As for the rest, they were busy with the longboat, and did not notice.

They provisioned the boat according to their lights, which were not bright. It is well known that sailors, quitting a sinking ship, will take photographs, trinkets, "boiled shirts," and small change, but will forget food and water. These men—outlaws all, but seamen—were no exception to the rule. They loaded the boat with casks of rum, several pounds of tobacco, some hard-tack, a couple of breakers of water, the compass and riding light, and Swarth's quadrant and chronometer. As they were near the equator they took no extra clothing, but, with sailorly logic, one provided against the future with a couple of stew pans, while another contributed some fishing tackle. Needless to say, they all took their arms—knives and cutlasses, but no pistols; for at the first mutterings of trouble Swarth had doused the powder.

Swarth, unarmed, but unabashed, mingled with the men and ventured to observe: "Why don't you take more grub and water?" His answer was a torrent of abuse and invective, resenting which he was struck in the face, prodded by knife points, felled with a handspike, and otherwise reminded of the wisdom of minding his own business. To which Swarth, bleeding and sore from his rebuke, responded: "Very well. Have your own way."

They had it. They piled into the boat just in time to shove clear of the swirling suction of the sinking craft, and, as they stepped the two masts and set the lugs, further showed their disapproval of Swarth by hustling him into the bow, where he remained nursing his hurts and thinking—thinking hard. Each man sat with his treasure at his feet, jealously guarding it, and the mate, at the steering oar, held his secure in the locker in the stern sheets, with the key in his pocket, while he steered due south before the quartering trade wind.

They were an unkempt muster, representing about all the maritime nations—Pedro, a Spaniard; Sam, the dark cook, a West Indian negro; Lars, a Swede; Wiess, a German; Big Bill, an Englishman in bad company; Frenchy, from Toulon; Goo Loo, a renegade Chinaman, with a full head of hair and no queue; Troski, a Russian and a linguist, like most of his race; Matsu, a Jap, on bad terms with his Asiatic confrère, Goo Loo; John, a kinky-haired Solomon Islander; Panthy, a South American Indian; McGill, from Galway; Campbell, from Glasgow, and Frank, a huge French Canadian. Over this crowd of nondescript cutthroats the one-eared mate held a limited authority based upon his late activity against Swarth.

With the sinking of their craft the bond of brotherhood was broken. From communal workers they had become competitors, each a capitalist concerned only with himself and his own. They were of the leisure class, as well; and when, the wind failing, Joe ordered the oars out, they refused; for this was work. Long Joe, no better armed than they, could not enforce the order, and from that moment his authority ended. Then, he, too, would join the leisure class, and, pulling in the steering oar, demanded a relief. This was but fair, as the common interest demanded progress; but as work and wealth were incompatible, they unanimously decreed that Swarth, the only man there who could qualify, should steer as well as navigate; so he was hustled aft, his sore spots added to on the way by a few more knife pricks.

While Joe remained near him and his treasure in the locker, Swarth took his place, and that night, steering by the compass and riding light, took his key. It happened when they had eaten the last of their hard-tack, drunk the last of the rum and water—giving Swarth none because, so they argued, he was on duty—and were sound asleep, each man but Joe hugging his loot, and Joe blocking the locker with his body. In the morning Joe voiced his indignation, and, as is usual in such cases, suspected any and all but the guilty man, who proved his innocence by emptying his pockets, removing his boots, and steadfastly asserting that Joe had roused from his sleep and dropped the key overboard. Big Bill, the man on the after thwart, who might have been most under suspicion, silenced Joe by threatening to separate him from his other ear; but had Bill courted investigation like Swarth the key could have been found in his bucket, where Swarth had dropped it.

The first law of nature dominates all others. When the glimmer of light in the morning sky had given way to scant palms that seemed to rise out of the sea, and these to a ring-shaped reef over which the Pacific surf seemed to be pouring in cascades, Swarth quietly gave them their choice: to man the oars or drown in the sea—and they chose to live. They headed seaward, and on the last of three big combers beached the boat stern first as skillfully as life-trained Kanakas. Then they hauled it above high-water mark, and, each carrying his possessions, started to explore.

But there was little to explore. The ring of reef, or atoll, was of about half a mile thickness from the sea to the quiet waters of the inclosed lagoon, which was less than four miles in diameter. Swarth, exhausted after his long steering and previous strain, slept beside the boat, with Long Joe watching that he did not break into the stern locker, while the rest encircled the atoll, looking for water and food. They found neither; the palms bore no coconuts, and the scant bushes no fruit nor vegetation; but they struggled on, while the still lagoon and roaring surf mocked their thirst, already at the torture point from the libations of the night. Their burdens were heavy, and at intervals they rested, each man sitting on his bucket or bag, apart from his neighbors; then, when one would make a start, the rest would join in the straggling march. And so, in scattered Indian file, they returned to the boat, where they found the awakened Swarth tinkering with the fishing tackle—fastening crumbs of hard bread to the hooks—while Long Joe regarded him moodily.

"What kind o' land be this, anyhow?" asked Big Bill, as he sat down on his bucket. "Nothink to eat an' nothink to drink. I call it 'ell—that I do."

Swarth, bending over his work, made no answer.

"An' my feet ban sore," said Lars weariedly; "an' my head she ache, an' I loose my tobax bag. Who got my tobax bag?"

"Oh, dry up, ye squarehead," said McGill. "Smoke less an' yer head won't ache."

"Himmel!" groaned Wiess, "mine tongue hang out. I kill mineself if no water I get."

"McGill, you got my tobax bag?"

"Why you don't shut up, Lars?" asked the big French Canadian, Frank. "Who would smoke wiz no food, no drink?"

"You're a lot of poor, unfortunate fools," said Swarth, while he worked. "Why didn't you bring grub and water? There was plenty."

They did not assault him. Such action would have required concerted effort or individual neglect of property, neither of which they were in the mood for. Instead, however, they bombarded his ears with a polyglot denunciation of his eyes, his heart, his soul, his habits, and his ancestry that seemed to bring an inward draft of surrounding air and lasted full five minutes. And as it died away from its very intensity there came weakly from Lars his plaintive query:

"Who got my tobax bag?"

"Swarth's got it," said Joe maliciously, "same as he's got my key."

"Don't lie, Joe," said Swarth. "If I'd taken your key I'd have taken your knife, too, wouldn't I? I'd need it more, in this crowd of fools."

"Fools?" excitedly exclaimed the Russian, Troski. "Right, we are fools," he continued, in his pure diction, "to have trusted to your knowledge—your navigation. You agreed to bring us to a place where we could live."

"You're alive, aren't you?"

"And how long can we live, in this desolate spot?"

"As long as I do," replied Swarth. "That means, as long as the fish bite."

"And what will we do for water?"

"Dig for it. Sand's a good filter. Three hundred feet back from the sea the salt water will seep into a well as fresh and sweet as you want to drink."

Swarth lied, but they did not know it. Nor did they know that a very few feet of digging would bring them to the hard coral. But they looked up the rising ground, and one of them estimated that at three hundred feet from the beach the well would need to be forty feet deep to reach the level of the sea or the lagoon. It was too discouraging.

"Launch the boat," ordered Joe, with momentary assumption of authority. "How far is it to the next land, where there's grub and water?"

"Two hundred miles," answered Swarth. He lied again, but they did not know it. They looked at the glassy sea, shimmering under the hot sun from the outer surf to the horizon. "You'll have to work the oars, for there'll be no wind for days. You know that."

They did not, nor did Swarth, but they believed him.

"We'll have to dig," said Big Bill. "What the bloomin' blighted thing are we goin' to dig with?"

"Your knives and your hands. I'll fish. I'm hungrier than thirsty, and you'll all be hungry soon. Better run the boat over to the lagoon. In deep, quiet water the fish ought to bite."

It was necessary, and they realized it. Slowly and painfully under the sun, inch by inch with many a grunt and groan—each man with his loot in the boat under his eyes—they hitched and pulled the heavy craft up the seaward slope and down to the lagoon, where they launched it. Then Swarth, with his fishing gear, sculled out, and they sat down—somewhat apart, however—and discussed a good place to start digging. But discussion was as far as they got; for digging was work, and their work was done; and each man felt that it were wiser, all in all, for the present, at least, to watch his property, as one or two had been detected in tentative picking at the portions of others, and there was a very natural mistrust. To meet this, Long Joe, whose property, though not within his own reach, was safe from pilfering fingers, proposed that they lump their portions in a pile, to be divided again when the well was finished. But this was strenuously overruled by those who fancied that they had a little the best of it in the first division, and might lose in the second. So man by man fell silent and drew away from the others, each sitting down on his treasure. A few made weak efforts to dig individual wells for themselves, but soon gave it up. Men cannot work in the hot sun with empty stomachs, parched throats, throbbing heads, and anxious minds.

So they sat, watching Swarth pulling in fish until his bread bait was exhausted; and when he sculled in, requesting that one fish be cut into bait, and offering them the rest of the catch with suggestions as to broiling over a dead palm-bark fire, they sullenly made bait for him, but foolishly refused to gather fuel and broil. With one eye on his treasure and the other on the pile of fish, each secured one and ate it raw—a sailor can eat anything—thereby increasing his need of water. Well-cooked fish is conducive to thirst: raw fish more so.

Swarth's next return to the beach was at a point half a mile away, too far for them to follow with their precious loads, and soon they saw smoke arising. Swarth had a flint and steel, they knew, and, not being a property owner, had no scruples against work. But they felt slighted and hurt—unjustly treated. If they must eat fish they wanted it cooked. Yet when Swarth, after another and longer fishing trip, returned to them with fish enough to feed all hands for a day and fuel with which to cook it, they forbore their reproaches; their thickened tongues made speech difficult. But each made a fire, cooked his fish, and ground it down his dry throat with much effort. More than one of them would now have traded part of his hoard for a pannikin of sweet, fresh water. Their heads ached and throbbed; their tongues and throats felt like sand paper; they were weak and listless and hopeless. Even tobacco, the sailor's anodyne for all trouble of body and mind, was unavailing. A few grew delirious as night approached, but sounds they made were inarticulate. Yet those able to see and observe noted that Swarth seemed content and comfortable; he hummed a song as he smoked after his supper, and while cooking it had palpably perspired. But he was a strong man and a strong spirit: they had long conceded this.

However, Swarth may have been the exception which proves a rule. Doctors and nurses, mothers and wives, have long known that a sick big man makes more fuss than a sick small man, though he may last longer. Big Bill was the rule; he was the largest man of all, and he suffered more than did the others; but when, next morning, from his greater physical strength he staggered and crawled, with his loot, toward Swarth's private landing place, it was only to sink down in the most complete exhaustion of all.

The rest were nearly as bad; it seemed that their thirst aggravated the weakness caused by their hunger, for, as the day wore on, and their mutual distrust still further separated them, they could only drag their burdens a hundred feet apart on an average, where each fell and remained, too feeble to rise, or talk, or voluntarily move.

"Wa'er," weakly whispered Bill, as Swarth had passed; but Swarth paid him no attention until, having gone down the line and received the same prayer from the rest, he returned and looked down on him. Bill's eyes were glazing; Swarth's bright and clear.

"Wa'er," again choked Bill.

"Bill," said Swarth, "you're too good a man to die. I'm distilling fresh water over yonder with a contrivance I've rigged up from the stew pans, and I've got about a quarter of a pint left. What'll you give for it—your knife and cutlass?"

Bill disdained speech, but, with eagerness in his eyes, tried to loosen his side arms. He was too weak, and Swarth assisted him.

"Not enough, Bill," he said, when he had secured the weapons. "Will you trade your share for a drink of water, and say nothing to the rest?"

"No!" gasped Bill, rolling over and hugging his bucket.

Swarth strolled over to his camp, and returned with a pannikin of water, which he showed to Bill; then he sipped and swallowed a taste of it and spilled a few drops on the sand. It was too much for Bill; life was more than loot to him now, and he weakly pointed to the bucket. Swarth lifted it out of his reach, delved for and pocketed the key, then, lifting Bill to a sitting posture, held the pannikin to his lips. There was more than a quarter of a pint, but Bill gulped it at a swallow.

Thirst is soon relieved. After a few breaths Bill said coherently: "Much obliged, cappen. S'pose I come over an' help you distill."

"No!" answered Swarth fiercely, as he picked up the bucket. "You don't know what distilling is. I've rigged a machine that will keep us alive, and I don't want it bungled with. Stay here where you are, or I'll slit your weasen."

He carried the bucket over to the boat and returned with another portion of water. Bill asked for it, but did not get it. Swarth went on and stood over Long Joe, the next man, who, with wide-open, feverish eyes, had been watching the proceedings.

"Wha' ya gah?" he asked. "Wa'er?" He held up his hands for the cup.

"Yes, you four-legged, one-eared, one-fourth of a white man!" answered Swarth hotly. "It's water—good, fresh, sweet, cool water, but not for you—not till I've pulled the rest through. However, I'll take these toothpicks."

He rolled Joe over with his boot, removed his weapons, and went on to the next man, with whom he had little trouble. It was the cook, and after giving him the water he marched back to the camp, with the weapons of both and Sam's coal scuttle.

Again and again he made the trip, tempting and tantalizing each man out of his wealth and weapons, and at the last gave Joe a drink. Then he went the rounds again, and after the second drink they were all moved to eat the fish. It strengthened them so that they could sit up, at least, of their own initiative.

Roused by Swarth's curses and pricked by his weapons, they crawled together into a group and listened to a highly colored and rather profane lecture on the unwisdom of mutiny on the high seas and the futility of resistance to armed authority. All their weapons were locked in the stern sheets of the boat, he informed them, and the first man to look sideways at him henceforth would be killed on the spot.

He drove them into the shade of the scattered palms to rest and recuperate, while he caught more fish and occasionally brought them water from his camp. On the next day he took as many as he had fishlines for into the boat with him, while the rest, at his direction, gathered fuel, rigged tripods, and smoked the fish that were caught.

This went on for several days, Swarth supplying them with water, but promising sudden death to any one going near his distillery, until, when in his judgment, there was enough smoked fish to feed them on the run to a better refuge from the terrors and hardships of shipwreck, he beached the boat near by and they loaded in the fish preparatory to hauling it across the reef to the open sea.

"S'pose we'll take the distillin' machine," questioned Joe respectfully, when the boat was stocked.

"There's no distilling machine," answered Swarth, with his hand on his knife. "Take all those casks down to the lagoon, rinse them out, and fill them."

"With salt water? Salt water's no good."

"With the same water you've been drinking, you bunch of inebriates. This is Quiros Island, with a fresh-water lagoon."

# Master of the Moose Horn

By Theodore Goodridge Roberts

*Author of "In Dog Seal Bay," "The Missionary," Etc.*

SYNOPSIS OF PART ONE

High liver and good spender, William Morgan Bayford at last comes to the end of his rope in gay Manhattan. All that is left to him is a tract of timberland in Canada, and he decides to seek it and recover his equilibrium. He goes up there to look over his property, securing experienced assistance in the Northern woods. But the most interesting feature of the landscape to him is a girl, Marjorie Hollis, who lives in the wild and does a little trapping with the aid of an old half-breed, Peter Paul. Her father dies almost at the same time that Bayford appears on the scene, and she is thinking of leaving the woods, partly because of an offensive suitor, Ben Stickney, when a tramp peddler steals her cached money. Bayford's party is responsible for the restoration of the little fund, and Marjorie and Bayford become friends. She defers her trip out. Meanwhile Bayford succumbs to nostalgia and longs for civilization. Along comes a chance to realize his desire in the offer from a lumberman named Nixon who wants to buy the Moose Horn tract of land owned by Bayford; but Bayford refuses in spite of every temptation.

***(In Two Parts—Part Two.)***

## CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH WILLIAM MORGAN BAYFORD BECOMES A LUMBERMAN.

NIXON'S offer had excited Bayford's interest in his land to such a degree that he decided to commence cutting timber immediately. He and Peter "cruised" the land and cut out poles and timbers for the stable and the new bunks with which the cabin was to be furnished. He would get in a small crew of men and a team of horses right after Christmas, and set to work at the pines. On the day before Christmas Eve he called on Marjorie Hollis. Her foot was doing well. She thanked him warmly for the efforts he had made on her behalf; and then she asked him to do her another favor. Would he go upriver to Ben Stickney's next day with some Christmas presents for little Tommy?

He started soon after breakfast on the morning before Christmas, with the toys in a sack slung over his shoulder, took his time, and reached Stickney's shack comfortably a full hour before noon. He found the woodsman farmer at home, and introduced himself as a new settler on the river. He mentioned Miss Hollis and Peter Paul, and presented the sackful of gifts. Stickney's manner, reserved at best, became decidedly cool. He accepted the toys for the baby with a muttered word of thanks. There seemed to be no glow of gratitude in him, and nothing of the season's kindly spirit.

He produced a bottle of cheap whisky, however, and Bayford took a glass with him and tried to look as if he enjoyed it. Of course, he asked the visitor to stop to dinner; but it is safe to say that no invitation to dinner was ever given with a worse grace. Bayford accepted—for the sake of the traditions of the season and an unmistakable keenness in his stomach. During the meal—which was plentiful and good,

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though roughly served and eaten—the host asked how Marjorie Hollis was getting along. His voice was sulky, suspicious, and bitter.

"She cut her foot about ten days ago, but it is almost well now," replied Bayford.

"Who's lookin' after her?" asked Ben sullenly.

"A young squaw, a granddaughter of Peter's by the name of Dolly or Polly Sacobie. She seems a good girl, but not much of a talker."

Stickney glanced across the table sharply, suspiciously.

"Who d'ye say?" he demanded.

Bayford repeated the young woman's name.

"Where'n hell did she come from?" asked Stickney, with his upshot, distrusting glance still on the other's face.

"From across the height of land, so Peter says."

Christmas passed quietly and comfortably for the three near neighbors on the Moose Horn. They all contributed to the Christmas dinner, which was served at seven o'clock in Marjorie's cabin. Dolly Sacobie waited on the table. During the whole evening she did not smile once or say a word.

Bayford set out alone for Plaster Bluff early the next morning. He reached the sawmill village in good order shortly after seven o'clock at night, and went straight to the little hotel. There he had supper, after which he sought out old Archie Douglas. The old woodsman congratulated him on his intention of getting out some of his fine timber. The two tramped about the village and its outskirts all the next day, seeking recruits for the new lumber camp. On the twenty-eighth they outfitted. At daybreak of the twenty-ninth they started upriver.

They traveled the middle of the river, where the snow was shallow. Bayford and Archie Douglas led the way, each carrying a light pack. Joe Creamer and Jake Towley came next, dragging a toboggan loaded with blankets, provisions, and a grindstone. Robert Griffith and his son Dave followed, also hauling a loaded toboggan. Bob Bean brought up the rear, teaming his two big gray horses and a pair of bobsleds loaded high with bales of hay and bags of oats and flour. They halted for lunch at eleven o'clock, made a fire, and blanketed the horses. At three they halted and ate again. At six they made camp for the night within four miles of Marjorie's cabin, and about five of their destination. They had encountered but little heavy sledding.

## CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH A FIRE CAUSES A SLIGHT DELAY IN THE WORK, AND BAYFORD REALIZES THAT HE IS IN LOVE.

Bayford and his crew built the stable, or hovel, and the new bunks in the cabin, in three days. It was brisk work. The chimney was repaired, and a big cooking stove set up. Rob Griffith took charge of the stove and the provisions. The choppers went to work in a big grove of pines which stood within fifty yards of the river's bank. Bayford, Peter, and Bob Bean dug and "swamped" narrow trails for the horses. As soon as a stick of timber was ready, it was twitched to the top of the bank and rolled over. The horses were worked singly at this job, without sleds. Bayford "teamed" one of them, and found it to be a lively and interesting task with the earmarks of a pastime.

Once he got his horse and himself stuck tight in a nine-foot drift that was as full of snarled underbrush as a spring bed is full of wire. He was dug out by Peter. He slept soundly every night, and ate three gigantic meals and a hearty "snack" every day. He soon became an expert twitcher of logs. During the first two weeks of the excitement of lumbering, he saw Marjorie

Hollis only once. His thoughts were all of big timber. His mind had no time to dwell upon the foolishnesses of his past. This game of twitching logs to the top of the bank, and rolling them down to the burdened surface of the stream possessed him. He lived to heap brown freight on that white stream—freight of brown logs, and every log marked with his mark.

Archie Douglas, who acted as foreman of the camp, and at the same time felled as much timber as any member of the crew, said that he had never before seen so small a gang turn logs into the brows at such a pace, and that it was thirty years since he had set an ax into such fine timber. Bob Bean was of the same opinion and swore that there was no other lumbering site in the province to hold a candle to it.

Toward the end of January, Marjorie was about again, as light on her feet as ever. She awoke one morning to find herself alone in the cabin. Dolly Sacobie had gone. She did not return during the morning; and early in the afternoon Marjorie went upriver to Bayford's camp and informed Peter of his granddaughter's desertion. The old man took it coolly.

"She git tired keepin' house," he said. "She go home, 'cross height of land. That a' right. She don't git lost. She come all by herself an' she go 'way all by herself."

Marjorie had to be satisfied with that.

Dolly had left Marjorie's cabin just as the first red streaks of daylight flared through the stems of the forest. She reached Ben Stickney's place before noon. Ben was chopping beyond the edge of the clearing. She entered the cabin and found Tommy on the floor before the hearth, staring through the wires of the high, homemade fender that kept him out of the fire. He welcomed the woman as if she were an old friend. She discarded her snowshoes and blanket coat, and squatted on the floor beside the child. He crawled into her lap. When she heard Stickney's step at the door, she did not move or look up; but the blood wavered like a red shadow over her smooth, brown cheeks.

Stickney entered from the outside glare of sun on snow and closed the door behind him. For a moment he did not see his visitor in the dimness of the cabin; and when he first caught sight of her he stood stock-still. For several seconds he stood so, motionless, speechless.

"You here," he said at last, in a colorless voice. "You give me yer word that ye wouldn't come here ag'in."

The young squaw looked up at him. The glow was gone from her face, and her eyes were lusterless. Her right arm closed convulsively about little Tommy. She did not speak. Stickney advanced a step.

"This ain't the way to treat me," he said. "I done the square thing by you; an' ye give me yer word ye wouldn't come here ag'in."

"Yes, you gimme fifty dollar an' two dress," she said slowly.

"That's right. I done the square thing by ye. You say it yerself."

"You like me pretty good little while ago, Ben Stickney."

"I was drunk! Can't ye leave me be? D'ye want some more money?"

She did not answer. She lifted Tommy from her lap and set him on his feet. He ran sturdily and gayly to his father, and clasped him about the knees. Ben glanced down at his child's fair head for a moment, then raised his sullen gaze again to Dolly Sacobie. She was pretty. Any man would have said so. But Stickney wondered at himself for ever having thought so. And yet she was far and away the prettiest Indian girl in the province. She looked as if she had some white blood in her—French, for choice—and as if the mixture had been a happy one. Her body and limbs were as slenderly rounded as a nymph's. Her features were delicately molded. Her eyes were black and not small or close set; but they were capable of only two expressions. They brightened and they dimmed—that was all. And yet they were the windows of her mind and soul. She was capable of but few moods and few thoughts—and those the extreme and elemental.

Stickney changed his tune. He spoke to her as if to a child.

"You must go home, Dolly," he said. "Go home an' marry some smart trapper. A pretty girl like yerself could git the smartest in the province. It ain't right for a girl like you to be runnin' round through the woods. If it wasn't that I can't leave Tommy, I'd take ye safe home myself."

"You want some white girl," she said dully. "You think you git married, maybe. Think you marry Marjorie Hollis, what?"

"Cut that out! Mind yer own business!" he cried savagely.

"She laugh at you. Laugh plenty. She got feller now—better man nor you, Ben Stickney—one rich man from New York. He own all Moose Horn, pretty near, an' come round an' see Marjorie every day."

"What's that?" cried Stickney. "D'ye mean Bayford?"

"Yes, Bayford. Fine feller."

The woodsman was silent for several seconds. His face was gray beneath its tan. He stood and stared over the Maliseet girl's head into the red coals and pulsing caverns of the fire. He laughed suddenly and harshly.

"Let her marry him!" he exclaimed. "I don't give a hoot who she marries!"

She seemed satisfied with that. She took the kettle from the hearth and went out and filled it at the water hole. She raked forward a bed of coals from beneath the blazing sticks, and placed the frying pan to heat. She sliced bacon and prepared the midday meal. Stickney made no protest. He watched her with veiled eyes. When dinner was ready he sat down and ate with her. When she began to wash the dishes he lit his pipe and took Tommy on his knee.

"Seein' as how you're here to mind the youngster, I reckon now's a good time for me to make a trip out to Plaster Bluff," he said. "Tea an' bacon is gittin' low, an' I need some more medicine for Tommy, in case he husks up ag'in."

He set out on the long journey within the hour, carrying blankets and cooked food on his back and a teakettle hanging from a strap of the pack. He got no farther than Bayford's camp that day, and there spent the night. He was impressed and displeased by all that he saw; but he minded his manners. Peter Paul, who devoted most of his time to lumbering now, asked him what he had done with Tommy.

"That's all right," he answered coolly. "An Injun happened along from across the height of land, and I left him in charge."

He spent two nights and a day in Plaster Bluff, and then returned to his farmstead on the Moose Horn with more than provisions and dress goods in his pack. He found the boy well, Dolly Sacobie still in charge, and everything in good order. After supper he produced a square face of gin and invited his companion to help herself. But Dolly would not have anything to do with the stuff. Stickney drank half the contents of the bottle, then left the cabin. He noticed that it was snowing softly when he stepped outside.

Dolly Sacobie considered only herself and the winning back of Ben Stickney. She had wit enough to suspect that he was even now playing into her hands. So she was content. She did not even go to the door to look out. She tucked Tommy snugly into his crib, placed several large sticks on the fire, and retired to her bunk, leaving the lantern burning close to the window. But she did not sleep. She lay still and warm in her blankets and waited.

Old Peter Paul was the first of Bayford's crew to give the alarm. He awoke suddenly, sniffed twice, then shot from his bunk and landed in the middle of the floor with an ear-splitting yell. The others rolled out on the instant, some of them still half asleep. They smelled smoke, heard the snap and crackle of flames, and saw a glimmer of red behind the bunks all along one wall.

"My horses! The hovel!" yelled Bob Bean, and shot out of the camp in his underclothes and socks. It was snowing thickly and softly. He dashed across the chip yard to the hovel, stubbing his toes unheedingly. He darted into the hovel and found all well there, and the horses dozing contentedly. He darted out and ran three times around the little building. All was well with the hovel. Then he raced back to the camp, which looked like a big, smoky lantern through the veils of falling flakes.

Bayford and his men fought the fire furiously, beating it with flails of frozen brush, smothering it with snow, and quenching it with water. The last spark was extinguished within an hour of the first alarm; but all one side and end of the camp stood as open to the weather as a stake-and-rider fence.

"Now how in thunder did it catch fire?" asked Bayford, as he stood in the tight little ring of men around the cookstove and sipped at a steaming mug of tea.

"It was sot afire—an' from the outside, at that," said Robert Griffith. "Ye can see where the fire was built agin' the nor'east corner."

"An' he chose a slick night for it, too, with the snow a-fallin' to cover up his tracks," remarked the teamster. "Ye have an enemy in these woods, mister. Tell us his name, boss—an' we'll l'arn him better manners."

"I don't know of an enemy—in these woods, or anywhere," replied Bayford thoughtfully. "It must have been an accident. The chimney must have dropped a spark into some bark or dry brush against the wall. An enemy would have set fire to the hovel as well as the camp."

They let it rest at that; but Peter Paul scratched his head as if he were not entirely satisfied with Bayford's summing up of the case.

First thing in the morning, Peter slipped furtively away with his snowshoes under his arm. He found Ben Stickney and the baby at home—not to mention Dolly Sacobie. Ben blustered at him.

"You got no right to walk into a man's house without knockin', dern yer old monkey face!" he cried.

Peter blinked his eyes at his granddaughter, but did not speak to her. His face was like a mask. The girl turned her face away from his owlish regard. Stickney advanced upon the old man and glared down at him.

"What d'ye want?" he asked. "If ye're after Dolly, here she is. Take her an' welcome—an' tell her to stop at home an' quit troublin' me."

"You out in the snowstorm las' night, hey?" said Peter.

"Yer a liar! I wasn't outside the door las' night."

"That darn good thing for you. Some skunk sot Bayford's camp afire las' night from the outside—an' you 'bout the only skunk on the river."

"Well, it wasn't me, you old fool. What would I set Bayford's camp afire for? I wasn't outside this house. Ask her."

"I don't ask her nothin' to-day. Jes' like axin' her to lie. She tell the truth some day, maybe—when she want to."

With this shot, the old Maliseet turned and retired.

"That a' right, Ben," said Dolly Sacobie. "You set Bayford's camp afire las' night, yes. But I don't tell on you —'less you send me home."

Stickney muttered a string of oaths beneath his breath.

Bayford and his men repaired the damage done to their camp in a single day. They covered the burned walls on the inside and outside with heavy tar paper held in place with long strips of split birch saplings securely nailed. Outside this they pinned a facing of squared poles.

Peter Paul did not mention to any one his visit to Stickney's cabin.

Marjorie was now deeply interested in Bayford's work—yes, and in his character. She visited the scene of operations three, sometimes four, times a week, and often accepted the cook's invitation to dinner. She did not feel so lonely now, with all this activity going on so near her. Bayford often called on her. They talked about all sorts of things, and gradually they got into the way of talking about themselves. As Bayford showed no unseemly curiosity concerning the girl's history, but only a sympathetic interest, it was not long before she told him why she and her father had left the big outside world.

Marjorie's father, John Hollis, a man of idle habits and small means, had married a very wealthy woman. Marjorie was the only child. The union had not been a happy one. From the very first, the woman had made the man feel the questionable character of his position—the inferiority of his worldly fortune. She had married him for his social popularity, and the social eminence of his cousins and aunts; and she had soon learned that she had made a bad bargain. She was purse-proud and bad-tempered; and the Hollis connections refused to accept her even into their outer circles. There had been several separations before the last. The final separation had come just after Marjorie had returned from school, and when Hollis had lost four-fifths of his modest capital in an effort to double and redouble it. His wife's sneers at his poverty had driven him to the effort. So the final separation took place. Marjorie loved her father and threw in her lot with his—and Mrs. Hollis had not objected to that arrangement. That was the whole story.

Bayford realized that he was absolutely, utterly, and everlastingly in love with Marjorie early in the month of February; but he kept it to himself. He did his best to keep it out of his eyes, his voice, and his manner—and never an articulated word of it escaped him. He felt that he, a man of lost millions, with his way to remake in the world, had no right to take advantage of Marjorie and existing conditions. She would soon return to her people, of course—to her father's people, or her mother's. She would go when the winter was over, in answer to the urge of her own blood; or if not that, some one would come for her. He could not believe that John Hollis had lived in the wilderness for five years without some of his friends or relatives being aware of it.

So he kept himself well in hand, schooled himself to treat the girl only as a friend. He found it a bitterly hard task at times. She had wonderful ways with her eyes that put his heroic spirit on the rack. And she had a way of leaning toward him and gazing at him steadily and tenderly when she talked. And she called him Will, and he called her Marjorie; and at times the delicious torture of it was almost more than he could bear, and all his manhood, all his senses, all the red life in him urged him to take her in his arms and tell her the truth of his heart.

It was no weakling's game that he faced. By way of distraction, he worked at the lumbering like two men. Sometimes, in the night, he awoke and wondered if she knew—and if she felt something of the same sweet madness.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BAYFORD DRIVES HIS SEASON'S CUT TO MARKET.

Bayford's lumbering operations went forward without a hitch until April. Then twelve hours of warm rain opened and swelled all the little streams in the valley; the drifts melted, and the snow water seeped into the Moose Horn from millions of acres of sloping forests and flooded levels; the Moose Horn heaved and lifted and smashed its roof of ice, and sent shattered ice and jumbled logs swimming away. Bayford and his men followed the burden of the racing river.

The trouble began at an elbow in the stream five miles below the camp. Here a big stick of pine ran its head between two big cedars growing on the bank and overhanging the water, stuck tight, and swung its tail out at right angles to the current. Plunging timber and wallowing ice struck the log. The log lurched, but held, and the cedars shivered and swayed. In ten minutes the jam of ice and logs blocked half the channel; and by this time the free end of the big stick that had started the trouble was driven deep into the bed of the river. Archie Douglas and Joe Creamer broke that jam by chopping down the big cedars close to their roots.

The drive was now strung out to a length of nearly a mile. Young Dave Griffith "cuffed" his way to the other shore on the running, plunging timber. He carried his peavey like a balancing pole; his spiked boots bit deep into bark wherever they struck; he sprang from log to log, drifting down with them all the time. In midstream he gave an exhibition of log-twirling. He sprang high in the air and alighted on the back of a medium-sized and particularly active piece of timber. He clamped his calks into its brown flanks, and so held it steady for a second or two. Then, with flying feet, he sent it spinning from right to left, over and over like a tortured thing. He steadied it, then swung it from left to right. Suddenly he leaped away to the next log, across a strip of hungry water, from that to the next, and so on from log to log to the farther shore.

Bayford's drive caught up with the tail of Nixon's drive next morning. By eight o'clock that night, Amos Dowling's booms at Plaster Bluff were full. Bayford's logs had been scaled by the mill owner's men on the brows, and now a count of the big pines was made in the booms. Some figuring was done, and then Dowling's bookkeeper drew a check to the order of William Morgan Bayford. Bayford retired to his room at the hotel and did some figuring for himself. The cost of his operations had been small, and the conditions under which he had operated had been most favorable. His pine had brought a big price. He had no tax to pay to the government in the form of stumpage. When he saw that he had cleared something more than six thousand dollars for his timber and his three months and three weeks of work, he felt a glow of satisfaction, and began to dream of the future. He would put in a larger crew next winter—and still there would be a few big pines and thousands of big spruces left standing. He would study and practice the science of forestry, and preserve his young timber. He would do man's work on a big man's scale. He would make good—yes, and he would make money—and, perhaps, Marjorie Hollis would admire and understand. Yes, he could make a living. He was no longer a cumberer of the face of the earth. He dreamed of golden harvests from his six thousand acres; but he knew Marjorie well enough to feel that money would not weigh for or against him in her clear eyes. He wanted to make money to strengthen his case with himself, not with her.

He paid each of his crew a bonus of twenty-five dollars. He took Joe Creamer back to the Moose Horn with him, for a plan of farming part of his land was forming in his mind. He called on Marjorie soon after getting home, and described the drive to her and told her something of his plans for the future.

"Why shouldn't I try farming, too?" she asked. "I own about a hundred acres here."

"But—but you will be going out—back to the world—before long," he replied, with his glance on the floor.

Her gaze dwelt on him kindly, inquiringly, for several seconds. He did not meet it.

"Why should I go back to the world?" she asked. "I was not happy when I lived there."

"But you are older now. You will be your own mistress and live your own life."

"But I live my own life here on the Moose Horn."

"No. It is not your life. You will be—a great heiress."

"But why? My father had nothing. Why should my mother give me her fortune—or even part of it? She did not love me, and I did not love her—and I left her of my own free will. Out in the world I should have nothing. Here are my cabin, my work, and my friends. Why do you want me to go?"

Bayford got hastily to his feet and snatched up his cap.

"I don't want you to go, God knows!" he cried, and fled from the cabin into the spring night.

## CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH TIME AND ACTION MOVE BRISKLY ON THE MOOSE HORN, AND BAYFORD LOSES HIS TEMPER.

By a series of strong applications of will power, Bayford kept away from Marjorie's cabin. He wanted to play the game, as he saw it; but he was afraid that he might forget the rules when he saw Marjorie. So four days passed in strenuous toil since the evening of his hasty retreat from her presence.

Some time about mid-morning of the fifth day, when he was at work in one tangle of pine tops, and Creamer was slashing in another fifty yards away, he looked up suddenly and beheld her. She stood at the edge of the clutter of brush in which he was working. She was regarding him steadily, with a flicker of curiosity and amusement in her clear eyes; and her lips were smiling a little.

"I came to look you up because I was beginning to worry about you," she said. "I was afraid that you had lost yourself in the woods that night you left me in such a hurry."

"I—I am sorry," he stammered. "I am afraid I sounded like a fool that night—advising you about your affairs—when I'm not able to attend properly to my own."

"But I was glad to have your advice; and I must admit that it was sound, though I don't like it. You have been very busy since then, I suppose."

"Yes," he said.

His voice was flat; the glow had gone from his face; his heart was chilled. She believed his advice to be sound! Then she intended to take it—to go away some time during the approaching summer—away to her people and their wealth—away to the cities and flesh-pots of the world, where rich men and great men would see her and love her and strive to win her in a fair field.

And he—because he had been a fool, but was still a sportsman—would remain on the Moose Horn, with his secret behind his lips. He stood motionless, staring unseeingly at the head of his ax, the blade of which was sunk in the shoulder of a great pine bough at his feet.

"I was afraid I had offended you in some way," she said gently.

He started sharply and met her glance for a second.

"You have been kindness itself," he exclaimed.

"But I thought we were friends—and you have neglected me for five days. I know that you are very busy; but can't you spare me an hour or two now and then, after the day's work is over? I've been lonely."

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed wildly; and then, in a suddenly lowered voice that shook with restraint, he asked if he might call on her that evening, after supper.

"Please come earlier than that and have supper with me," she said. "Now I must go on as far as Peter's. The old man always grows lazy this time of year; but I want him to do some work for me. Have you seen him lately?"

"He hasn't shown his nose these three days," replied Bayford.

Bayford knocked off work at four o'clock that day, washed and changed, and went to see Marjorie. Again he was master of himself and felt equal to playing the game according to his lights. His visit passed pleasantly; but he was conscious, all the time, of a tingle in the air. Perhaps Marjorie was conscious of it, too—conscious of something that threatened to develop suddenly into something that she felt no certainty of being able to cope with. However that may be, both talked with guarded tongue and averted eyes. Bayford left at nine o'clock.

"I believe she knows that I love her," he said, as he took the homeward path along the shingle of the subsiding river. "She didn't make it so hard for me to-night. She helped me play the game—as if she wanted me to play it. That shows what she thinks of it, I suppose."

A sense of desolation and bitterness filled him.

Marjorie bolted the door of her cabin and returned to the glowing hearth. She stood motionless on the rug of caribou skin for several minutes, gazing down into the fire. She sighed.

Peter Paul overcame the indolence bred in him by the season and made a trip out to Plaster Bluff to buy a horse for Bayford. He brought in Father Kelly along with the horse; but Bayford saw nothing of the horse until after the wedding of Ben Stickney and Dolly Sacobie. It was not much to look at, and its name was Jabez.

One morning, more than a week after the marriage of Stickney and Peter's granddaughter, Stickney came down-river to Bayford's place. He had finished the gin, the wedding gift of old Peter. He craved a drink. He found Bayford, Joe Creamer, and Peter at work in a patch of new clearing.

"Kin ye let me hev some liquor?" he asked.

"I've nothing of the kind but one bottle of brandy," replied Bayford.

"That'll hev to do, if it's all ye got."

"I can let you have half of it, if you really need it. Is any one ill?"

"I'm a sick man. I want a drink. Hand over the bottle."

"So that's the way of it? You want a drink, do you? Then you'll have to go somewhere else for it."

Stickney glared and swore. He glared and swore at Bayford first, then glared all around the clearing. He caught sight of Jabez munching hay near by, and recognized him as the horse upon which Father Kelly had come to the wedding. Another jet of oaths shot from him.

"That yer hoss?" he cried.

"Yes," replied Bayford.

"Ye loaned it to Peter Paul, so's he could fetch in the priest to marry me to the squaw, didn't ye?"

"Well?"

"Wanted to git me tied up to the squaw, didn't ye? Wanted a clear road for yerself, hey! Hev ye fooled the girl into thinking ye're the real thing, yet? She's soft, all right."

"Are you drunk?"

"No!" and he followed the exclamation with an oath.

"In that case, look out! I'm coming!"

Stickney sprang aside at the warning and thrust out a foot with the intention of tripping Bayford in his forward rush. Bayford refused to fall for so crude a trick, however, and jolted the bushwhacker behind an ear with his left fist. Stickney reeled, then jumped with a yell of rage and grappled with the New Yorker. Now his superior weight told, and he would soon have had his opponent down and at his mercy if the hold had not been broken. Bayford broke it at top speed—almost too quickly to write about. At one and the same instant of time his left shoulder caught Stickney a sharp and lifting blow beneath the chin, and his right hand administered a thumping wallop on the rib line. Then he seemed to produce half a dozen fists from his clothes, as a conjurer produces rabbits from a hat—but faster, much faster. And every fist of the half dozen landed on Stickney.

Stickney was glad to lie down. Strange to say, he knew that he would be safe while lying down, though in a fight with one of his own kind a recumbent position would be the last to assume for safety. He continued to lie prone upon the moss until old Peter fetched a pail of ice-cold water from the spring and poured it over his head and face. Shortly after that he arose to his feet and went his way.

Marjorie heard about the fight from Joe Creamer.

"But Ben Stickney looks to me to be larger, heavier, and stronger than Mr. Bayford," she said.

"Maybe he is," returned Joe; "but I'd ruther fight two of Stickney than the boss. I'd ruther fight a bobcat as big as our hoss Jabez than Bill Bayford. You'd ought to hev saw him, ma'am. I've saw lashin's of fightin', an' I've fit a little myself—but hair an' hell is all ye can think of when the boss unbuckles himself and gits a-goin'."

"Is he quarrelsome?" asked the girl. "He never seemed so to me."

"Quarrelsome! Not him. He's kind an' perlite as a setter pup. I never seen him riled before."

"Why did the request for a drink make him so angry with Stickney?"

"It wasn't the drink. It was somethin' Ben said about you, far's I could make out. That fool Stickney ain't got good sense."

"Oh!" exclaimed Marjorie. That was all. Her interest in the fight seemed to have died a sudden death from chill.

Marjorie did not mention the fight to the hero of it.

Three days after Ben Stickney's ignominious defeat in Bayford's new clearing, Dolly Sacobie appeared at Marjorie's cabin with Tommy in her arms. She begged for shelter and protection for herself and the child; and Marjorie took them in. After dinner, Dolly told about her affair with Ben Stickney and their marriage; and Marjorie felt shame and indignation drumming in her brain and crawling in her blood at the thought of Stickney's last call on her. But the thought of Stickney's last call on Bill Bayford was like balm to her outraged sensibilities. Dolly went on to tell of her husband's sulkiness and drunkenness since the wedding, and of how he had actually ill-treated herself and his child during the last two days. He had come home with a battered face from somewhere, and since then had struck her several times, and been rough and unkind to Tommy. She was afraid. So she had run away with Tommy. She frankly admitted that she loved Ben more than anything in the world, and next to Ben she loved his child.

Four days passed. Bayford and Joe went steadily on with their clearing and burning. Peter sat about and smoked unconcernedly, and Dolly and the little boy lived with Marjorie, undisturbed. On the evening of the fourth day after Dolly's flight, Ben Stickney stepped into Bayford's camp while Bayford, Joe, and Peter were at supper. Stickney's face still showed discolored patches.

"I want a word with you in private, Mr. Bayford," he said.

Manner and voice showed embarrassment and anxiety. Bayford eyed him keenly for a moment, then left his seat at table. They crossed the threshold and stepped into the deepening twilight, elbow to elbow.

"What can I do for you?" asked Bayford.

"I'll tell ye," returned Stickney. "I know where Tommy is, an' I want him home with me ag'in; but I ain't got the nerve to go there for him. I'll never be rough with him ag'in—nor with the woman. I was sure in a darned ugly temper when I scared 'em away—an' no wonder, what with the gin hang-over an' the beatin'-up ye give me. But it was the first time I was ever rough with the boy—an' it'll be the last, so help me!"

"You want to take your wife home, too?" asked Bayford.

"Sure. I wasn't myself when I hit her—an' I didn't hit her hard, neither. She's all-fired fond of Tommy. I'll treat her right."

They returned to the cabin, and Stickney took a seat at the table. After supper, Bayford went to Marjorie's cabin and gave Dolly a message from her husband. It was a verbal message, and he delivered it before Marjorie. Dolly's face brightened with joy, and she laughed softly.

"I know he soon wants us back ag'in," she said.

Marjorie did not think it was safe for them to go; but the other laughed at her fears.

"He ain't bad man, 'cept when he git the rum," said Dolly. "Me an' Tommy handle 'im a' right now."

She managed to give Bayford a warning before he left the cabin.

"You watch out, mister," she whispered. "Ben got grudge on you. He try to fix you bad, some day—on the sly. You best watch out sharp."

Bayford thanked her with a smile. He took the warning lightly. He feared Ben Stickney's spite about as much as he feared the chatter of a squirrel in a tree. He felt that he knew how to deal with that fool.

Dolly and the child left Marjorie's protection early next morning. Stickney met them within a few hundred yards of Marjorie's door, and took Tommy in his arms. The little boy slid his arms around his father's neck.

"That's all right," said the man huskily. "I was only foolin', Tommy. I was only pretendin' to be mad."

"He know that a' right, Ben," said the woman. "I tell him so."

## CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH THE SETTLERS ON THE MOOSE HORN ARE DRIVEN FORTH IN CONFUSION.

Joe Creamer went out to Plaster Bluff early in June, after the brush on the new clearings had been burned, and oats and grass seeds had been harrowed in on the ashes. Two weeks after Joe's departure, when the oat blades were like a gray-green veil over Bayford's new-land acres, a thin haze stole down from the northeast and hung motionless in the high woods along the Moose Horn.

The haze was thicker next morning. It hung in the branches of the pines and spruces like a thin fog. Peter wagged his head at it. He didn't like it. He was restless all day, and his face was turned continually to the northeast. He went to talk to Marjorie about it; but she laughed at his nervousness and reminded him of the fact that there was smoke in the woods along the Moose Horn almost every summer.

"You know how it travels, clinging low in the woods," she said. "That fire may be fifty miles away."

"That a' right," replied Peter. "Fire one hundred mile away, maybe; but I git burn once, long time ago. Fire chase us all night, all day—an' moose an' deer run, too. Don't like him ever since."

They awoke next morning to find the air clear as crystal. Bayford shared Peter's sense of relief, for he stood in awe of forest fires, though he knew nothing about them except what he had read in books. For two days the air was free of any taint or haze of smoke; and then it thickened again in a single night. A fitful little wind crept into the valley of the river from the northeast, herding the smoke before it, and hanging it in gray films among the trees and over the tops of the underbrush.

"That smoke don't come far," said Peter, testing it with his nose. "You smell 'im, what? Guess I go home now an' resin my canoe—jes' for luck."

They saw red in the northeast sky that night. It was so near that from his lookout in a big spruce Bayford could mark the pulsings of the red and yellow beneath the black of the night, and of the pall of smoke.

He descended without a word. What mattered it to him if the fire was twenty or only ten miles away? He realized that it was marching down to destroy his wonderful timber, and with his timber his wonderful dreams.

"I got to go upstream an' see what that darn fool Stickney goin' to do about it," said Peter. "Maybe he run away an' forgit the papoose. You wait at Marjorie's place; but if the fire come too quick, don't you wait too long for me. Bury the stuff. Don't load canoe too heavy. Darn little water in old Moose Horn to-night."

Bayford put a bridle on Jabez, mounted the sharp ridge of that honest back, and set out for Marjorie's clearing. He took his course along the margin of the shrunken stream, with the lighted lantern swinging from his right hand. He had not gone far before he caught the glimmer of another lantern approaching. He drew rein and shouted, and was answered by Marjorie herself. He put Jabez to a reckless, clattering trot, and soon met the girl. He dismounted and raised his lantern for a moment so that the yellow glow of it flooded her face. He saw that she was frightened.

"We must get out of here as quickly as possible," he said. "Climb up on old Jabez and we'll move along. We must bury all your valuables."

"Is it near?" she asked. "And where is Peter?"

"It is near enough, and coming nearer," he replied. "Peter has gone upstream to help the Stickneys."

He lifted her to the horse's back. They went forward at a sharp pace. The smoke lay thick over the shallows and still pools. Neither spoke again until Marjorie's clearing was reached. As she slipped from the horse's back she said: "I waited for you—for hours."

He turned away without a word. He could not trust himself to say a word. Now, if ever, was the time for him to play the game like a man. In a few hours, or in less time, the red fury to the northeast would be trampling through his forests with feet of destruction. So he worked with as little speech as possible; and that little had to do only with the task in hand. The girl followed his example in this matter.

They packed one dunnage bag with her clothing and such particular treasures as the candlesticks, the spoons that had belonged to John Hollis' grandfather, and the silver cigarette box. They packed one box with food, and made up a bale of pelts. They dumped books and provisions into the little cellar near the spring, and covered all deep in earth. The smoke grew thicker all the while, and the wind steadier and stronger. The red pulsed behind the ragged tops of the forest to the north and east. There were strange sounds in the air—a low, constant humming, and occasional dull and booming reports. Flakes of gray and black ashes drifted down upon them as they worked.

Bayford examined the canoe by the light of his lantern, resined it, and lifted it down to the edge of the river. He loaded it, placed a pole and two paddles aboard, and then turned to speak to his companion. Jabez stood at his elbow, switching his tail and regarding the canoe doubtfully; but the girl was not there. He ran to the top of the bank, with the horse scrambling after him. The glow of the fire sifted through the forest now, and lit the clearing and the cabin dully, like a red dawn. Bayford remembered her father's grave at that moment, and ran across the clearing and into the woods beyond. Jabez trotted after him. He found Marjorie kneeling beside the grave. He called her name gently, then went over to her and laid a hand tenderly on her shoulder.

"I think we had better go down to the canoe now," he said. "It seems to be coming pretty fast; and Peter may be along at any moment."

He helped her to her feet and steadied her with a hand under one elbow until they were out of the wood. They crossed the clearing and went down to the loaded canoe in silence. Jabez crowded against his master.

"I do not lose much, after all—I have so little to lose," she said. "But you will lose a great deal—and I am very, very sorry, Will."

"Yes, I lose everything," he said dully.

"Do we have to wait here long?" she asked, after a brief silence. "These fires do not always run straight, you know. Peter and the Stickneys may go up to the lake at the head of the river."

"The wind is shifting," he said. "They are sure to be safe with Peter—safer than you in my charge, I fear. He warned me not to wait too long. The fire may travel down ahead of us."

Something crashed through the bushes at the top of the bank, clattered across the shingle, and splashed into the stream. Jabez jumped and snorted. Marjorie clutched Bayford by the arm.

"It's only some animal," he said. "A moose, I suppose."

Marjorie got in the bow of the canoe and took up a paddle. Bayford launched it into deeper water and stepped aboard. He knew something about the management of canoes, for he had paddled on many tame waters in the past—on the Hudson, the Charles, the Thames, and other storied rivers. Better still, Peter had given him a few lessons in handling a canoe on the Moose Horn both in high water and in low. He stood with his feet braced and his body balanced, and with a thrust of the pole slid the light craft out to midstream. The horse followed, with snorts and splashes.

"We'll have to go easy," said Bayford. "The water is too low to risk letting her run. I'll have to snub her down until we get into the Tobique. Can you hang the lantern on the bow?"

Marjorie fastened the lantern to the bow so that it shed a circumscribed glow on the sliding waters ahead. Smoke swung about the canoe, sometimes black as the pit, sometimes melted through by a dim glimmer of red. The vague humming and dull boomings of the fire seemed to come from every point of the compass. Now and then something sank lightly to the river that hissed as it touched. The water was warm to the hand, and its surface was gritty with ashes. But the wind had shifted, and was now crawling out of the north and northwest.

Bayford kept the canoe from running with the speed of the river by snubbing now on one side and now on the other with his iron-shod pole. He dared not let it run, for the stream was shallow, the current winding and broken by rounded bowlders.

Jabez followed them, sometimes banging along the rock shore, sometimes splashing in the shallows. The wild life of the valley was astir on every side. A bear crossed the stream just behind the canoe and drove poor Jabez to the verge of hysteria.

The smoke grew stifling and luminous, and the air like the breath of an open furnace. The hum of the fire was a roar by this time, shot over and under and through by boomings and crashings. Sparks and flakes of burning bark showered down upon the water. The canoe rounded a bend. Bayford stared ahead through smarting lids and saw the channel lurid and clear. He took the middle of the channel and let the canoe run.

"I don't think there is much of it!" he cried. "We'll soon be out of it. Mind the sparks!"

He squatted and splashed water over the canoe and the girl with both hands. He saw great torches flaming and swaying on his left. He heard mighty things splash and hiss around him. But he was out of the shallows. He grabbed up a paddle and sent the canoe jumping along.

The flaming torches were passed. The lurid glare died out of the enshrouding smoke. The terrific voices of the fire and the tortured trees grew faint astern. Bayford ceased his efforts and let the canoe drift.

"Poor old Jabez was afraid to follow us through," he said.

The girl shivered.

"Look," said Bayford. "Is that the dawn, or more fire?"

"The dawn," she answered. "Yes, it is the dawn—and we are alive."

But the morning was gray; and just as the canoe ran out of the Moose Horn and into the Tobique, the first drops of rain pattered down. The patter grew swiftly to a swishing thunder of jumping, liquid sounds. Bayford smiled bitterly as the cool rain streamed down his face. If it had come earlier, only a few hours earlier, it would have saved him and his dreams. Now it drenched him to the skin and filled his canoe like a bath. The spray of it crawled white over the river. He ran the canoe ashore. Marjorie got slowly to her feet and stepped heavily over the gunwale. Bayford followed and lifted the canoe two-thirds of its length up the shingle.

"I'll rig a shelter of some sort," he said. "We can't travel in this. It may hold up in a few hours."

"The fires won't last long, anyway," she replied, glancing at him covertly. "When the rain holds up we can go back."

"Go back!" he exclaimed. "Would you go back?"

"What else can I do? Where else can I go?" she asked, with lowered glance and averted face. "Peter will help me build another cabin."

He stared at her for a moment, breathing quickly.

"No, that won't do," he said, almost harshly. "You know that it is mad, impossible. You must go out—and back to your people. I will take you down to the village."

Then he drew his ax from the canoe, ran up to the top of the bank, and went savagely to work at building a shelter in a clump of young spruces. He covered the frame with a big tarpaulin, and then carried the dunnage up from the canoe. Marjorie entered the shelter without comment. Bayford lifted the canoe farther up the shingle and turned it over. A voice hailed him from the gray rain curtains over the water.

"Who's there? Is it you, Peter?" he cried, in answer.

A canoe slid ghostily out of the swishing mist, heading straight for the spot where he stood. In the bow sat a stout man in a glistening yellow waterproof. His face shone round and red between his upturned collar and the streaming brim of his felt hat. In the stern crouched old Archie Douglas, his iron-gray locks and mustaches hanging straight and adrip. Bayford advanced, put out a hand, and eased the bow of the canoe ashore.

"Glad to see ye, boss," said Archie. "Ye've fetched Marjorie out all right, I guess? Here's a gent a-lookin' for her."

"She is all right," said Bayford heavily, as he shook hands with the woodsman. "She's back there in the shelter I've just made."

"This here's Mr. Bayford I was tellin' ye about," said Archie to the stranger. "He ain't no cheap sport. He's white clean through."

The stout man had struggled out of the canoe by this time. He was fairly water-logged. He stood close in front of Bayford and gazed at him searchingly through the downpour for several seconds. Bayford met the scrutiny with steady eyes and a colorless face. He advanced his wet right hand, and Bayford took it.

"I was glad to hear that there was a man like you near her," he said. "I didn't know of John Hollis' death until I reached Plaster Bluff. My name is Strong. I'm a lawyer."

"I felt sure that some one would come for her before the summer was over," returned Bayford quietly. "It seemed like madness to me."

Mr. Strong nodded.

"But as it happens, it is all right—thanks to you," he said. "Douglas assured me that you would bring her safely out of the fire—safely out of the whole mad business. Her mother is ill."

Bayford nodded his head and turned away. Strong went up the bank to the shelter among the spruces. Archie Douglas went in search of dry wood for a fire. Bayford stood with his arms hanging limp at his sides and stared into the gray and white of the rain and the beaten river with unheeding eyes. In his mind he went over and over the lawyer's words. Strong knew that he had played the game. Archie Douglas had known that he would play the game. He wondered at the sense of failure that numbed him. He had done well; he had played the game; and now he found the consciousness of virtue to be but a cheerless reward.

"I might have won her," he reflected. "She would have gone back with me only a few minutes ago. I brought her out—safe out of the fire and safe out of the whole mad business. She will go downstream with the lawyer and Archie. And that's the end of it, as far as I am concerned!"

Noiselessly he turned his canoe over and lifted it into shallow water. He placed his two paddles aboard and shoved off, stepping over the shoreward gunwale at the same moment with the pole in his hand. A strong thrust sent him far through the gray veils of the rain. He crossed to the other shore, then headed upstream and poled vigorously. The rain sluiced down upon him. It filled his eyes. It ran in spouts along the bending pole. It filled his clothing and sloshed about in the canoe.

A spirit of fight awoke in him, and he fought greatly against the drag of the current and the drag of his heart. But he would overcome them both, for he was their master. So he toiled up the river toward the ashes of his forests and his dreams, as if eager to see their ruins and taste their bitterness to the full. He thrust ashore once for long enough to empty the canoe, then, went on, heedless of hunger and fatigue.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN WHICH MARJORIE HOLLIS GIVES AWAY TO TEARS.

Marjorie had met Mr. Strong before, and now recognized him instantly as an old friend of her father. He told her that she would have seen him seven months ago, if he had known of her loss; and he told of her mother's illness and desire to see her.

"I will go out with you, of course," she said, "though I scarcely know my mother—and I think this is the first time in my life she has asked to see me."

Strong nodded. Archie Douglas started a fire close in front of the lean-to, of dry cedar and bark and sticks of white birch. It was partially sheltered from the rain by the tops and branches of the grove, and soon burned merrily.

"I have met young Bayford," said Strong. "Douglas tells me that he is a fine fellow; and I must admit that I was very favorably impressed by what I saw of him just now. He does not belong to this country, I hear."

"He is splendid. No, he is not a native of the Moose Horn. He came from New York. William Morgan Bayford is his whole name."

"Bless my soul! I read something about him last winter. He is the young fool who lost a fortune, millions, in a few years. Gambled, you know—speculated—and was eaten up. The moment he was cleaned out he cleared out. Quit."

"Like a man. He didn't hang about New York and try to excite pity. Yes, that is the same Bayford—and my very dear friend. I wonder where he is now. Archie, where is Mr. Bayford?"

"Down by the canoes, I reckon," replied Archie. "But I'll go see."

He went. He was soon back at the shelter. He stooped and glared in fixedly and fiercely at Mr. Strong.

"What did you say to Bill Bayford?" he demanded.

"I? I didn't say anything—except that I'd come to take Miss Hollis to her mother," replied the astonished lawyer.

"Well, he's gone," said the old woodsman. "He's cleared out—him an' his canoe. Ye've drove him away—you or the gal—somehow!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Strong. "Gone? Call him back!"

"He's out of earshot, I reckon; an' when the boss once starts, there ain't no callin' him back," said Archie harshly. "That's how I figger him out—an' I've seen him start things more'n once."

"He can't have gone!" cried Marjorie. "He can't have gone without—without saying something—good-by—to me!"

"He's gone, right enough; an' straight back to his burned timber, ye kin bank on that," retorted Archie.

Marjorie turned her head away and covered her face with her hands. Strong scowled at the woodsman and shook his head violently. Archie retreated a pace or two and placed more wood on the fire. The girl sobbed.

"Go after him," said the lawyer to the woodsman.

"Go after him yerself," retorted the woodsman. "Go fetch him back yerself, if ye want him so bad. He's as good as you be—an' a darn sight better. He's a man, the boss—an' knows when he ain't wanted."

Silence held for several minutes after that, broken only by the natural sounds of the beating of the rain on forest and river, and the hissing and crackling of the fire.

"You told him to go," said Marjorie at last.

"I did nothing of the kind, my dear," said the lawyer.

"He thinks I am rich," she faltered, still with her face averted and covered with her hands. "He often said so. Am I wealthy now?"

"I don't know," replied Mr. Strong. "I was your father's friend and his adviser after his trouble. There was nothing left of his estate five years ago, as you know—nothing but a few hundreds. I know nothing of your mother's affairs, my dear—except that she is ill and wants to see you. I undertook this trip for your own sake—and John's."

## CHAPTER XII.

### IN WHICH BAYFORD FINDS ENOUGH OF HIS TIMBER STANDING TO KEEP HIM EMPLOYED.

The rain eased off a little at noon, poured down again for a few hours, then ceased at sunset. It left the air clean and cool, and the green forests and black desolations alike dripping and thankful. Bayford reached Marjorie's clearing after dark. To his astonishment, he found the cabin still standing. He entered it, found a candle and matches, and made a light. He was conscious now of fatigue and hunger. He started a fire on the hearth and fed it generously with dry wood, then stripped himself and hung his clothes to dry and made a pot of tea. He found some gingerbread on the table, and ate every crumb of it. After that he covered himself with a moose hide and lay down before the fire and fell asleep. He slept heavily all night, and awoke at dawn, chilled and stiff and miserable. He wondered that the consciousness of having done the right thing did not lighten his mood. He brought food from the cellar, and cooked and ate his breakfast. He extinguished the fire on the hearth, fastened the door, and continued his journey afoot.

"I'm glad Strong came," muttered Bayford.

He looked about him in wonder when he suddenly found himself out of the burned tract and in green forest again. He increased his pace, a bitter curiosity driving him forward. He was on his own land now—and still the woods were green and alive. He ran forward, with the tips of the green branches brushing his face. The pines about his mound were untouched. His camp and hovel were just as he had left them. From the open doorway of the hovel a familiar head issued inquiringly. It was the head of Jabez, the horse.

He climbed into the upper branches of the same tall spruce from which he had watched the approach of the fire the night before. He looked first to the east and northeast. All was living green along the river, and back from the river for a distance of from a quarter to half a mile. Beyond that narrow strip all was black; but he could see that the rain had beaten out the fire over wide areas before the trees had been deeply burned. He turned then and looked across the river. There only the edge of the forest was blackened in a few spots; but far away up the valley the world was black to the horizon on both sides of the river.

Bayford descended to the ground an entered the cabin in search of a pipe and tobacco. Knowledge of the fact that he had lost only about one-third of his timber instead of all of it did not seem to cheer him.

Bayford went around his new-land fields and found the young oats wilted in some places, singed beyond hope in others. Before noon he put food in his pockets, shouldered an ax, and started upstream. Snowshoe Brook ran between black rampicks and Peter's denlike cabin was a pit of ashes. Bayford forded the mouth of the brook and continued on his way. In places he felt the ground warm through the soles of his moccasins. Death was on all sides, and it seemed that only the sunlight and the river were alive.

The amber river ran with an undershadow of black ashes. The black trunks and misshapen things that had so recently been towers of living green, seemed to throw wine-red shadows across the gray and black. So it was all the way to Stickney's farmstead—and beyond. The cabin and barns lay in ruins and ashes and blackened timbers. The base of last year's haystack was a mound of ashes. The fences were gone from the fields. The very sunlight seemed to redden and grow old as it touched that desolation. Bayford hunted through the ruins of the cabin and came to the conclusion that the inmates had not only escaped, but that they had taken a deal of bedding and provisions along with them. He searched the shingle and the bushes along the top of the bank in vain for anything that might ever have been a part of a canoe.

He ate his lunch, lit his pipe, and went on up the edge of the narrowing stream. It was the first time he had been beyond Stickney's clearings. He had gone about two miles when he came upon the charred ribs and gunwales of two canoes—of two empty canoes. He guessed that lack of water had here forced the fugitives to shoulder their dunnage and continue the flight afoot. He went on. The stream was now full of big, tumbled bowlders, between and over which the wash of the recent rain sprayed and roared. He ascended this rugged way until he reached a small pond of ice-cold spring water. He skirted the scorched margin of this pond until he came to the mouth of a black, ditchlike stream that crawled into it without a murmur. He followed the winding path of the stream into a swamp of crowded alders and big, wind-felled cedars.

The fire had touched the swamp only here and there. It was too sappy and water-logged to burn. He came upon shapeless tracks in the black mud that might well be human footprints. He followed them. The alders stood greener and ranker as he advanced, and he sank to the knees in black, thin ooze at every step. Once he sank to the hips in a green-slimed hole. It was at the edge of this hole that he picked up a frying pan—a pan with no rust upon it, but with a deposit of cooled bacon fat around its edge.

At last the bushes thinned before him, and he saw the brown waters of a lake. It was a depressing piece of water—the deep, dark heart of the great swamp. He advanced to the quaking margin, and saw a thin feather of azure ascending on his right. He made his way toward the smoke over the treacherous ground and through the gray hardhack. On a little island of dry ground he discovered the fire, Peter Paul, and the three Stickneys.

Ben Stickney was in a bad way. He lay in the shade of a blanket rigged tentwise, moaning and muttering. He had been feverish and restless all the day before the night of the fire, and had retired to his bunk early in the evening, complaining of nausea and splitting pains in the head.

"Pison himself, maybe," said Peter. "Dunno. Darn sick man, anyhow, an' die pretty darn quick. I know ol' Dave Stickney, down to Andover, long time ago. He die jes' like that—git fever, git cold, an' die darn quick. Weak inside. Heart no good. Too much rum, maybe."

Ben Stickney died at two o'clock in the morning. He was unconscious for several hours before death stilled his confused babbling. Bayford was ready to return to his camp at dawn. The woman still crouched beside the body. Peter took Bayford by the sleeve.

"We come pretty soon," he said. "Maybe to-morrow, maybe next day."

"Then let me take Tommy now," said Bayford. "This must be an unhealthy spot, and he needs good food. I have condensed milk. I'll keep him safe."

"A' right. You take him. You hear what Stickney say about the fire, hey? You hear that?"

"Yes, I heard it. What of it? He is dead."

Bayford took the little boy in his arms and splashed his way out of the swamp into the rocky valley. The child clung to him, crying as if its small heart would break. Bayford tried to comfort him, but without success. In Stickney's ruined clearing they found two cows and a bunch of young cattle. Bayford relieved the cows of their torturing burden of milk. He gave some of the milk to Tommy, in a smoky tin mug which he picked out from among the ashes of the cabin. Tommy stopped his sobbing.

Bayford was glad of Tommy's company next day. The two wandered about through the silent woods hand in hand. Tommy sat on Bayford's knee to eat his meals. He did not ask about his father that day; but late at night Bayford was awakened by the sound of stifled sobbing. Bayford lit the lantern, took the child in his arms, and sang "A Capital Ship," the only song that he knew, until the sobbing ceased.

Peter and Dolly did not appear the next day; but Archie Douglas arrived, unexpected, just before sunset. He eyed Bayford quizzically as he shook his hand.

"I took 'em out safe to Plaster Bluff," he said, "an' I've fetched in a letter for yerself. I was comin' in, anyhow."

Bayford took the note and opened it. He turned away from the old woodsman to read the few penciled lines.

Why did you leave me like that—without saying good-by? Do you think it was kind?

That was all. He gazed at it fixedly for several seconds, then folded it small, and thrust it into a pocket.

"I don't blame ye a mite," said Archie. "Not a mite, by heck! Some folk couldn't onderstand, maybe—but I can. That's Ben Stickney's boy, ain't it? What's happened to Stickney?"

Bayford told him what had happened to Stickney. Archie made no comment. He filled his pipe and lit it.

"What we want to do, boss," he said, "is to git busy at cuttin' out all this here timber that was scorched, but not damaged much. It's pretty fair timber now; but it's dead, an' if ye leave it standin' long it'll git a shell on it like iron, an' go all dotty inside. Ye'd best put a crew right into it. Ye can drive it down when the river raises with the October rains. What d'ye say? I'll go down an' make a dicker with Amos Dowlin' for ye, an' fetch the old crew back with me, if ye want me to."

Bayford seemed to consider the question.

"Did she give you her address?" he asked.

"No. Ain't it in the letter?" answered Archie.

Bayford shook his head.

"That's a good idea," he said. "We'll get to work again. Don't go out for the crew until Peter gets back, though. It is beastly lonely here with only Tommy for company."

Peter Paul did not turn up until the

fourth day after Archie's arrival. He came alone.

"Took Dolly home," he informed Bayford. "See Father Kelly some time about her money—an' Sacobie look after her a' right. She best home with her own folks—Injuns an' breeds. Girl like that don't do no good in place like this, you bet."

Archie Douglas went out for Joe Creamer, Towley, the Griffiths, Bob Bean, the horses, and stores. Peter took up his abode with Bayford and little Tommy Stickney. Bayford spent part of a day in restoring Marjorie's books to their shelves, and nailing up the windows and doors of the cabin. He made a cross of cedar for John Hollis' grave and planted the mound with moss and ferns.

Bayford and his men worked in the scorched woods through July and well into August. Dowling's man, who came up to examine and scale the stuff they were cutting, seemed satisfied. Nothing unusual happened. The child's memories of his father became fainter with the passing of each day, and his affection for Bayford grew stronger. Peter made a trip across the height of land with money from Bayford for his granddaughter—the price of the two cows and the young cattle which Bayford had adopted. A new barn and a new storehouse were built.

Bayford worked hard—as hard as he had worked during the past winter, but not with the winter's zest.

A strange Indian arrived at the camp one night and asked for Archie Douglas. He produced a letter. The old man pulled a leather case from his hip pocket and donned a pair of spectacles. It took him a long time to read the letter. His lips moved laboriously in the mastering of each word.

"Business," he said. "I got to go out to Plaster Bluff."

He started before sunrise, accompanied by the strange Indian. That was on Wednesday. He did not get back to Bayford's camp until an hour after sundown on Saturday.

"I hope you arranged the business to your satisfaction," said Bayford. "You were long enough about it."

"Long enough is right,' answered the ancient woodsman. "I figger on takin' jist that long on every job I tackle; an' when I've done a job it's done for keeps—onless some durned fool comes along an' messes it all up. That's me, boss."

"You're right, Archie. No job of yours ever has to be done over again," returned Bayford heartily.

The old man drew his employer aside.

"I see smoke at the chimley of the Hollis shack," he whispered.

"Smoke!" exclaimed the other. "Who is there?"

"I didn't ask. Some sport, like as not. Nobody only a sport would bust into a shack an' make themselves to home like that."

Bayford's face was pale with anger. He looked now as he had looked that day he thrashed poor Ben Stickney.

"I'll find out," he said. "That cabin was fastened up tight—nailed and locked."

"Now don't be rash," cautioned Archie. "Don't make a mess of it."

But Bayford was already out of earshot.

Bayford did not permit his anger to cool as he hastened through the darkening woods. He knew that it was not entirely reasonable; but he thrust reason aside. He was looking for trouble. He would vent the bitterness that had tortured him so long on the man, or men, who had ventured to force the door of that cabin.

He reached the clearing and saw a dim light in the window of the cabin. He did not pause for a moment, but strode across the clearing and up to the door. He was unarmed.

Bayford pulled open the door and entered the cabin truculently. The fire on the hearth had fallen to a few coals, and the light of the lantern was dim. He saw some one at the farther end of the room.

"Get out!" he said. "This is private property."

"Who owns it, I wonder?" returned a voice that he knew.

He put out a hand and so steadied himself against the wall.

"I have come home," said Marjorie, advancing from the shadows.

"Home?" he repeated dully, without moving.

"Why did you run away without saying good-by to me?" she asked.

He dropped his hand from the wall and stood straight.

"You know," he said quietly. "But why have you come back?"

"I wanted to," she whispered, lowering her eyes.

"Did Archie Douglas bring you in?"

"Yes."

"I don't understand; but I tell you that I've come to the end of my endurance! It broke when I ran away that time. I'll not run away again. You can, if you want to. I advise you to. You have done a risky thing in returning to the Moose Horn."

She lifted her eyes to his and smiled tremulously.

"I—I'm afraid you talk too much to —be really dangerous," she said.

He advanced two paces, without haste, and took her firmly by the shoulders. She bowed her head. He felt her shoulders quiver in his grasp, and a tremor went through him from head to foot.

"I talk like a fool," he said; "but you are driving me mad! Why are you here? What does it mean?"

"I came because—because——"

"Marjorie, I don't care who you are, or how worthless I am—I love you—and I won't let you go!"

He drew her to him and held her tight. She slipped her arms around his neck.

"That is why—I came," she whispered.

"My mother has disowned me," she murmured, ten minutes later. "I saw that she intended to when I told her that I was returning to the Moose Horn to ask you to marry me; and yesterday, in Plaster Bluff, I received a wire from her lawyers. I am a pauper, Billy."

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "And I am rich. We'll own this river from end to end before we're done with it. But you haven't asked me to marry you yet."

"Yes, I have."

"Ask again. I didn't hear you."

Peter Paul entered the cabin.

"That's a' right," he said. "You can't fool me. I know you like him all the time, Marjorie. I think often you goin' to tackle 'im afore the fire chase you out. Archie tell me Bayford act like one darn idjit that time. You got 'im now, a' right, anyhow. You bet!"

THE END.

**TOMMY WILLIAMS—an old-time favorite of POPULAR readers—will be reintroduced in the next number in a great story of Austro-Hungary called "THE EMPEROR'S EMERALD:" It's a book-length novel, and will be printed complete in the issue of December 7.**

# A Chat With You

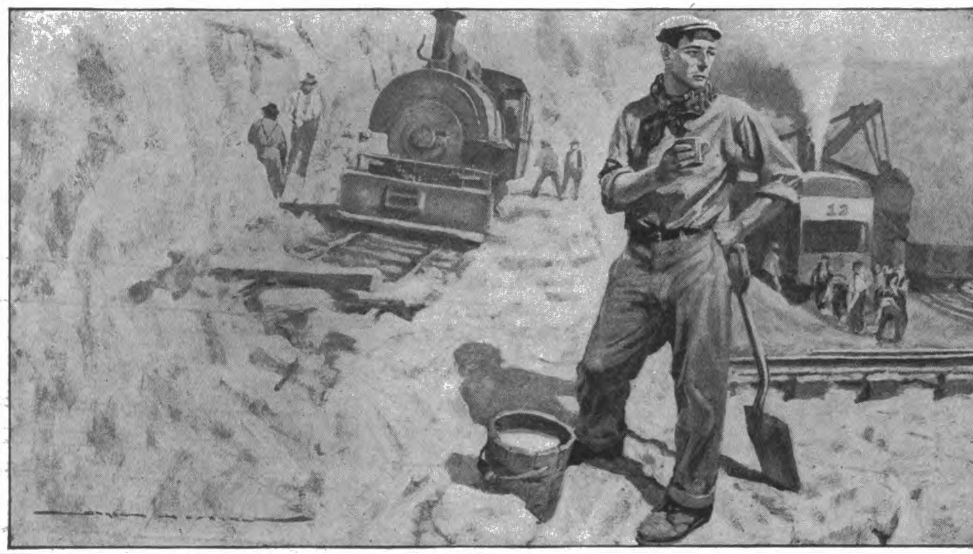
ANY one who reads these lines and who is at all inclined to be proud of his ancient family tree would do well to consider the house of Hapsburg. Of course, we all come of equally ancient families, but the thing that counts among the snobs is to come of a family that has been wealthy, or prominent, or powerful for a long time. Such families are rare. Nature makes one Washington, or one Jefferson, or one Lincoln, but generally fails to provide them with prominent or numerous descendants. As a rule it is only three generations from "shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves," as the saying is, and the real old mildewed, cobwebby family is a rare thing indeed. When it comes to ancient lines, the Hapsburgs are at the top of the list. What thirty-year port is to ordinary wines, what Napoleon brandies are to ordinary alcoholic poisons, the Hapsburgs are to ordinary aristocrats. The Hohenzollerns of whom we hear so much are a race of upstarts, parvenues, and newly rich compared to the Hapsburgs. The first Hohenzollern who ever amounted to anything became prominent by securing a job from one of the Hapsburgs to look after the finances of Nuremberg for him. Prior to that the Hohenzollerns were keeping a humble tollgate somewhere in Switzerland, and although they did claim relationship to some Colonna family in Rome, no one paid much attention to such claims or took them very seriously. Compared to the other royal families in Europe the Hohenzollerns are old-timers, so it is easy to see what noble blood surges in the Hapsburg veins.

THE Hapsburgs are the descendants of the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire. Their double-headed eagle indicates that they once ruled both in Constantinople and Rome, the east and the west, at the same time. The fact that they are decidedly unpopular in both places to-day is one of the least of the troubles of the Hapsburgs. They have an ancestor, Red-bearded Frederick, who is supposed to be asleep somewhere near Salzburg in an underground dungeon, who is expected to come to life again when he is needed. He is still fast asleep, says the legend, with his red beard growing all around the table, but he has been needed often by the Hapsburgs, who are a most unfortunate as well as blue-blooded race. The present head of the house, the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austro-Hungary, is now, at the very end of his life, looking about him on an empire which it has been his life work to hold together, which seems to be on the verge of going to pieces, besieged by enemies from without and torn by dissensions within. His public career has been a constant and fruitless effort against adverse fortune and the irresistible tide of human progress, but his private life has been even more terrible. One long history of assassination and strange misfortune has been the history of the Hapsburgs, and the crowning misfortune, the killing of the aged emperor's nephew and his wife, was the spark of fire that started the present war in Europe. Perhaps the most harrowing experience of the emperor's life, however, was the mysterious death of his son, and the still more mysterious disappearance of his favorite nephew a good many years ago. This mystery has been a puzzle for years. It is solved in the novel which opens the next issue of THE POPULAR, out on the news stands two weeks from to-day.

THE novel is entitled "The Emperor's Emerald." It is full book length, it appears complete in one issue of the magazine, and is written by J. K. Egerton. It opens in a particularly sleepy corner of old Greenwich Village, in New York. It would be hard to imagine a place or environment farther from the mysterious Hungarian kingdom, but the end of the thread of romance that leads Tommy Williams and his friend eastward to adventure is there, and the tale moves rapidly. First to Germany, and then through a strangely enforced railroad journey to a Hungarian castle the Americans travel. "The Emperor's Emerald" is a story of action and rapid-fire incident. It is a good mystery story, and although it is in no sense a story of the present war, it is a story of almost to-day. You are sure to like it.

A GOOD novel may be worth more than the price of a copy of THE POPULAR, and generally is, but it isn't enough to make any number of the magazine all by itself. In the next issue of the magazine there are a lot of short stories, each worth a talk in itself, each worthy of special mention, and each worth buying a magazine for. Furthermore, there is plenty of variety. If you are in the notion of a trip to the Northwest, if you care at all for the crunch of snowshoes, and the low sweep of snow-laden pine boughs, if you like a strong, grim, compelling narrative which has in it a little more than just plain interest, read "Panic," a great story of the Hudson Bay Company, by Bertrand W. Sinclair. You know Sinclair's name, you know what he has done in the past. This is one of his best. If you want to see the Northwest in another guise, not the forests, but the plains; not the grimness and solitude, but the rough companionship and rough humor, read A. M. Chisholm's story, "The Gentle Jests of Fantail," in the same number of the magazine. Read of the fate that overtook the practical joker, and that last grand elaborate joke that he perpetrated. Chisholm's men are by no means carpet knights, or drawing-room exquisites. They are rough men, but they are, above all things, most vitally alive and human. Their talk is always arresting in its quality, pungent, vigorous, and characterized by a truly remarkable incisiveness of repartee. First you will chuckle at "Fantail," and then you will laugh aloud—and that is the final proof that a funny story is really funny.

THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS will take you farther east in Canada in his story "On Guard," which tells of the new recruit who goes from Canada to defend the empire. L. J. Beeston, in his story, "In Old Stamboul," will whisk you off the Continent entirely to Constantinople, in which an Englishman boxes with a Turkish pasha for his life in a Turkish harem. Edwin Balmer will take you back to an Eastern university with his great football story, "The Class Kid," and Robert V. Carr will take you out West again to associate with the cattlemen in "Virtue Is Its Own Reward." Then there is the last installment of "The Conflict," which is the best part of the story, and the first half of a great two-part mystery story by W. B. M. Ferguson.

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# A Notice to the Public

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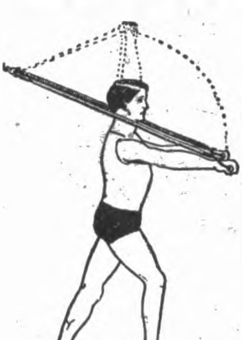

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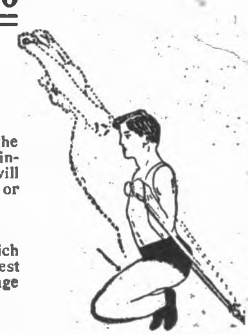

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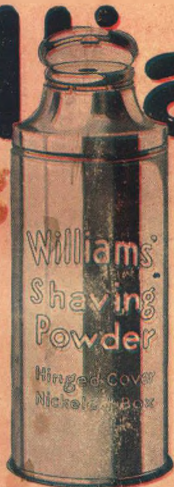


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