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The Popular Magazine

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APRIL 7 1922

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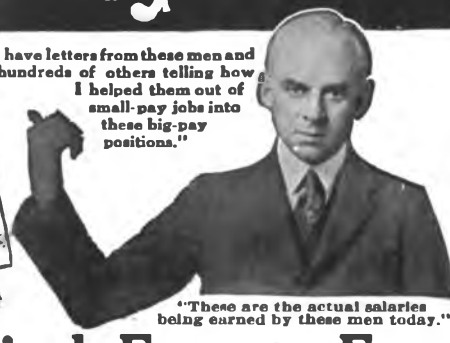

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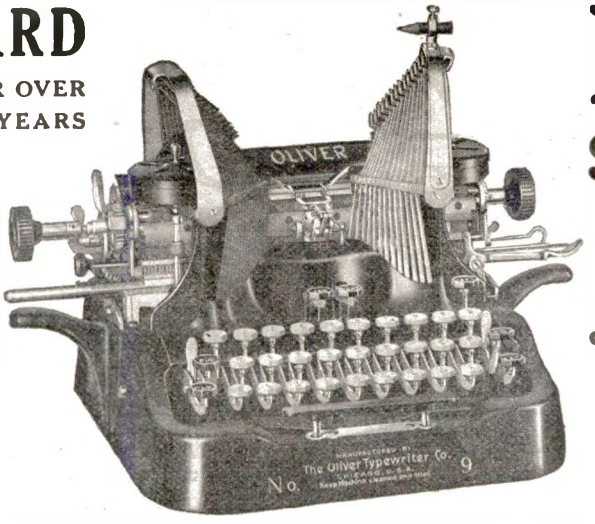

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$49.50 CASH

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City..... State.....

Occupation or Business.....

In the next issue—McMorrow, Lockhart, Stacpoole, Phillpotts, Niven, Paine and other good writers

Vol. LXIII. No. 6

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April 7, 1922

Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH, President; GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer; GEORGE C. SMITH, JR., Secretary. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 20, 1909, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $4.72. Foreign, $5.44.

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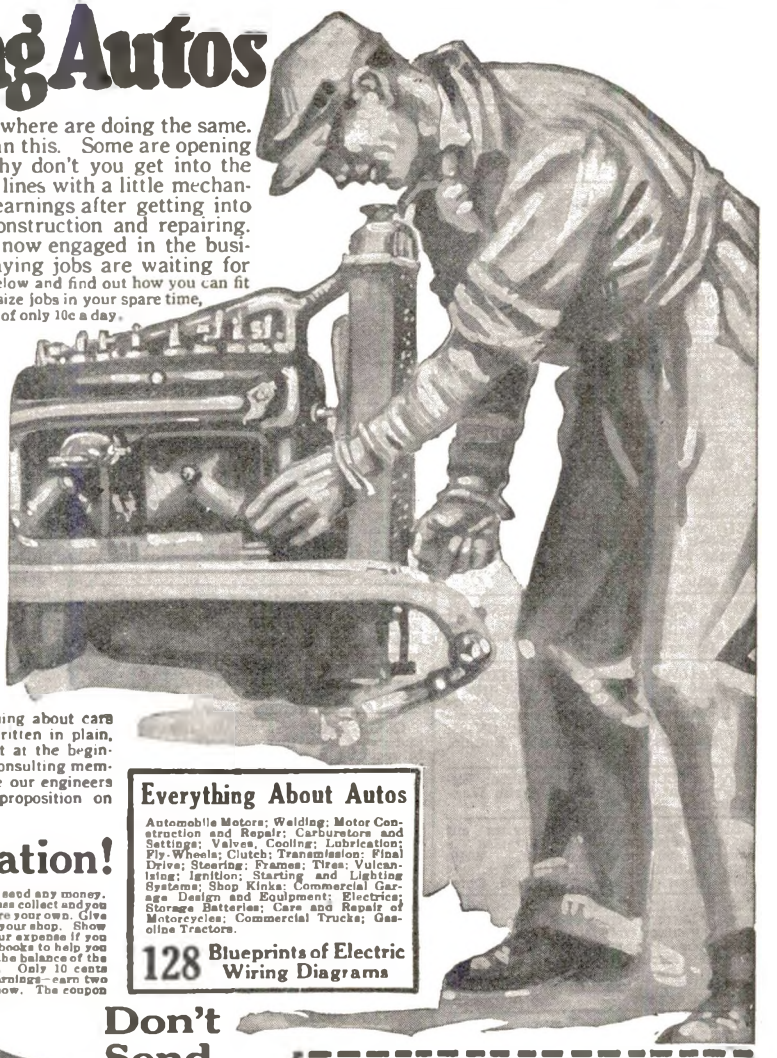

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THE TULLOSS SCHOOL, 457 College Hill, SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

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If Chad Illsley of New York, Brooklyn and elsewhere had had less youthful pride he would have had less trouble—but then we would not have had this story. And besides a good story Mr. Hoefer gives us a look-in on a field of metropolitan activity never before depicted in fiction.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

CHINO COPPER down to nineteen! The ticker tape that announced the sodden news slipped from his lifeless fingers and Chadwick Illsley turned slowly from the clicking instrument in the Broad Street brokers' office and gazed dully out of the window down upon the noisy, milling "Curb."

Chino down to nineteen! Wiped out! The last of his modest capital of five thousand dollars that his Aunt Eleanor had secretly given him when he quarreled with his father and left his home in Boston three years before was gone—tossed off in this final attempt to recoup former losses and to run the proverbial financial shoe string into a sum of money worth while.

Young Illsley removed his hat and mopped his perspiring face. Curiously, no feeling of remorse or of anger came over him at the moment. Instead a rather tired, dead sort of feeling crept upon his senses. It was as though all the verve and enthusiasm in him had slowly drained from his being, leaving him without sensation or positive emotion of any kind.

It wasn't the loss of the money in itself that mattered. He was far too careless in money matters ordinarily to greatly mind that. It was what the money might have meant—if he could have won his gambles and gotten enough. He vaguely realized that as he stared down upon the pulsating Curb. The five thousand would have been as nothing—for his intended scheme of things. He wouldn't be piker enough to ask Claudia Ramsay to marry him with only that and a little bank clerk's job back of him! He'd want to give her the things she was accustomed to; and she was accustomed to a lot, if she did live in a modest studio apartment in Stuyvesant Square like many another less fortunate artist. For her family in the South was wealthy. And he had hoped and even expected to be able to gather a sizable bank roll by playing the various "sure thing" market tips.

Of course he realized that she might not have accepted him anyway. The dreams he had had ever since the first day he saw her, when he came to live in the same house two years before, might never have come true. But there had been always the hope—until now. Now she would never even know that he had cared for her like that!

A passing acquaintance slapped Illsley jovially on the back and this brought him out of his mood of introspection back to the hustle of the brokers' office. He glanced at his watch and noted that it was nearly one o'clock. He would have to be back at the bank shortly. He smiled dourly at the thought. He still had a job, anyway.

Leaving the brokers' office he walked slowly up Broad Street It was mid-April with the warm breath of spring in the air and the alluring signs of spring all about. An old woman selling flowers at the corner of Broad and Wall Streets beamed up at him as he passed. A young girl, stopping to buy a tiny bunch of hothouse violets smiled at him in sheer joyousness of the season. A flock of sparrows on a doorway ledge chattered and chirped excitedly in their ecstasy. But young Illsley, unseeing, unheeding, walked dazedly on. Two blocks farther up he stopped at the bank where he was employed and listlessly entered.

"Mr. Welling wants to see you," some one informed him. He turned and entered the office of the bank official. He knew that Welling liked him and had been noticing him for some time and Illsley vaguely speculated upon the reason for his being wanted. A raise, perhaps, or maybe a bit better position, was his thought but it raised no feeling of satisfaction within him.

"Sit down, please," ordered Mr. Welling, his rather distinguished young-old face inscrutable. Illsley sank into a chair.

"I'll be as brief as possible, Illsley," announced the grave-faced bank official. "What I have to say is this: I've had my eye on you for some time. At first, because of your enthusiasm, your intelligence and ability I thought you were the type of young man we're always looking for here. I've had it in mind to bring you along gradually with us. You indicated great promise in spite of your impetuousness and —er—rather uncertain—ah—at times—temper. But in watching you we've learned one thing we didn't expect. A thing we can't tolerate in our employees at all. You've been gambling." He glanced keenly at the young man, a look of annoyance in his face, perhaps at the necessity for this interview with so altogether a charming and likable youth. "And so," announced the bank official slowly, "I'm obliged to tell you—you're discharged."

Illsley stared at the other stupidly, not really comprehending for the instant.

"You mean I'm—fired?"

"That's it," was the dry response.

Welling waited for the usual outburst in such cases, the excuses, the denials, the entreaties, perhaps, for another chance as he keenly eyed the young man. But they never came. Instead Illsley continued to stare dully before him until the thing of a sudden surged in upon his brain and awoke some of the dormant feeling within him. Then he rose stiffly and reached for his hat.

"I'm sorry," repeated the older man, kindly. Young Illsley laughed a short, bitter, mirthless laugh.

"Oh, hell!" said he with a savage outthrust of his long, stubborn chin and left the office without another word.

Out in the street again he stopped and attempted to think clearly but without immediate success.

"Spring—and youth—and a girl—and love." The thoughts and words came to his mind in a crazy jumble. And here he was, the next thing to being broke, without a job now; at outs with his family—and the world gone flat and tasteless. Well, they always did hit a fellow harder when he was already down, thought he, a snarl upon his usually pleasant mouth. He tossed his cigarette end into the street with a vicious flip as his mood turned to one of sudden anger.

With swift resolution he entered the subway, his mind made up. He'd leave his present living quarters, with their two years' pleasant memories and associations, at once. He'd have to soon, anyway, in his financial state. And he might as well settle it at once. What did it matter now, anyway? What did anything matter?

He alighted from the train at Fourteenth Street, walked to Stuyvesant Square and entered a house that overlooked the park. It was an old-fashioned, three-story, brownstone house, with tall windows and lofty ceilings and set farther back from the sidewalk than its more modern neighbors. There was an aged but well-kept look about it that gave it an air of quiet distinction and staid respectability.

The first floor was occupied by a young doctor, McLeod, whose card was displayed for passers-by in one of the front windows. It was in a room of this apartment—the big rear one that overlooked the pleasant back yard with the old-fashioned garden—that Illsley had lived since coming to New York. The second floor was the studio apartment, occupied by two girls, Claudia Ramsay, painter, and Helen Brokaw, singer, while the top apartment was used by the owner's family.

Illsley strode moodily down the hall to his room in the rear, closed his door and immediately set to work getting his belong-

ings together. He started in energetically but when he came to taking the pictures from the walls he found himself delaying the process and dawdling over the task in a mood of reflection that was bittersweet.

There was the framed photograph of Claudia Ramsay gazing out at him with sweet seriousness; there was the little landscape, a fall scene, done out in Westchester, that she had given him his first Christmas there and the group picture, of McLeod, the two girls and himself, taken the summer before, which he had had enlarged.

As he handled these a flood of memory swept over him. The four had been very good friends during his two years there. They had had parties and picnics and jaunts together in the near-by country and he hadn't realized until now just how very happy he had been in this place. He abruptly put these reveries from him and continued his packing with savage energy. After two hours' work the job was completed and his trunk and two suit cases ready to send off.

With this done he sat down, lit a cigarette and tried to think connectedly. There was a knock on the door and then the doctor entered.

"Hello," said McLeod in surprise at the looks of the room. "What's the idea? Going for a vacation?"

"Going for good," was the short answer. The other gaped in surprise.

"Where to? What's the big idea, anyway, Illy?" he demanded.

"Why, I'm just moving," stated Illsley lamely. "To another part of town until I can get my bearings. I can't stay on here."

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing I can't afford the room any more," was the short reply. The doctor carefully studied the other. McLeod was several years older than Illsley and felt toward him a good deal as he would have toward a younger brother.

"Now look here, Chad, something's wrong. Out with it. Don't get into one of your pig-headed, hot-tempered moods. What's the matter? Let's have it." Illsley refused to tell him for some time but repeated urgings finally brought the information.

"I'm about broke. I dropped the last of my money down in Broad Street this morning," he stated without emotion. "Also I'm fired. And before I'm absolutely broke I'm going to get into cheaper quarters first and then try to rustle up a job. That's all."

McLeod grinned. "Come on, snap out of it," he said jovially. "If you want some money I'll let you have it. And you can forget about the room until you get in financial shape again. Get those things unpacked and come to your senses. We aren't going to let you go off like this, you know."

Illsley stubbornly shook his head. McLeod argued and tried to explain things and tried to reassure the other and bring him out of his determined mood; but it was no use. Young Illsley stood pat on his decision. Finally the doctor, who knew from past experience that further argument would be useless, lost his temper and strode over beside the younger man.

"Chad," said he sternly, "you're a plain damn fool, a stubborn, pig-headed young ass, and it's going to get you into real trouble before you're much older. You have friends, lots of them—you make 'em easier than any one I know—and yet you refuse to let any of them help you. You're afflicted with a severe case of galloping pride, not the real thing but the bunk article, and you give me a damn big pain. I don't suppose it'll do you any good to know this, but that's my diagnosis of you and it's correct."

"All right—all right—have it your way," replied Illsley testily. "But it isn't only a matter of paying for the room here. It's something else, too," and he thought of Claudia Ramsay.

"What is it?" demanded the other.

"I can't tell you," was the answer.

Illsley left the house that evening, with one suit case, and told the M. D. that he would send for his other luggage later. He failed to see either of the girls, as they were away on Long Island visiting.

"Where's Chad?" asked Miss Ramsay, when she and Miss Brokaw returned the evening after Illsley's departure. She was the smaller of the two, petite, dark-eyed, with a sweet, sympathetic face, a trim, graceful little figure and a mass of chestnut hair that was simply arranged and twisted into two large, shining coils at her neck. The other girl, tall and blond, of the statuesque type, laughed.

"Yes, where's Chad?" she asked. "We're going to make a rarebit upstairs."

"He's gone," stated McLeod with a frown.

"Gone!" echoed both girls.

"For a visit?" asked Helen Brokaw, casually removing her hat as the doctor stepped into the hall from his office.

"No. Gone for good—or bad," was the short reply. "The crazy young idiot has beat it."

"Why—what's the matter?" asked Miss Ramsay.

"Well, for one thing he's dropped five thousand dollars—all he had—in various amounts in stocks. And then he got fired from his job. So he decided to dig up a cheap room somewhere until he can get a job. But *we* may never see him again if he does get a job. He's in the dumps and in one of his fool tempers."

"But we could have helped him out."

"No, we couldn't," snorted McLeod. "I tried to, but he's so stubborn you can't do a thing with him. He won't let his friends help him; that's why I don't think we'll see him again."

"Chad—gone!" said Claudia Ramsay wistfully. "And he didn't even leave a good-by." The bright animation faded from her face as she thought of the impetuous Chad, pictured his clean-limbed, athletic figure and his likable, mobile face with the gray, usually smiling eyes, the self-indulgent, full-lipped but pleasant mouth above the long, stubborn chin, and the thick shock of black hair that was so often tumbled about. "Why," she stammered. "It won't be the same without him."

"He was here two years," said Helen Brokaw thoughtfully as she nervously tucked in a stray strand of blond hair. "I hope we hear from him soon."

"We won't," stated McLeod with dry emphasis. "I know that cub! When he's mad or in trouble you never hear from him."

But they did. Three weeks later a letter arrived from the missing Illsley that brought a grin to the doctor's face as he read it; it was so like the writer. McLeod went upstairs and displayed the epistle.

"News from the front," he announced. "The prodigal has retreated."

"From Chad!" exclaimed Claudia Ramsay, her eyes brightening. "Where has he retreated to?"

"Brooklyn," was the reply and McLeod read the letter:

"DEAR DOC: Will you please ship my luggage to address below—and jazz is up a little—there's some clothes in the trunk I won't need that will hock.

"Yes, I've got a job, a good job, too. It's with a burglar-alarm company over here in Brooklyn. I'm a 'Sleeper'—no kidding, that's the company's official title for it—and I get paid for it, at that, not very much but as much as I can reasonably expect for 'sleeping.' Report at six p. m. and stick around playing pinochle, unless we have a 'run' or two, until late. Then back in the dormitory to earn my salary 'sleeping' on the premises in case some one is needed on a night run when the night runner is already out on a job. Salary is five bucks a week and living quarters here. You're supposed to have a regular job daytimes but by visiting an uncle in Myrtle Avenue—my only unforgiving relative—I can soak enough stuff to make out until I get a regular job to go with this one.

"Very best regards to the girls and yourself and if you should see Eddie Diggs, by any chance, grab him and turn him upside down to see if you can get a ten-case note out of his clothes. He owes me that amount.

"P. S.—Don't worry about my prospects, either, you old sawbones. I've got 'prospects' here. We protect jewelry stores and banks and pawnshops and everything. And if I ever see a good chance to play burglar and get clean away with it I'll take it. *This is no joke.* You see worse things pulled every day by 'respectable' business men than a good, honest safecracker ever thought of. C."

The postscript of the letter was taken by all three readers as a playful little joke of Illsley's—at the time.

But not some three months later.

CHAPTER II.

The Electric Burglar Alarm Company's Brooklyn office was the watchdog of ninety-seven business houses in the City of Churches. It was an impartial watchdog, its subscribers varying in business caste from Herschberg's, the gloomy-looking pawnshop, to the Union Trust Company, the great banking institution, and ranging in distance from the dim region of Sands Street near the navy yard and the murky reaches about the entrance to Brooklyn Bridge to the smug prosperity of the financial district and the glitter of the smart shopping section in Flatbush Avenue.

It was an uncommonly efficent watchdog, too, this office, with its modern, scientific system of electric protection. Attempted "breaks" by the burglariously inclined gentry were almost unknown there, which was more a tribute to the known efficacy of the system than to the safety of the city in which it was located.

This system, indeed, was a marvel of scientific ingenuity. Its delicate senses were

responsive to the slightest disturbance of its organism and its warning bark was immediate and insistent. Each of the ninety-seven business houses was connected by a direct wire with the office. Each had its warning outcry in its individual galvanometer on the big "galvo" board in the office. And after a business place was finally closed for the night the slightest opening of any wired door, window, skylight or other means of ingress and exit was instantly signaled to the waiting office.

At the first sign of a night opening on a subscriber's premises a numbered disk on the galvo board dropped, indicating the subscriber, an electric buzzer hissed a warning to the night manager and the sensitized little needle on the galvanometer showed by its action what was happening on the distant premises. If the action showed a forced opening two men were immediately dispatched from the office to the danger point.

It had been a dull night in the office this night some three months after McLeod received Illsley's letter. It usually was dull and uneventful on the night shift after the business places had signaled in their closings —except in damp weather. Wet nights might mean wire trouble and runs on repair work. But on this dry, sweltering August Saturday night not the semblance of wire trouble was indicated in the tilt or action of any of the electric needles on the ninety-seven galvos ranged row on row on the big board near the front wall of the spacious office. And there had been no late openings by subscribers.

The last closing signal, sent in from Herschberg's pawnshop in Sands Street, had been received a few minutes before midnight and since then nothing had occurred to be transcribed on the night manager's report.

The place presented a peaceful scene. Pomeroy, the night manager sat tilted back in the swivel chair at his desk reading an evening paper. Across the desk from him, Berndt, the night runner, big, meaty and middle-aged, whose fat face with its heavy features and German mustache always seemed rather pathetically comical, overflowed an armchair and was heroically managing to keep from dozing off. A dozen feet away, idly seated before the galvo board was Haydock, the night inspector, a testy, abrupt individual of thirty years or so, an expert electrician and acutely aware of the fact, whose dour, lantern-jawed face was a study in grim repose. And in the center of the room, seated about the flat-topped desk of Kelly, the absent day manager, were three of the four office sleepers. The fourth, young Illsley, was absent, it being his night off duty.

The sleepers were playing pinochle. They generally were playing pinochle after nine o'clock when most of the subscribers had closed. For they had more leisure time on their hands than the other three men, being merely reserve runners, used only when Berndt and Haydock were out on runs. They slept, of course, on the premises in the small dormitory back of the office and adjoining stock room, to be handy in case of emergency.

At one o'clock the card game, which had been getting duller with each passing minute, petered out for lack of interest. Severance, one of the sleepers, tossed the cards upon the desk, leaned back in his chair and yawned widely.

"Guess I'll turn in," said he sleepily. "Gee, what a quiet night."

"I'll say quiet," replied Burns, another sleeper, rising languidly. "I wish we'd get a real big 'break' over here just for excitement."

Haydock roused himself at the remark and snorted.

"A big break over here in Brooklyn," he jeered in his rasping voice. "You might as well expect a carnival in a cemetery. Even the New York crooks come over the bridge here just to sleep."

"You said it," agreed Burns, halting on his way to the dormitory. "When I first came over here on this job I got all steamed up about it—thought I was going to run right into Bill Sikes and Jesse James the next night. And all the excitement I ever get is toting a gun I never use and a lantern on a night run and melding a round trip in pinochle. No action 'round here at all," he mourned.

The night manager glanced up from his paper at that.

"Action," he repeated dryly. "Why you kick like the devil every time we get you a little action around here. The last time we got you out of bed was over a week ago when eighteen had a swinging break. And Berndt tells me he nearly had to use dynamite to get you to move."

"You don't want action, Mike," offered Severance. "You got a job right now where

they pay you to sleep—they even give you an official title of sleeper. And still you kick. You oughta try for a night watchman's job at the morgue."

"Even then he'd kick," rasped the sardonic Haydock. "He'd be afraid some of the stiffs'd walk in their sleep. But I might get you some action yet, before you go off in the morning. If that trouble in thirty-five shows up I'll yank you out of your downy couch at about three o'clock and you can get swell action beating it down to Tetley's factory near the bridge to stand guard till I get along to open up and fix it."

"Attaboy," grinned Cowler, rising and making for the dormitory in the rear. "Get these action bimbos like Mike up first. Me, I'm willing to accept my sleep and leave the crooks get in theirs, too, believe me."

"Sure," agreed Severance, also starting for bed. "Me too. Don't call me early, Pom. I don't wanna be Queen of the May. Good night, you guys; I'll have breakfast in bed," and the three sleepers retired to live up to their company titles.

It was two-thirty o'clock before the fourth sleeper, young Illsley, returned. He looked tired and a bit haggard as he passed through the office with a brief "Hello" to Pomeroy and the nearly dozing Berndt and accorded Haydock a curt nod on his way to the dormitory.

There was some ill feeling between the night inspector and Illsley. The latter refused to submit to Haydock's overbearing ways with the sleepers; he disliked the inspector's surly manner and resented his caustic, personal remarks. And in his turn the saturnine Haydock openly disliked Illsley. The latter was so very evidently a young man of superior education and former advantages that the inspector seemed to resent it. There had been several verbal clashes between the pair in the comparatively short time Illsley had been with the company and a physical mix-up had been averted only by the timely intervention of the other men.

With the retirement of the sleepers the office sank into even further drowsy, waiting lethargy. The minutes trooped slowly, draggingly by. The clock in the Greek church tower two blocks away in Duffield Street tolled the hour of three, the sound floating into the office clear and sharp on the still, night air.

At the sound Pomeroy rose from his desk, stretched himself energetically and stepped to the window. He was an alert, energetic man of forty, lithe of build, medium height, with strong features, a short black mustache above a determined but pleasant mouth and a capable look on his keen, intelligent face. The other men liked Pomeroy. He was crisp and incisive with his orders and insisted on rigid obedience but he was genuinely considerate of those under him and always agreeable.

The dull hours were always irksome to the alert night manager and on this night especially he seemed to mind the quiet, inactive waiting until four o'clock, when he would go off duty.

He leaned out of the window and gazed down into Willoughby Street nine flights below. Mingled street noises—the occasional sound of a passing auto, the thin shrieking of a flat-wheeled owl car in the distance, the deep rumble of a passing elevated train in Myrtle Avenue—the sounds sifted up to him at even this hour. He returned to his chair, lit his pipe and again settled down to wait.

The hour passed with only an occasional remark among the three office occupants and when the clock outside tolled four Pomeroy rose with a sigh of relief, reached for his hat and turned to leave.

"Dull night," said he as he opened the door.

"Dull night," agreed the burly Berndt drowsily in his heavily accented speech.

The ensuing hours until the remaining two men left passed with nothing to break their monotony except the opening signal from Pelham's jewelry store in Flatbush Avenue at seven-thirty. Berndt went there to get the signature of the colored porter who had opened the store and then returned to the office. At eight o'clock Johnson, the day inspector, and Cramer, the clerk, arrived. With their coming Berndt rose to leave. Haydock remained to hand the night report to the day manager who was due at eight but was a bit late this morning. Kelly, the day manager, big and husky, bustled into the office at a quarter past eight to begin the day's work and to relieve Haydock.

"Anything doing?" he asked briskly as he seated himself at his desk.

Haydock handed him the night report. "Not a thing," he replied in his raspy voice as he put on his hat. "Everything closed at twelve—Herschberg's was the last. No late

openings. Not a sign of wire trouble and that bad place in thirty-five didn't show up."

"I'll send Johnson over to look it over anyway," said Kelly, taking the report. "There's corrosion there somewhere. Makes a swinging break. We'll have to locate it now or there'll be trouble when it rains. Those old factories down near the bridge are all damp anyway. Hard to keep the wiring in shape."

"Yes. But if we always had dry weather and no wire trouble we'd never get a run all night outside of having to get the signature of some subscriber reopening late. As for crooks—and a real break—say, if we got a real big break in this joint we'd all drop dead."

The big manager grinned.

"Can't ever tell," said he, after exuding a smoke cloud from his newly lit cigar. "We might get one over here these times. Crooks're active in New York. Another safe cracked in Maiden Lane two nights ago. But of course they didn't have our protection. They steer clear of a job when they see our sign on a place."

"Sure," replied Haydock, in the doorway. "And especially over here they wouldn't take a chance. But last night was the quietest I ever saw for a Saturday. Nothing doing after ten at all. Not a dog-gone thing," and he left.

It *had* been a quiet and dull night up in the office of the Electric Burglar Alarm Company. But it hadn't been quite so quiet and certainly not so dull in a certain place not far away. And it wasn't going to be a quiet day, as the big day manager was soon to learn.

For just as the office door closed upon the night inspector the telephone bell rang with a shrill, insistent ring, to emit its message of ill omen.

Kelly leisurely took the receiver from the hook and called a genial "hello" into the phone. But the good-natured smile faded from his face at what he heard, his lax body stiffened to a position of alertness and a note of dismay crept into his deep voice:

"What's that?" he gasped into the phone. "What—Pelham's Jewelry Store? Yes, yes—that's Galvo 49—what? Yes—yes! Be right over," and he sprang up and grabbed his hat.

"What's eating 49?" asked Cramer, the clerk, casually glancing up from his work. "Pelham's beefing about something again?"

"Yes," snapped Kelly on his way to the door. "And they've got something to beef about this time, believe me!" The look on his face startled the clerk.

"Anything wrong?" he asked in concern.

"Everything's wrong," snarled big Kelly. "A quiet night last night, huh?" he threw out with sarcasm, stopping at the door. "A quiet night, hell! That was Seamon, from Pelham's. The colored porter phoned him from the store and he's down there now. There was a break there last night."

"A break," echoed the clerk in astonishment.

"Yes—a break," boomed Kelly. "A regular one, too. Pelham's was nicked for a bunch of stuff in the safe!"

"How much?" asked the excited Cramer.

Kelly flung the door open viciously and threw his reply over his burly shoulder. "A hundred and fifty thousand dollars," he snarled.

His thoughts were a mingled maze of dismay and astonishment as his big, athletic frame swung into Duffield Street from Willoughby, then into Fulton and along Fulton into Flatbush Avenue.

A break at Pelham's! A hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar haul—a clean get-away for the thieves—and not the sign of a signal given! Not even a hiss of the electric buzzer. It seemed incredible. The alarm system was so perfect, so accident proof that the thing apparently couldn't happen. Yet it had happened and he soon learned how.

Pettus, the colored porter, rolled his eyes dramatically at Kelly by way of greeting.

"Dey done made a powahful clean-up, Mistah Kelly," he announced. "Yes, *suh*. A mos' powahful one, dem crooks!"

Kelly brushed by him brusquely and walked through the luxuriously appointed shop with its rich carpeting, its glittering show cases and general air of quiet elegance. At the stairway to the basement in the rear of the store he was met by Seamon, the manager of the establishment, a slim, usually dignified man of polished manner, but with agitation in his face now and his graying hair and his correct clothing littered with white dust. Seamon greeted the alarm company manager with the curtest of nods and an icy glance.

"My God!" he exclaimed, accusation in

his tone. "They got into the safe without disturbing the system in the slightest."

"I'd like to know how," bristled the other.

"You shall," was the terse reply and Seamon led the way down the steps to the rear of the basement where a space was partitioned off away from the coal bins and the heating plant. The safe, a solid affair, eight feet high and about five feet square, was built near the left wall and about twenty feet away from the rear wall of the basement.

"Nothing disturbed here," said Kelly, puzzled, after a quick glance about. "They didn't blow the safe. We'd have known it if they had, of course. Where's the break?"

"Underneath," replied Seamon. "They dug through the concrete floor of the safe from below."

"From the subcellar?"

"Yes. Dug through the ceiling of the subcellar and then through the safe base. It's the only part of the safe we didn't have you wire. Who'd ever suspect *that* needed protection?"

Kelly walked past some big packing cases near the wall, inspected the walls, then lifted a small trapdoor that led to the subcellar which was used for storage. He descended the narrow steps leading below, turned on the lights and glanced about. At a spot directly under the safe location the floor was littered with débris—bits of wood, sawdust and crumbles and large broken pieces of concrete. He glanced up to gaze into the jagged opening, large enough to admit a man's body, that had been dug out of the subcellar ceiling, through the beams and then through the concrete floor of the safe.

"Well, I'll be damned!" said he aloud. "That's a new one." He went back to the basement.

"But how'd they get into the building at all?" he demanded. "Even the walls are protected."

"Yes, from the ground level up, but not below the ground," replied the other. He pushed one of the large packing cases away from the wall. "Look," said he, "that's how," and he pointed to another hole in the side of the wall, just above the basement floor, that had been covered by the packing case.

"Been through here?" asked Kelly.

"No," replied Seamon. "I suppose it merely leads up to the ground."

Kelly peered into the opening, then removed his hat and coat and crawled through. He emerged some minutes later, covered with dirt, with an amazed look upon his face.

"Why," said he, "that hole leads right into the basement of Denry's, the sporting-goods store next door. The crooks weren't taking any chances of being seen outside at all. They must have broken into Denry's—they haven't any electric protection, you know—got down into the cellar and then dug through into here. But where was Denry's watchman?"

"They haven't one. They use this Merchant Police system—with a man on patrol outside. That's how they could break in from the rear and get away with it," replied Seamon.

"Well," stated Kelly with finality as he prepared to leave, "there's one thing sure: whoever made that break knew all about the premises. That's the only way they could possibly pull it off." He stared hard at Seamon, a meaning look in his eyes. And Seamon stared back just as hard at him. Seamon had some employee of the alarm company in mind as an accomplice. But Kelly wasn't above suspecting an "inside" job.

"Anyway, we'll see when the detective gets here," said Seamon, as though he had been reading the other's thoughts. Kelly shrugged his big shoulders.

"We will," said he.

CHAPTER III.

Corrigan, the detective, arrived on the scene of the robbery early Monday morning from the office of a private agency in New York. He had been hired by Pelham, the wealthy jeweler, upon his arrival from out of town and after a conference with Jaynes, the president of the alarm company.

He was a pugnacious individual, this detective, quite true to the type, impatient of interference and with a brusque, not too considerate way about him. He immediately went over the store premises with Pelham and Kelly but was no more successful than the latter in discovering anything in the way of a clew to the thieves. On descending into the subcellar and inspecting the hole cut through the ceiling and the safe bottom, however, his hard eyes gleamed with a knowing look.

"Just what I thought," he said, examin-

ing the opening. "No amateur's work. A safe mob cracked this."

"But they must have had an amateur with 'em to show 'em the way to dig in and where to get at the safe to avoid an alarm," said Kelly, still clinging to his theory of either an inside job or at least one in which expert information as to the premises and alarm system must have been given the burglars.

"Not necessarily," barked Corrigan disagreeably. "An inside guy had to give 'em the lay of the place all right but he wouldn't have to be with 'em on the job. They started this safe with a drill," he explained, examining the débris on the floor; "then they chiseled the rest of the concrete away."

Next he got each employee of the store alone for a grilling and after that he went to the burglar-alarm company, questioned Cramer and Johnson, waited while the night manager, inspector and runner were sent for from their homes and examined them. And that evening, when the four sleepers arrived on duty they were taken singly into the stock room and subjected to the same severe questioning.

Young Illsley was put through the most severe cross-questioning of all. The detective wasn't quite satisfied with this sleeper's answers as to how he had spent Saturday evening and part of Sunday morning. Illsley's story that he had been to a picture show in Park Row didn't exactly account for his arrival back in the office as late as two-thirty in the morning, for one thing; and, for another, the young man was so clearly not the type of person usually found employed in a position of the sort that Corrigan made a mental note to learn more of young Mr. Illsley, his past history, his antecedents and present reason for working at a part-time job for five dollars a week and sleeping quarters when he was so clearly in need of money and so obviously fitted to earn more.

Then, the following morning, the detective, not satisfied with his first search of the store premises returned there for a further examination and on a sudden hunch he requestioned Pettus, the colored porter.

On Tuesday afternoon Corrigan got Jaynes, the alarm company president and Kelly to his office for a short conference.

"Well," he said with a wide grin of satisfaction, "I got your bird; the guy who tipped the layout of the place and the wiring to that safe mob."

"Who is it?" asked Kelly with keen interest, expecting the name of some one in the jewelry concern.

"This young Illsley," stated the other emphatically.

"No, I don't think so," said Kelly with energy. "Not him." He liked Illsley and believed him incapable of an act of the sort.

"You don't, hey?" snapped Corrigan, his pugnacious jaw outthrust. "Well, I do. Just look at the dope on him." He bit the end from a cigar, lit it and leaned back comfortably in his chair. "This kid was broke and he was desperate; I spotted that right away when I got after him. He acted pretty cocky and I couldn't bluff him much, but he couldn't fool me. And he wasn't used to being broke, believe me—not that guy. Do you know who he is? He's the son of Judge Illsley of Boston, no other. He had a row with his father about three years ago, left home and came on to New York. He got with a bank downtown. Had a good record with 'em, too, I'll admit. But he started in gambling and they let him out. You got his good record part when he gave you references but you didn't get that part about his gambling, I guess."

"Well, there's nothing crooked in that, necessarily," interposed Kelly, determined in all fairness to give Illsley every chance.

"No, not yet," grudgingly agreed Corrigan. "But look at the reason he had for being crooked. This guy's in love with a girl here in New York right in the house where he used to live——"

"Nothing criminal in being in love, either," interrupted Kelly.

"Nope, not so far," conceded Corrigan, annoyance in his pugnacious face. "But he started gambling on account of the girl. He wanted to marry her. But he wanted to do it right. She's a dame from a wealthy family. And this guy's no piker, take it from me. The girl's an artist—lives in a studio apartment with another girl, a singer. Illsley took what coin he had, a few thousand and shot it at the market on a wild chance of getting some real money together so as to be able to marry—but he missed and went broke. Then he got canned from his job." The detective grinned in great satisfaction.

"And here's the layout," he continued. "He still wants to marry that dame. But

in his mind he's got as much chance right now as a Hebrew at a wake. He's dead broke and sore and he's damn desperate. The only chance he's got now to gather some real coin is to steal it. And he happens to be right in a job where he spots his chance. He might even have got this job with that idea in mind. He's a smart young guy—I'll hand it to him. So what does he do? Why, he dopes out this whole job at Pelham's, gets some professional safe blowers in on it to put it through and plans to cache his share of the dough until the thing blows over, when he'll quit his job, nice and casual-like, and that's the last you'd ever see of young Mr. Illsley."

"Too vague," said the loyal Kelly. "You haven't any real evidence."

Corrigan grinned and reached into his vest pocket. "How's this for evidence?" he asked, producing a fountain pen with the cap broken and the end of the pocket clip snapped off. Kelly and Jaynes stared at it.

"His?" asked the alarm-company manager.

"His," replied Corrigan, a grin of triumph on his face. "And it proves that he not only gave out the layout of the place but was fool enough to be actually in on the job himself. That's why I called this little meeting. After I got this dope on his past record I had a hunch and went to Pelham's again and questioned Pettus, the colored porter. And he told me he found this pen in the yard back of the store to-day. As it was two days after the robbery and other employees had been about there since then, he just naturally supposed one of them had dropped it so he put it into his pocket, intending to speak about it—and he forgot about it. Those crooks got away over the back fence. And this must have been dropped by Illsley and stepped on and the cap busted by one of them when they were making their get-away. When I talked to Haydock he told me the pen belonged to Illsley. He was sure of it because of this broken pocket clip that's snapped off. And on top of all this young Illsley wasn't on duty that night, you know. He told me he was at a movie across the bridge in Park Row but the movies don't stay open till near two-thirty in the morning. And he wouldn't tell me what he was doing in the meantime. He was just kinda vague about it."

"Sure it's Illsley's fountain pen?" asked Kelly. "There was a little bad blood between him and Haydock and Haydock might have been sore enough to——"

"It's Illsley's all right," barked the detective. "Because he told me so himself. I asked him. He happened to be in the office this noon went I went there. Of course he faked surprise and wanted to know where it came from but I just told him I'd let him know later. And I will, too, as soon as I can get over there. For I saw Mr. Pelham then and we've got a warrant for him and I got a cop outside to go over and make the pinch all nice and legal." He grinned in triumph at Kelly.

"And I guess," he continued, "that now, with this dope on him, even Kelly'll agree to having him nabbed." And the detective rose, put on his hat and a minute later he and Kelly and a policeman left the detective's office for Brooklyn.

The confident Corrigan was in for a surprise, however. For when the trio reached the alarm company's office in Brooklyn at six o'clock the desired young man was nowhere in sight. Nor had he appeared up to nine o'clock that night. And then it began to dawn upon the detective that perhaps he wasn't going to appear at all.

Corrigan swore volubly and expressively. "He's beat it," said he angrily. "I should have nabbed him at noon, legal or not. But I was sure he'd stick and plan to bluff it out and besides I wanted to see you two before I took him."

"Well," said Kelly regretfully, "if he's beat it I guess he's guilty after all."

"Guilty!" ejaculated Corrigan scornfully, "why he's guilty as hell. But I'll get him yet and pretty soon, at that—if he's tried to see that girl of his before he shook the town."

The disappointed detective left the office on the jump and hailed a taxi cab in Fulton Street.

"Over the bridge to Stuyvesant Square—and make it snappy," he ordered the driver, displaying a shield on his vest. The driver complied with the order and before ten o'clock the taxi stopped before the old-fashioned brownstone house facing on Stuyvesant Square.

Corrigan hastily climbed out, dismissed the cab and stood eying the house with a calculating look. The lower floor was in darkness but the second-floor apartment was lighted and from the open front windows of the

apartment the tinkle of a mandolin and feminine voices, with the occasional deep bass of a man, floated down to the waiting detective on the still, summer air.

He ascended the stoop and pressed the bell button and, after a short impatient wait, pressed it again and again vigorously and peremptorily. Soon he heard some one running down the stairs inside and then an aggressive-looking man of about thirty-five opened the door and peered into the entrance way.

"I'm Doctor McLeod; what's wanted?" he asked briskly, rather expecting a professional call for himself after the violent ringing.

"I want to see Miss Ramsay—Claudia Ramsay," stated the detective. But he didn't state his profession nor his errand —just then.

The brisk young medico grinned goodhumoredly. "Oh, certainly," he said. "Follow me right up. I'm calling there now, myself." Corrigan followed the doctor up one flight into the second-floor apartment, through a living room and into the front-room studio and stood facing the two girls who were seated near the front windows.

"Miss Ramsay," said Corrigan brusquely, glancing inquiringly from one girl to the other.

"I'm Miss Ramsay," said that young lady.

Corrigan gazed at her in open admiration.

"Some little queen," thought he as he grinned at her. "That guy Illsley can sure pick 'em; I'll say that for him." And then aloud, "I'm a friend of Illsley's," he said to Miss Ramsay.

At the name her eyes brightened in immediate interest.

"Oh—Chad," she exclaimed softly.

"Yes, Chad," replied the other, deciding to try a bluff. "I want to see him. It's very urgent. And I was told he's been here and you'd know where to locate him."

"Why no—there must be some mistake. I haven't seen him in months," she replied.

"Oh, come on," blurted Corrigan. "None of that. He's been here all right. Maybe he's here right now, too. Better come clean about Chad."

The others stared their surprise at the tone. The Ramsay girl's trim little figure stiffened.

"I don't understand you," she replied, an angry flash in her eyes. "I meant it when I said I haven't seen him. You've been misinformed."

"Well, you know him, don't you? You'll admit that much?" The tone was insolence itself.

"Why, of course. We all do," the surprised girl replied. "He lived in this house for over two years. We were all very friendly."

"You bet you were. And you, most of all," blared Corrigan in a bullying voice. "And what's more he came to see you today—to say good-by—for a darned long time, too, I guess. Now where is he? C'mon through, sister!" At this the other girl, tall, blond and majestic, more vivid of looks and action than her friend, rose and looked the detective over coolly.

"Exactly what affair is all this of yours anyway?" she demanded.

The aggressive M. D. also was staring at the detective in open hostility.

But from Miss Ramsay's eyes, at Corrigan's last statement, the anger had gone. In its place had come a look of concern.

"What do you mean by Chad's saying good-by—for a long time?" she faltered. "Why is he going away? He isn't in more trouble is he?" she asked, appeal in her voice and eyes.

"Trouble?" laughed Corrigan. "I'll say trouble, sister. He's up to his collar button in trouble. And don't try to let on you don't know it. Don't try to pull any of that innocent stuff——"

McLeod rose swiftly at this, cutting off further words.

"Say you!" he snapped incisively. "That'll be about all of this sort of thing. If you've no real business here get out!" He placed an athletic hand upon Corrigan's shoulder. "Get out," he repeated, "or I'll throw you out!"

Corrigan angrily shook himself free and glared about him. "Oh, no you won't!" he snarled, openly enraged at the doctor's words and action before the girls. "And if it's straight that you haven't heard from young Illsley or seen him to-day maybe you'd like to get the real dope on your crook friend."

"Chad's no crook," blazed the Ramsay girl, rising from her chair in indignation. Corrigan laughed brutally at that.

"Oh, don't pull any of that high-and-mighty stuff," he sneered. "The kid ain't worth it—from *you*. He's a crook all right

and you'll know it when you see his moniker in all the morning papers."

"A crook!" exclaimed McLeod.

"Yes, that's what I said. A crook," repeated the other. He displayed his shield. The others stared in surprise at the detective insignia.

"Oh yes, I'm a detective all right," was the brusque explanation. "And I'm after Illsley. So don't come any lofty stuff on me."

"Why, what's Chad done?" asked Helen Brokaw.

"Plenty," grinned Corrigan. "And he's wanted by the police—he's skipped out but we'll get him. He's wanted for—that hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar haul at Pelham's jewelry store."

Claudia Ramsay's face went white at the announcement. Her lips parted to a gasp. The postscript in Illsley's letter of three months before, in which he had intimated that he'd commit robbery if he had a good opportunity—intimated it jokingly as they had thought then—came to the minds of the three. Helen Brokaw and McLeod exchanged startled glances. But the little Ramsay girl was staring straight before her, pain in her soft eyes.

"Chad—wanted for *burglary!*" said she in a weak little whisper. "Oh-h-h!" And she sank limply into a chair.

CHAPTER IV.

With the detective's departure from the alarm company office early Tuesday afternoon Illsley went back into the dormitory to think things out. He knew that Corrigan suspected him of implication in the robbery. There was no mistaking that fact. And he knew, also, from the detective's attitude of triumph that the latter felt he had sufficient evidence for an arrest in the finding of the broken fountain pen on the jewelry-store property.

Arrest was only a matter of a short time if he remained. Should he face it and risk a grand jury investigation and perhaps a subsequent trial—or not?

Illsley sank upon his cot, his burning head between his hands, to collect his thoughts and think out his decision. There would be no witnesses, only circumstantial evidence against him. But many a man had been jailed on just that kind of evidence. And if convicted it meant the penitentiary—several years of it. Then there was Haydock who had first informed Corrigan of the pen's ownership. The night inspector would, he felt sure, be unfriendly in any testimony he might give.

With the thought his stubborn temper came to the fore and his gorge arose. Stay and let Haydock have the laugh on him when he was taken? Not much! He'd get out before they had a chance to get him.

His mind was made up. Anyway—the thought came to him sharply—he might as well be even a hunted suspect, roaming about at large under cover, as to be existing from hand to mouth as at present.

He sprang from his cot with sudden energy and took stock of his resources. He had four dollars in currency and some change on his person which wouldn't take him very far from New York. Perhaps he could still pawn something. He hurriedly went through his bureau drawers and over his now pitifully meager possessions but there was nothing, absolutely not a thing left in his possession upon which he could raise money. His watch, ring and stick pins had gone long ago. His surplus clothing had gone later. He had only his four dollars and some change and the clothes he stood in.

A hopeless, forlorn feeling took possession of him as he now, for the first time, fully realized his condition. He felt a bit queer, had a rather sickening feeling way deep down inside. But his temper, usually his worst enemy, now stood him in good stead as it drove away the panicky feeling which had started over him. With a snarl on his usually pleasant lips he put on his hat and glanced about the place for a final, lingering look. And there, gazing out at him from the framed photograph on his dresser, were the grave eyes of Claudia Ramsay. The eyes fixed him to the spot for several long moments. They were serious eyes, soft and alluring and with a look of sympathy in them that seemed to want to hold him and to be saying, "Good-by" at the same time.

With a gulp in his throat and a sick look in his eyes Illsley tore himself from the spot and left the room.

Safely in the subway his thoughts began racing. He would go to one of the railroad stations. He must get away from New York. Anywhere, but immediately. With swift decision he decided on Philadelphia. It was the only really big city within reach of his four dollars.

In the Pennsylvania Station he glanced furtively around, then walked swiftly to a ticket window and bought a ticket to Philadelphia. The ticket seller glanced keenly at him as he made the change. He was an observing individual, this ticket seller, and this close scanning of the young man on the opposite side of the window was merely a habit with him. But Illsley, supersensitive now and cautious as well, hurried away with the feeling that possibly he had aroused suspicion in even this man.

The twenty-five minutes' wait for the next Philadelphia train was spent in an agony of restlessness and when he was finally in the day coach he pulled his hat well down upon his head and crouched down into his seat to escape observation as much as possible.

He alighted from the train at the Broad Street station in Philadelphia and bought an afternoon paper. Perhaps, he thought, his name would appear in the headlines even this early as the suspect in the jewel-robbery case. But a close inspection of the news headlines failed to disclose any mention of his name and he sauntered out upon the street, glanced cautiously about and then continued walking.

Some blocks away, at Franklin Square, he stopped, entered the park and sat upon a bench. The habit of the down-and-outer was already upon him. A bench in a public park, the derelict's club, was now the only real haven of rest and reflection open to him and Illsley shuddered slightly at the realization. For some time he sat there, nervously smoking cigarettes and occasionally glancing at the paper. Presently he felt a touch upon his shoulder. With a guilty start he jumped up and glanced around—only to look into the grimy, bewhiskered face of a park lounger.

"Got the price of a cup of coffee, bo?" asked the man, wearily.

Illsley took his money from his pocket—ninety-five cents now—picked out a dime and handed it to the other. The beggar mumbled his thanks and shambled off. With a grim smile Ilsley rose and gazed after him. He returned the rest of the change to his pocket and grinned sardonically. He, giving money to another and less than a dollar between himself and—what?

He began to feel hungry; he hadn't eaten since early morning in New York and his head was aching fiercely. He left the park, sauntered along Race Street for a few blocks and entered a cheap little restaurant which reeked of stale food odors and which murmured with buzzing flies. The place was stifling in the August heat. As he gave his order the waitress glanced sharply at him—suspiciously, he thought—and the feeling of apprehension again came over him. But the girl had merely been attracted by the unusual sound of a cultivated voice in the place.

With his meal paid for and a cheap pack of cigarettes bought he had forty cents left. Back to the park he sauntered. He was tired and there seemed no other place to rest and think. He was beginning to understand why the public park was always a rendezvous for the down-and-outer.

For a long time he sat there, smoking and idly watching the stream of humanity drift by. He found it interesting, even fascinating, in spite of himself. Grim faces there were and gay; generous and sordid; faces fresh with living and worn with life.

Dusk crept on and then the park lights twinkled out through the shadows. He felt sleepy and began to think of where to spend the night. Presently a young man of about his own age sauntered up, sat upon the bench near him and dexterously rolled a cigarette. He was a breezy, capable-looking fellow, with a hard but humorous eye and a soft shirt, but not badly dressed, withal; and his tanned, weather-beaten face had a look of other places. Clearly he was no park loafer and as clearly he was no staid citizen, pacing the monotonous but safe treadmill of a regular week-in-week-out job. Perhaps he would be able to solve the problem of the night's sleep at a very cheap rate.

"Where," asked Illsley, turning to his neighbor, "could a fellow get a bed—cheap—near here?"

The other turned, noted the cultivated voice and looked Illsley up and down, coolly and quizzically.

"Up against it, bo?" he asked with a grin. Illsley nodded shortly.

"There's a joint a coupla blocks away—you can get a clean flop there for two bits. I'm going there myself," said he. "Come along."

Together they left the park and stopped before a shabby building in Vine Street which announced itself by a weather-beaten sign over the narrow entrance way as the Albany Hotel. A fat, greasy-looking indi-

vidual back of the desk on the second floor pointed a stubby finger at the ragged-looking register, and the breezy young man signed it with a flourish.

"Jack Hansen," read Illsley over his companion's shoulder and was about to sign in his turn when he checked himself with a start. He'd have to have an alias, now. The thought had nearly escaped him. After a moment's reflection he wrote, "Joe Dawson," the act giving him a queer feeling. He was a fugitive, traveling under an alias!

They were assigned to a partitioned-off space which could hardly be called a room, on the third floor, with two narrow cots that fairly crowded the small place.

"It ain't the Adelphia, kid, but it's pretty clean," said Hansen with a chuckle as he noted the disgusted look on Illsley's face, at the gray-looking sheets and the grimy aspect of the place. "It's a kind of a welfare joint only they let you pay, instead of making you chop wood for your flop. A cop tipped me off to it. Most of these flop houses're rotten."

"Been here long?" asked Illsley.

"Blew in yesterday—and I'm blowing right out to-morrow, believe me. Wanta come along?" asked Hansen. He had taken a sudden liking to his companion. Most people did like young Illsley on sight.

"No," replied Illsley. "I guess I'll get a job here for a while."

The following morning they had breakfast together in a lunch wagon, Illsley spending his last fifteen cents for the meager meal. As he ate he glanced at the front page of the morning paper which the man to his left was reading and what he saw, even though he had been expecting it, made him start so violently that Hansen glanced up. There, in a double-column headline on the front page of the Philadelphia daily, for all the town to see, was his own name. The headline ran:

CHADWICK ILLSLEY, JUDGE'S SON, IS ROBBERY SUSPECT. ARREST EXPECTED SOON.

For three quarters of a column the news story continued.

"What's the matter? Sick?" asked Hansen, noting the look on his companion's face.

"No," replied Illsley, repressing his agitation. Then, after a moment, "Which way are you going when you leave here?"

"Harrisburg," was the reply. "Why?"

"I guess I'll come along—after all."

"All right," agreed Hansen. "We'll grab a trolley over to West Philly right away. We can get a rattler over there."

They rode over to the railroad yards by trolley, Hansen paying the fares, and not long after were aboard a freight train, on the bumpers between two box cars.

That night Illsley slept in Harrisburg, in a cheap furnished room, as the guest of his companion who soon learned of the other's total lack of money.

"Broke, hey?" grinned Hansen as he paid for two suppers. "I guess you better hold this burg down a while with me. I'm gonna get a job here, I'm a machinist and I'll get you one too. You stick with me, kid, and you'll wear diamonds," prophesied the breezy Hansen, who seemed optimism itself.

Illsley fully intended to accept his companion's suggestion to remain in Harrisburg for a while but another glance at the paper, the following morning, caused him suddenly to change his plans. What stared at him from the morning's sheet was:

ROBBERY SUSPECT TRACED TO PHILADELPHIA.

On reading the news story he learned that Corrigan had inquired at the Grand Central and Pennsylvania Stations in New York—had interviewed every ticket seller until he came upon one who remembered selling a ticket to Philadelphia to a young man with a harassed look who tallied with the detective's detailed description. Corrigan had immediately taken a train for that city.

Illsley swiftly considered his prospects. Corrigan, he knew, was determined and tenacious and he reasoned he had probably been given carte blanche in the matter of trailing him. A hundred and fifty thousand dollars loss wasn't exactly an amount to suffer without a determined effort at recovery. And Philadelphia wasn't more than a step from Harrisburg by fast train. He'd have to keep moving, Illsley decided. Corrigan in Philly was too close for comfort. With the right hunch he might be in Harrisburg soon; perhaps was already here.

"Where can I get another train out of here?" asked Illsley.

"Where to?"

"Anywhere away from here," was the reply. Hanson grinned shrewdly at the answer. He was an experienced young man in

many things and he had his suspicions of the other—though not the correct suspicions. But it affected his liking for Illsley not at all.

"You can catch a freight out of here most any time now, up toward Altoona way," he explained. "They all slow up a little ways out from here, at a block signal. C'm'on, I'll show you where."

An hour later Illsley was again on his way, seated over the wheels, on the trucks of a gondola loaded with coal.

He felt momentarily safe now and began to formulate plans for the near future as he took stock of his prospects. For one thing he required money and he required it mighty soon, he reflected, as he ran his hand over his face which hadn't been shaved in some time. He must look like a movie underworld villain, he thought, and he'd look worse still when he got off the train, covered with perspiration and coal dust. Also he'd have to have funds for food and lodging. He'd remain in Altoona for a week, at least, and get a job there, he concluded. He'd have to take that chance.

The heavy train rumbled on until Illsley observed the city of Altoona in the distance. Through the yards it went and finally, with the depot in view, it slowed down to a crawl.

The grimy, soot-covered young man leaped off, glanced about the yards cautiously and made for an opening that led to the street. "Safe as the Bank of England," was his thought as he made for the opening. He began humming a gay tune and finally sang it aloud. It was a song that Claudia Ramsay had played on the mandolin the last evening he had seen her. "A Gypsy Love Song," it was called and Illsley grinned at the thought. It seemed appropriate. And with the song still upon his lips a feeling of temporary security came upon him. Then, before his mood could change to one of concern and apprehension at his forlorn state of being, he felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

Beside him, holding his shoulder in a vise-like grasp, was a husky, hard-faced man who towered above him to a height of some six feet three inches. The soot-covered young man groaned. The song had fled from his lips.

"Where you goin'?" thundered the tall man.

"Into town," said Illsley.

"Where didja come from?"

"Why, I belong here—I just came from that factory over there and walked through the yards," lied Illsley with quick invention. The big man grunted, gazed keenly at his victim and shook his head.

"You come in on that rattler," he accused and displayed a badge. "You come along with me."

"Where to?" asked Illsley.

"Up to the city jail. We'll stick you there overnight and in the mornin' you can say 'Good day' to the justice of the peace."

The justice of the peace! That didn't sound like being arrested for a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar jewelry robbery. A peculiar species of hope rose in Illsley's breast.

"Say," he inquired, "what am I pinched for, anyway?"

The other man adjusted a pair of handcuffs to himself and the other before replying. Then he grunted and looked his prisoner over with a look of disgust.

"Why," he snorted, "you're pinched for train ridin'—what else?" and he marched his captive across a bridge to the city jail where Illsley heard the door clang behind him with a sense of relief.

"A railroad bull!" he exclaimed under his breath. "And I thought it was an arrest for the robbery. Well," he reflected, "they'll have to board me and what's more if I'm in one jail for train riding they can't find me to put me in another for robbery." Whereupon, this young man who looked to the onlookers like a cross between a cinema derelict and a villain plucked from a melodrama astonished them by casually lighting a cigarette and humming a little tune as he was escorted to a cell.

When the cell door was closed upon him Illsley luxuriously inhaled his cigarette and breathed a sigh of thankfulness.

"Corrigan," he announced to himself, "will never find me here."

CHAPTER V.

It was a sizzling August morning when three prisoners, who had been brought from the city jail where they had spent the night, were haled before a justice of the peace in the city of Altoona. They stood, handcuffed one to the other, and the justice, a short, round, red-faced, bald-headed little man, stern of mouth but with a very merry twin-

kle in his beady little eyes, looked them over quizzically.

"What's the charge, officer?" he asked, as he mopped the perspiration from his corrugated face. "Murder and arson or just plain manslaughter?"

"Train ridin' your honor," replied the big railroad detective who had brought the prisoners from the jail. "I collected 'em off the Pennsy. This one"—indicating the slim, hook-nosed, crafty-eyed individual of Hebraic countenance and dapper appearance—"was on the blind of the Limited just before she pulled out. That giant"—and the detective pointed to the big, rawboned fellow in the center who had a scar on his face that ran from his left cheek bone to his chin—"was just gonna grab a free ride off the same rattler. They look like a fine brace of crooks, too. But this bird here is the worst of the lot from his looks," and the detective nodded toward Illsley. "I bagged *him* in the yards near the depot. He tried to tell me he belongs in town but he couldn't put the bluff over. He come in on a coal drag, by the looks of him. An' he's a nut, I guess. Anyway he was singin' somethin' about love when I come along."

Illsley indeed was a hard-looking citizen after his ride on the coal car. His face needed the razor badly and the hot, sultry weather caused him to perspire freely, which, aided by the grime and coal dust from the train which he had had no opportunity to remove during his night's stay in the jail, lent him an appearance midway between that of a tipsy coal heaver and a ragged villain plucked from the most lurid melodrama.

The little justice eyed him up and down, lingeringly and almost in awe, it seemed; and Illsley, in turn, looked up at the justice with frank curiosity.

"They look pretty tough, yer honor—'specially this bird," offered the detective, indicating Illsley.

"They do," agreed the little justice.

"They might be totin' guns—an' then we could get 'em for carryin' concealed weapons, too."

"They might," was the solemn reply.

"I better frisk 'em, yer honor," the detective suggested, hoping to unearth more than mere train riders in the trio. "They might have enough nitro on 'em to blow us all to heaven," he added.

"Search them," agreed the red-faced little justice, still staring in amazement at the evil-looking Illsley, whose soft hat now tilted over one ear, gave him a devil-may-care air in addition to his blackened look.

The detective immediately set to work in his search. The Hebrew's pockets disclosed nothing more dangerous than a handkerchief, a fountain pen, a gold watch, a packet of cigarettes and a pocketbook.

The justice bored the prisoner with his beady eyes.

"Nothing so terrible here," he admitted finally as the articles were laid upon his desk. "But it does look suspicious for one to be trying to steal a ride on a train with that much money on his person."

"I been outa work, judge, an' I drew that money from the bank. It's all my savings. I gotta job promised in New York an' I was tryin' to ride the flyer in there to get in as cheap as I could," spoke up the prisoner in an aggrieved voice.

"What's your name and occupation?" asked the justice.

"Joseph Klein, judge; I'm a clerk," replied the prisoner, who was a bit untruthful inasmuch as he was a New York gangster, Benjamin Garstein by name, known to his intimates as "Slick Benny," with a natural talent for forgery which he practiced upon occasion. Neither the prisoner's manner nor his story deceived the quizzical little justice.

"Thirty days," decided the latter promptly. "That ought to save you quite a bit of money in room and board, Joseph. Now for our Hercules, officer," and the justice indicated the big, rawboned man with the scar. "We ought to unearth at least one weapon from our red-haired friend."

But a search of the big man brought forth only a dirty, red handkerchief, a large pocketknife, a ten-dollar bill with some loose change and a plug of tobacco.

"And your name and occupation?" demanded the justice. "I dare say you're a churchwarden and merely tried to ride this train to reach a sick choir boy."

"No I ain't, yer honor," protested the big man in a solemn rumble. "My moniker's Clarence Brown an' I'm gonna take a job in Philly in a machine shop. I'm a mechanic." This was only partly true, the man's name being "Brick" Hartigan to his familiars; and although actually a mechanic and an expert one he specialized in other people's safes and locks.

The justice eyed the big man interestedly and his keen eyes twinkled.

"Clarence," said he gravely, "I'm afraid the Philadelphia gentlemen are going to be disappointed for a month. Thirty days. And now we come to the most desperate one of the lot, evidently, officer," he continued with a sly smile. "He'll probably protest that he's a Sunday-school teacher and will carry at least an automatic pistol, a bowie knife and a few sticks of dynamite to prove it."

The search of young Illsley, however, while it proved quite a surprise, indeed, proved also that the jocular little justice was wrong. A penknife, two pencils, six pawn tickets, a handkerchief and a small volume of poems comprised the lot of the third prisoner's possessions. Of money and weapons there was nothing.

The justice glanced through the book of poems and his eyebrows shot up.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "A young man who sings love songs, rides freight trains, carries this volume of poems and looks like a desperado! Let us solve this riddle. What *is* your occupation—and your name—your real one?"

Illsley swiftly reflected. Giving his erstwhile occupation as a bank clerk would never do. Nor would his connection with a burglar-alarm company be safe information to disclose. The book of poems caught his eye. He had written verse for his college publication; and had once even had a bit of verse accepted in a highbrow magazine. A poet, moreover, was a safely far cry from a jewel-robbery suspect. He glanced up at the little justice. The latter was frowning down at him but his bright little eyes were twinkling.

"I write verse," confessed Illsley pleasantly. The tone and accent, coming from so hairy and dirty a face astonished the others. The big man with the scar, the Hebrew, the detective and the little justice all glanced at the grimy young man in surprise. The justice's eyebrows shot skyward again; he pursed his lips comically in astonishment.

"A poet," he breathed softly. "My Lord!"

"Poet or nut," grunted the detective; "same thing."

"A poet," repeated the justice, his eyes bright. "Ah, your case becomes clearer. No visible means of support. Why wouldn't a poet look like you?"

"Why not indeed?" assented young Illsley with his winning smile.

"H'mm," mused the justice, tapping his bench gently with a paper knife. "A most interesting case. It presents its difficulties, too. He doesn't carry a Smith & Wesson but he does tote a volume of Browning's poems. Apt to be almost as dangerous in some cases. He isn't a desperado but he is evidently pretty desperate, from his appearance. Innocent of the usual crimes but guilty of poetry. Criminals all, I dare say, if we only knew the real facts. What's your name?"

"Edward Kendall," replied Illsley, discarding his first alias.

"Well, Edward," concluded the little justice after a pause, "I sentence you, with the others, to thirty days in the county jail at Holidaysburg, with no option of a fine."

Thus did Dame Justice introduce a gangster, a burglar and a whilom rhymster, now a robbery suspect, to each other and extend them her hospitality.

The three prisoners, still handcuffed to each other, were escorted by the detective to a trolley line where, after a short wait they boarded a car for the county jail. Illsley grinned at the expressions on the faces of the other occupants of the car who evidently considered the trio a desperate party. What would they think if they knew that he was wanted for a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar burglary?

After safely depositing his prisoners at the county jail in the village of Holidaysburg the detective left and the great iron doors clanged upon the trio. They were relieved of some of their possessions in the warden's office and their names taken and then a trusty escorted them from the jail office down a corridor.

"Hafta get a bath, first thing," said the dapper little Hebrew.

"Glad of it," replied Illsley with a sigh of relief.

After the three had had their bath they were taken to a cell on the ground tier, thrust inside and the door locked upon them.

"Safe in jail!" murmured Illsley as the three looked about the cell in which there were three mattresses upon the floor and some blankets, but no bunks.

"Some dump!" rumbled the big man with

the scar. "No bunks, even. Worst jail I was ever in."

"I guess they don't bother much with train riders," offered Garstein. "Them guys on the upper tier, now—in for murder an' burglary and waitin' trial—they got it better, I guess."

"There seems to be some distinction made here among the guests," suggested Illsley pleasantly as he settled himself upon a mattress, borrowed a cigarette from Garstein and puffed away.

"You said it, kid," replied Hartigan, with a grin. "If you bust up a trust company or a bank you're a financier but if you steal a ride on a train you're just a piker of a little crook." Hartigan spoke as though attempting to ride free of charge on a railroad was the worst of his offenses against the law but it wasn't long before Illsley was undeceived regarding both him and Garstein.

Early that evening, after their dinners had been shoved through the opening in the grated door, Illsley flung himself upon one of the mattresses to try to sleep. For a long while he lay there, silently and without moving. The other two thought he was asleep.

"Asleep?" asked Hartigan, in a rumbling whisper, nodding toward Illsley.

"Yeah, guess so," replied Garstein with assurance, and the two began to converse in guarded tones. What they talked of would have surprised any one overhearing the conversation. For it would have informed the listener that the two had just made an unsuccessful attempt to blow a post-office safe in a small town in Pennsylvania and that they had been surprised in the act by a constable, had made an apparently safe "get-away" but, to be doubly certain of escape, had then attempted to get back to New York by the "underground" way of the blind baggage instead of by "riding the cushions."

"Can ya beat it?" asked Hartigan in disgust. "We make a clean get-away from the post-office job an' here we hafta take a fall for bummin' a ride on a rattler." He turned toward the silent Illsley to make certain that the young man was still asleep, but what he saw brought a venomous look to his hard eyes and a curse to his lips. For Illsley lay facing them, his eyes wide open, a fascinated look in them; he had been drinking in every word of the guarded conversation. Hartigan leaped up with an oath, followed by Garstein and was next to Illsley in another leap.

"Pipin' us off, hey?" he snarled.

"A stool, huh?" added Garstein. "Did they plant you on us?"

"If you wise that trusty I'll break every bone in your knob," threatened the big man savagely. His great hands clenched and unclenched. But instead of being cowed by this Illsley's ever ready temper rose and his eyes snapped. He leaped to his feet and his eyes matched the big man's with an angry glint of their own.

"You won't do a damn thing!" he said angrily. "And don't pull any more of that stuff about turning you in. I'm no stool pigeon and what's more I don't care a damn what you've done. It's nothing to me. I've got troubles of my own." The other two looked at Illsley long and keenly and Hartigan was clearly mollified with what he saw in the other. He believed Illsley, evidently, for his rage left him and he turned to Garstein with a half grin.

"I guess this kid's a leveler," he said to his companion.

"I guess so," agreed Garstein. And from then on the two took Illsley on trust. Not much later, as the three played cards with a greasy deck obtained from a trusty, Hartigan and Garstein found they were liking young Illsley immensely and it wasn't very many days before the three were not only friendly but intimate.

It was a warm, beautiful September morning when the trio were released from the jail confines after their thirty-day stay. Illsley inwardly groaned as he thought of the prospect before him. He'd have to keep moving and he'd have to keep under cover. And he was in no better plight than before his arrest, except for the fact that by now Corrigan had probably been thrown completely off his trail. The other two seemed to read his thoughts in his dejected attitude for as he extended his hand to say "Good-by," Hartigan waved it away with brusque friendliness.

"Listen, kid," said the big man. "We're goin' on in to New York, me an' Benny. We're gonna ride the cushions, too; no more chances on this road for us. An' you're gonna come along with us. We'll stake you to the fare."

Illsley protested. "I can't go there," he objected. "That's exactly where I came from. I had to get away. I'd be arrested

right off if I landed back there now." He had previously told them of his being wanted for a robbery. Hartigan growled with good-natured impatience at this.

"Now look here, bo," said he brusquely. "What chance've you got bummin' around the country? You're broke right now. Sooner or later you'd be in the hoosgow again for train ridin' an' then some wise hick bull is gonna remember that he lamped your description somewhere for a job an' he's gonna connect you up with it."

"Sure," added Garstein. "An' you're as safe in the Big Town as anywhere."

"We'll slip you some kale for a stake," added Hartigan. "An' you better come an' stay with us in a room we got over on the West Side for a while. You can keep under cover there." Illsley protested at the proffer of money which caused a verbal explosion from the big man.

"Now look here, kid," growled Hartigan, as Garstein produced several bills, "we're pals of yourn. We ain't tryin' to get you in with us on any jobs. That's your own business. But you're gonna take this kale—it's just a loan till you get right again—or I'll bust you one. You gotta learn to make use of your pals in this world. No guy is so good he can always go it alone."

Illsley took the money and as he placed it in his trousers pocket the thought came to him that here was the same advice as that offered by McLeod on the day he had left the house in Stuyvesant Square.

"Make use of your friends," the doctor had testily advised him and, "Make use of your pals," was the advice now tendered him by Brick Hartigan with the loan.

The three walked to the railroad depot a few blocks distant. Garstein purchased three tickets to New York; a half hour later they boarded their train and that evening the strange trio were in a furnished room above a soft-drink saloon in Tenth Avenue, New York.

As Illsley smoked a last cigarette before going to bed that night the face of Claudia Ramsay persisted in his mind. The face was grave but the soft eyes seemed to be smiling whimsically at him. He grinned a bit mirthlessly at the mental picture. Then the grin faded and a sigh escaped him. Would her eyes be smiling if she could see him now, only a short distance from her, but in a place as foreign to her as China?

He had hoped to marry this girl! He had hoped and expected to have enough money to give her a comfortable living, luxuries even. What a dream! And here he was, under cover from the police, without a dollar of his own and living with two crooks in a shabby furnished room above a saloon in the heart of Hell's Kitchen!

CHAPTER VI.

On the Tuesday night in August when he left the house in Stuyvesant Square, after his unsuccessful attempt to obtain information regarding Illsley, Corrigan was, in a villainous temper.

He had had the suspect within his grasp and had allowed him to slip through his usually tenacious fingers. The arrest and subsequent conviction of Illsley so soon after the sensational robbery would have added no little to the captor's reputation and Corrigan was not one who at all disregarded his own prospects in any matter.

Nor was his anger directed at himself, although he was entirely to blame for not apprehending Illsley while he had the opportunity. Instead the detective heaped mental curses upon the heads of the two girls, the brisk medico, McLeod and, most of all, upon the black thatch of the slippery young suspect himself.

With every thought of Illsley Corrigan's gorge rose higher and his bulldog determination became greater. He was a man of little vision and a single-track mind and all his great tenacity was now bent to one purpose—to get young Illsley and to bring him back to New York under arrest. And once in his grasp Corrigan felt certain that the broken fountain pen would be sufficient evidence to land the young man in the penitentiary. The fact that there was the possibility that Illsley might actually be innocent, despite the strongly incriminating circumstantial evidence, was no concern of the detective's. His job was to get Illsley and he meant to do it. And a conviction and sentence, whether guilty or innocent, would be but added prestige to himself. On the following morning Corrigan told Pelham of Illsley's flight.

"And with this bird gone your chance of recovering that stuff is gone too," said Corrigan. "But I can get him back, damn him—if you'll let me go after him and keep after him."

The venerable jeweler quickly considered

the matter, thought of the missing jewelry and made a swift decision.

"All right," he snapped testily. "Go after him—and keep after him while you think you can get him."

Corrigan immediately left the jeweler's office and set to work. His plans were pretty well formulated. He was certain his prey had left New York. And he knew that with Illsley's scant funds he couldn't have gone far. Of course there was the possibility of his beating his way on trains and getting a great distance away without funds; but this, he decided, was highly improbable. Illsley had no experience with such methods of travel and would most likely not attempt them until he was broke and more desperate.

The detective first went to the office of the burglar-alarm company in Brooklyn and secured a photograph of Illsley and a sample of his writing, which were procured from Kelly, who got them from the suspect's bureau drawer in the dormitory. With these in hand Corrigan, as has been said, visited the Grand Central Station and the Pennsylvania and from a ticket seller in the latter station had traced his man and had himself started for Philly. Not three hours later he was there, where he rapidly reviewed the situation and its possibilities.

Chadwick Illsley had then already been in the city a day. He must be very nearly broke now and, if he had not already left town by beating his way on a train, he had probably spent the night in a cheap lodging house, assuming he had enough money left for even that. Otherwise he had spent the night in a park, most likely, reasoned Corrigan.

But first he would get in touch with the local police. There was a chance, slight though it was, that Illsley had already been arrested. The news of the robbery was spread broadcast and the suspect's description was out. The police would be on the watch for him. Corrigan went to police headquarters but learned that no one answering to the name or description of Illsley was among the recent Philadelphia jail arrivals.

The detective then immediately started on a tour of the known cheap lodging houses, beginning with those nearest the station. Into one grimy, shabby place he went after the other, searching and questioning without success. It was after nine o'clock in the evening before he came near Franklin Square and it was after ten when he arrived at the Albany, the fourteenth on his list. By this time he was beginning to feel that his quest was futile. But at the Albany Hotel his persistence was rewarded with some hope.

The greasy-looking individual behind the desk on the second floor looked over the photograph that Corrigan tendered him long and carefully, scratched his towsly head in slow reflection and then his bleary eyes lit up in recollection.

"Yeah, sure; we had that guy here—only last night," said the clerk. "He came here near midnight with another bloke. Let's see now," and he perused the ragged register.

"Yeah, here it is—room No. 329 was where I stuck 'em—him an' his buddy," and he pointed a fat finger to two signatures.

Corrigan read the names scrawled on the register, "Jack Hansen" and "Joe Dawson," he read aloud. "He's got a new moniker already, huh? Let's see which one's his," and he compared the signatures with the writing of Illsley's he had.

"This one's it," he announced after an examination. "Joe Dawson is this Illsley. Has that room been cleaned since they left?" The clerk grinned. "Nope; ain't been touched. No one in it since, either," he replied.

"Show me up there," commanded Corrigan. A minute later the two were in room No. 329 where Illsley and his chance acquaintance had spent the previous night. A careful search of the place at first revealed nothing but the two narrow cots, a day-old copy of the Philadelphia *Ledger* on the floor, an empty cigarette box near one of the cots and cigarette stubs and burned matches scattered about the floor. But the persistent Corrigan moved both cots and spied several pieces of paper in a corner where one of the cots had been.

He collected these bits of paper and saw that they were parts of a letter written on a ruled sheet from a cheap writing pad. He sat upon a cot and pieced them together as well as he could. The collected pieces formed a part of the postscript to the letter evidently, but they were so incomplete that the meaning the words conveyed was vague. Corrigan frowningly puzzled over the thing. What he made of the bits of writing was:

P. S.—When—get to—Jamieson & Co——op—Harrisbu—Jac—

By supplying missing letters to the last two words he got, "Harrisburg" and "Jack."

"M-mm," mused Corrigan. "The letter was this Jack Hansen's, all right; and he's expecting to be in Harrisburg some time or other, I guess."

Had he gone to Harrisburg immediately? And if so, had Illsley gone with him? The detective judged it was easily possible. If Chadwick Illsley had formed enough of an acquaintanceship with Hansen to go to a cheap lodging house with him and to sleep in the same room with him he wouldn't be above traveling with his new-found friend. And further, reasoned Corrigan, Illsley could easily travel with Hansen without funds because the latter would most probably beat his way to any point he wished to reach. The type that stayed in cheap lodging places of the Albany kind wasn't the type to spend good money for railroad fare even if he had it. Corrigan turned to the desk clerk abruptly.

"What did this Hansen look like?" he asked.

The desk clerk yawned, corrugated his brow in labored reflection and then gave his description.

"He was a pretty well set-up, husky, young bloke, about middle height, maybe, light hair and a kinda careless, happy, don't-give-a-damn look on his face. Kinda hard lookin' but not a bad-appearin' guy."

"Was he a hobo or a tramp?"

"No, I don't think so. He wasn't bad dressed. He was no bum, that guy. I kinda guess he might of been a mechanic, maybe."

The detective left the Albany Hotel and went immediately to the Broad Street station and bought a ticket to Harrisburg where he arrived in an early hour of the morning. He was exhausted and went immediately to a hotel and to bed. But eleven o'clock found him up again and busy.

After breakfast he got a city directory, went through the Jamieson names in it and came to the firm name of Jamieson & Goll, Machine Shop. He grinned his pleasure at the discovery. It looked as though he were on the trail of Hansen, at least.

Out to the plant of Jamieson & Goll at the edge of the city the detective went. He entered the office, displayed his badge to the man in charge there and asked if any one named Jack Hansen had been there recently. The office man grinned at the name. The breezy Hansen evidently had already made an impression.

"Yes," said the office man. "We took on a fellow by that name just this morning. He's out in the works right now. Isn't a crook is he?"

"No; oh no," Corrigan hastened to say in his pleasantest manner. "But he's got some information I want and I heard he might be here."

Hansen was sent for and a few minutes later he was standing before the detective, looking him coolly over.

Corrigan surveyed Hansen carefully with a keen look and saw that he tallied with the description of the Albany Hotel desk clerk.

"Hansen," said he pleasantly, "step over here. I want to talk to you a moment." Hansen did so. "I'm looking for a friend of yours," added Corrigan when the two were out of earshot of the others in the office.

He had sized the breezy young man up quickly and immediately decided that this stocky individual with the carefree manner and the cool eyes wouldn't be easily bluffed or browbeaten; and he was probably the type who would, moreover, want to shield Illsley if he suspected that youth of being wanted by the police.

"I'm looking for Joe Dawson. A relative of his died and left him some money," lied Corrigan pleasantly. "He's been up against it and left the place where he was staying and all mail to him has been returned. So the law firm handling the matter got me to locate him, poor kid. I found he was with you in Philadelphia, last night, at the Albany Hotel, and I found you'd come on here. The poor chap's been up against it hard, I guess. This money'll come in handy."

"I'll say he was up against it," chuckled Hansen. "He didn't even have the price of a flop after we left Philly. So he's got some jack comin', hey? Gee, that's good! I kinda thought he might be a toff, but he's an all right bloke, that guy." And Hansen grinned again as he thought of the likable Joe Dawson.

"Is he staying in Harrisburg here?" was the hopeful query.

"Nope. He flopped with me last night but this morning he got a notion he wants to beat it. So he does—to Altoona."

"Know where he's going to stay there?"

"Even he don't know that. He was flat broke when he left here."

"All right," said Corrigan brusquely and left. He took the next train for Altoona but there the present success of his hunt for Chad Illsley ended.

A conference with the police authorities and a visit to the city jail there resulted in nothing. Illsley, luckily for him, hadn't arrived in Altoona as yet. He was, in fact, still riding the trucks of a coal drag going into Altoona when Corrigan was in conference with the police. And when, a little later, he was arrested by the railroad detective and placed in the city jail overnight his appearance was such that no one even thought of him in connection with the suspect of the jewel robbery. For the train rider was a hairy-faced, sooty, villainous-looking individual while the description of Illsley pointed to a dapper, good-looking, even aristocratic young man. Then, before there was any opportunity of Corrigan's locating him about the city Illsley had been arrested in the railroad yards, placed overnight in the city jail and a little later was in the county jail at Holidaysburg, safe from the detective's clutches.

After a day in Altoona Corrigan reluctantly admitted that he had lost the trail. He swore copiously and colorfully and then returned to New York. A week after his return he called at the burglar-alarm company's office in Brooklyn in response to a telephone message from Kelly, the manager.

"Got a tip from this Illsley?" asked Corrigan hopefully as he seated himself at Kelly's desk. The latter shook his head.

"Not a thing. He's evidently disappeared from the face of the earth. And it may be too bad, too," said Kelly.

"I'll say so!" angrily barked the other. "But I'll get that smart young guy yet. And when I do I'll run him right into the pen. They don't get away from me much—and stay away."

Kelly leaned forward and tapped the detective impressively on the knee.

"What if this boy's innocent, Corrigan?" he asked slowly.

"Don't make me laugh," was the curt reply. "Why, that fountain pen of his is enough to get him a swell little stretch from any sane jury in the land."

"I'm not so sure—now," said Kelly. "Something else has turned up since you left."

Corrigan started.

"What?"

"A little dope that sounds all right to me."

"What is it?"

"The information that Illsley lost that pen of his on the Friday before the burglary and has never had it in his possession since. If that's true he couldn't have dropped it in the yard back of Pelham's jewelry store. And if he didn't do that there's no evidence against him aside from his being off duty when the place was robbed."

"Where did you get that bunk?"

"From Mrs. Gulberg, the woman who cleans this office. She found Illsley's pen in the hall near the elevator Friday night when she was cleaning. She brought it in, thinking it belonged in this office. Haydock looked at it, said it was Illsley's and put it on my desk. Illsley was out on a run at the time."

"Well?"

"I questioned Haydock; he tells me he did take it."

"Said he gave it to Illsley?"

"He says no. He and Illsley weren't on good terms, he says. I knew that. Haydock says he wasn't even on speaking terms with him. So he put the pen on my desk—he says—and when it was gone, a little later, he says he assumed Illsley had taken it."

Corrigan grinned. "Well, what's wrong with that?" he asked. "Sure Illsley took it."

But Kelly shook his head.

"I don't think so. I don't believe he ever saw that pen again from the time he lost it before the robbery until you showed it to him after the robbery."

"Say," barked the detective, "don't be simple; sure he's the one that picked it up. Don't let any one kid you, Kelly."

"No one's kidding me," replied Kelly evenly. "And I still insist that I don't think young Illsley ever got that pen after he lost it. I questioned Pomeroy, the night manager, and Berndt, the night runner. Pomeroy, I find, was back in the stock room when this woman came in. But Berndt was in the office and he says Haydock received the pen and put it on the desk."

"Sure; and Illsley come and picked it up when no one was looking," added Corrigan.

Kelly smiled.

"Not so fast," said he. "Then I questioned the sleepers. Two of 'em were in the dormitory at the time and knew nothing of it. But the third, Severance, did. And he

says he remembers seeing the pen there on the desk, put there by Haydock. Then he went back to the dormitory for a minute or two and when he returned to his seat at the desk here he noticed the pen was gone." Kelly leaned forward and looked Corrigan in the eye, meaningly. "And," he continued, *"Illsley hadn't returned from his run at the time."*

Corrigan laughed rudely. "So Severance *says,"* he replied.

"And I believe him," stated Kelly firmly.

"And I don't," snapped the detective. "There's something I happen to know, too," he rasped. "And it's this: *Severance is the best friend Illsley had in this office.* They often palled around together. Sure he'd protect Illsley. No bunk story like that goes with me."

"Of course he was friendly with Illsley when it comes to that," said Kelly; "but so was every one around here—except Haydock. They all liked him with that exception."

"Well," countered Corrigan with a knowing grin, "how come you didn't get all this dope about the pen before Illsley skipped? If it's straight why didn't this cleaning woman say something about it before and keep him from getting leery of a pinch and dusting out, huh?"

"For the very simple and sufficient reason that she comes to clean only once a week and we didn't get hold of her until nearly a week after the burglary," smiled Kelly. "Anything else?"

"Yeah! Just this!" replied Corrigan angrily, his eyes narrowed and his pugnacious jaw outthrust. "Don't try to call me off this chase with any simple bunk like you just gave me. Illsley's my man and I'm gonna get him if it takes a year. I s'pose you got an idea this guy Haydock might have pulled the stunt."

Kelly didn't reply to that. He was now frankly, totally mystified about the robbery of Galvo 49. But he felt certain that Illsley hadn't been in on it and, in all the circumstances, he feared it possible that Haydock had been. The latter was at swords' points with Illsley; he had threatened to get him. He had received the pen from the woman—had admitted it. And it was easily conceivable that he might have given the information to the thieves who did the actual robbing, had them plant the pen on the premises and killed two birds with a single throw by getting a haul for himself and getting square with Illsley.

The detective tilted his cigar aggressively toward the ceiling and rose.

"Yeah," said he with a hard grin of confidence at the day manager. "This Illsley guy's the bird we want. And what's more, when I get him I'll prove it."

"How?" asked Kelly.

"By sweating that young pup so hard that he'll be damn glad to admit it," barked Corrigan as he went to the door.

CHAPTER VII.

Chad Illsley took up his abode with Hartigan and Garstein in a far from satisfied or settled state of mind; but the fact that his present companions were a pair of reckless crooks had nothing to do with his uneasiness. In fact that phase of the matter bothered him not at all. He found them interesting and likable; they had befriended him in several ways and their business ethics and attitude toward society he considered none of his affair. Besides, he reflected, he was a fugitive and couldn't afford to be a moralist even had he wished. It was the constant feeling of apprehension that worried Illsley. That and his being dependent upon the generosity of his companions for his actual existence at the moment.

He couldn't help thinking of Corrigan. He began to feel that he had made a mistake in returning to New York, with the determined detective in all probability not far away in the same city with him by now. When he mentioned this to the other two, however, they laughed at his fears.

"Just lay low for a while and you'll be all right," assured Hartigan. "It's out in the weeds, away from where the job was pulled, they'll be lookin' for you. That's where we put one over on 'em—by havin' you double back here. Anyway, I'd rather be on the lam in the Big Town than anywhere else."

"Sure," agreed Garstein lightly. "Just stick close here an' be a little cagy, that's all. They'd never pipe off this joint in a year."

Nevertheless Illsley wasn't at all reassured. He stayed as close to the room as possible, only venturing outside for his meals, which he took at a restaurant around the corner in Thirty-eighth Street. He was nervous and insanely cautious. At almost

any moment he half expected to feel the touch of Corrigan's vigorous grasp upon him and to see that bulldog look of the detective's in the offing.

Then, after a week with the two, he found himself almost without money again. Another day would leave him nearly penniless. Of course his two friends would advance him money. He knew, in fact, that they expected to. But that sort of thing couldn't go on indefinitely and he decided he'd better start out for himself again now as later.

Fearing a useless argument with the explosive Hartigan if he informed that individual that he intended leaving, Illsley waited until the two were gone, then wrote a note saying he was leaving. A minute later he was out in Tenth Avenue, once more without a place to stay and the police close upon him for all he knew.

All that day he walked the streets in that vicinity, looking for a job; but work was scarce and night found him in a room above a saloon in Thirty-sixth Street which had taken fifty of his last seventy-five cents, with no means of subsistence in view. Late the following day, however, he secured work with an express company in Tenth Avenue and again his mobile spirits rose.

It was heavy work, loading the trucks and wagons for eight hours a day, but it was work that kept him in one place and made him feel fairly safe from the police. For three weeks Illsley remained steadily on the job, keeping a watchful eye out for chance policemen when working and remaining close to his room when his work was done. But even here his luck refused to hold.

At the beginning of his fourth week of work his hand was crushed by a heavy packing case and his job and pay ceased. At the end of ten days his money again gone, an irate landlady turned him out of his room and once more young Illsley was out upon the streets, with nothing but his wits between himself and starvation or the police.

For the next two weeks he lived almost literally from hand to mouth. He was unable, with his still injured hand, to do heavy work and the little occasional light work he was able to secure in the vicinity was barely enough to keep him in food. He slept alternately in a fifty-cent transient room and in the parks, depending upon the state of the day's finances. It was now November and a chill spell had set in. He was without an overcoat and in light, summer clothing, and as he walked the streets, shivering and half famished, with an ever watchful eye for the police, he began to feel for the first time since his flight a real sense of despair. He was hunted and cold, almost continually hungry and helpless. And always there was the mental shadow of the grim-jawed Corrigan lurking near.

Then, late one afternoon, as the city lights were beginning to flicker out through the dusk, Illsley strolled into the park at Tenth Avenue and Twenty-seventh Street and the thing happened that he wished almost above all else to avoid.

A slight drizzle had begun and the park was nearly deserted. He was sitting upon a bench, entirely oblivious in his misery to the cold rain, his coat collar turned up, his legs extended out into the path, his dirty hat pulled down over his eyes and a cigarette drooping from his lips. A dirty little cur dog, tail hanging limply in the rain, stood huddled against him as if for protection. Together they made a doleful and pathetically funny picture.

A girl, who had been hurrying along the path stopped before the doleful-looking pair to raise her umbrella as the drizzle started. As she was about to pass on she chanced to glance at the park lounger, then stopped, her lips parted in astonishment.

"Chad!" she exclaimed.

Illsley looked up at sound of the familiar voice to stare into the eyes of Claudia Ramsay.

"Why—Claudia!" he exclaimed, rising in confusion at the unexpected sight of the one person on earth—save the police—he most wished to avoid in the circumstances. "What are you doing here—in this part of town?"

"I called to see a girl who lives near here; I'm going to use her for a model," she explained. A chill wind was blowing up and Illsley was shivering a little. She looked at him a long moment, her heart in her eyes. "Oh, Chad!" she cried, a little catch in her voice as she stood looking at him. "We all thought you were a long ways off. What are *you* doing here?"

He laughed shortly, a mirthless laugh.

"Keeping away from the police," he said, glancing carefully about. He looked down at himself, rubbed the two days' beard on his face with a cold, damp hand and again the bitter laugh came from him. Here was the

girl he had once hoped to marry! "I got clean away from New York once," he said harshly. "But two friends—I met 'em in jail"—he was getting a certain morbid enjoyment out of the telling—"one's a safe-cracker and the other's a forger—brought me back with 'em. I'm safer from the police right here in New York, it seems, than if I was roaming about the country—provided I keep pretty well under cover and watch out."

"But you didn't rob that place, did you, Chad?" she asked pleadingly. "Of course you didn't. You wouldn't *steal*. I knew it when I read the papers that morning. I knew there must be some terrible mistake. Please say you didn't do it."

A feeling of perversity at the question came over him. What did it matter now, anyway, one way or the other?

"What would be so terrible about it if I told you I did?" said he, begging the question. "There's worse things done in business at the expense of poor devils, every day."

Her eyes narrowed at the reply and her trim little figure stiffened.

"You don't really *mean* that? You can't!"

"Of course I do," he said brazenly, his face suddenly hardening as his undernourished frame shook in the cold wind.

"Oh!" she cried with a little sob, glancing away.

"At least I suppose you won't turn me over to the police, now you've seen me," said he, a sardonic light in his feverish eyes. He was making it as hard for her to sympathize with him as he could.

"That was unnecessary—and cruel," she replied with dignity, her firm little chin in the air. But again her eyes softened as she looked at him.

"Chad," she said, coming closer to him and placing a tender hand upon his rain-soaked shoulder as she held her protecting umbrella over him with the other, "Chad, won't you come home with me, please? I want to help you—we all do. I know you didn't do this thing—you *couldn't* have. But even if you still wish to keep away from the police, we'll keep you out of sight. Please come with me. You can't stay outside like this."

"I can't do it," he replied and she knew from his tone that he meant it and would remain unshaken.

"Then let me give you some money," she begged, fumbling with her hand bag.

It was his turn to stiffen now and get up on his dignity.

"I may be a pretty sad spectacle," he said, "but I haven't gotten so far down yet that I accept help—money—from a girl."

"Don't be a fool," she said angrily, "and don't be melodramatic. You ought to be glad to accept help from anybody. At least you can't refuse this," and she took a ten-dollar bill from her bag and held it out.

He drew himself up in ragged dignity at that. "Please——" he began in a harsh voice, but she interrupted him.

"Oh, you can't refuse to take this!" she replied angrily, with a stamp of her foot and a flash of her eyes which were dangerously near to tears. "This is from Eddie Driggs. He says he owes it to you and he left it with me the other day when Larry was out. It isn't *my* money," she added scornfully, "so you needn't be at all finicky about taking it. It belongs to you."

He accepted the ten-dollar note with a forced air of carelessness. "Oh, well, that's different. It'd be a crime not to let Eddie pay his debts occasionally." Then he turned closer to her with a sudden energy. This small bit of aid seemed to awaken new determination within him. He placed the bill in his ragged trousers pocket and held her eyes with a piercing, feverish glance of his own.

"No, I'm not coming back with you, now," he said slowly. "I'm sorry, but of course I couldn't. But I'm coming back there some day and when I do you won't see me like this." His frame shivered as a fresh wind blew up and his teeth were near to chattering. But he clenched them savagely and went on. "I'll have money when I get back. That's the only real standard of things in this world, anyway. I'm not licked yet. And whether it's stolen money or not won't make any difference to me—or most people, for that matter." A fit of coughing cut off further words and a moment later he turned and left.

Illsley's last words kept singing in Claudia Ramsay's ears as she left the park and started for home. "Whether it's stolen money or not," recurred to her again and again. That sounded as though he had something in mind. Had he done this thing—robbed the jeweler's? And did he have his share cached away somewhere to be got-

ten when he felt it was safe? "No, he simply *couldn't* have done it," she told herself loyally again and again; but always that phrase, "whether it's stolen money or not," came back to her to raise a doubt within her mind.

That evening the little artist told about the meeting with Illsley to Helen Brokaw and Doctor McLeod. She mentioned it in such a hushed voice, as though the police were within earshot of her, that the others laughed in spite of their interest at hearing of young Illsley.

"He looked awful," she explained. "But he's just as obstinate as ever and I couldn't do a thing with him. He was cold and he looked actually hungry. And I really believe he has no place to stay. And then there's the police—he has to watch out for them, too. He was awfully bitter and desperate. I'm afraid in his present state of mind he'll do something desperate—even if —if"—she stumbled on, half ashamed of the thought—"he hadn't anything to do with that other—burglary."

"He said he wasn't in on it, of course," said McLeod.

"No he *didn't*," she replied despairingly. "He kept dodging that. But he intimated that he'd do a thing like that any time, if he could."

"Just Chad's talk," observed McLeod dryly. "He always did talk up in the air and profess peculiar views."

"Of course he didn't have anything to do with that Pelham affair!" said Helen Brokaw.

"Then why did he run away?" asked McLeod.

"Oh, why wouldn't he?" asked Claudia Ramsay angrily. "He must have been in trouble even before then. He was pawning everything he had, this man Corrigan said, to keep going. And then when they found his fountain pen on the place it looked serious. And if he had stayed and let them arrest him he might have been put in jail anyway. Lots of innocent people get sentenced, don't they, Helen?"

"Of course they do," replied the other girl loyally. "And anyway, what chance would Chad have against that brute Corrigan even though he was innocent? That man's a beast. And he was bound to arrest some one just to help his own reputation."

"That's it exactly," put in the Ramsay girl. "Of course Chad didn't help rob that place. He *couldn't* have," she stated with a conviction that she secretly wished she really felt. "He's been in jail already, though," she confessed, a bit hesitantly, a little later.

"In *jail!*" echoed Helen Brokaw excitedly. "For the robbery?"

McLeod laughed. "If he was he wouldn't be out now, believe me," said the medico. "You do more than a few weeks for a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar haul. No, if he's been pinched for anything it was for some misdemeanor and they kept him for just a few days. With Chad's uncertain temper I dare say he became peeved at some one and beat him up. Perhaps he didn't like the looks of some cop, since his recent experiences."

"I wish he'd beat up that man Corrigan," said Helen Brokaw. "That man's a perfect beast."

"Well," said McLeod, "it's all Chad's own fault, his getting in his present fix, anyway. If he wasn't such a stubborn, obstinate young pup he'd be here still. What's he going to do now?"

"I don't know," replied Claudia Ramsay. "Wasn't it lucky I had that ten dollars of Eddie Driggs' with me? He wouldn't take any money from me. But he has friends, in that part of town," she added as an afterthought. "He spoke of them—two men."

"Who are they?" asked Helen.

"A—a—forger and a safe nicker or something like that," she replied, trying to remember Illsley's words. McLeod laughed.

"He's very choice in his selection, isn't he? A forger and a safe blower. Well, that's Chad, all right. He's apt to have the darnedest friends and he doesn't care what they're like, either. And even a forger and a safe blower would be sure to cotton to the young devil, if they're normal. Everybody's been asking me about him, since he left. The minister two houses away missed him before he was gone a week and the ash man said he hoped he'd get clean away with the haul he made over in Brooklyn—he didn't care if Chad had turned burglar—when he read it in the papers."

Helen Brokaw smiled as the doctor made his comments and as she thought of Illsley her face softened.

"Poor Chad," she said. "I wonder what's going to happen to him. But whatever does I'll never believe he was in on that Pelham robbery, will you, Claudia?"

The other girl merely gazed silently out of the window by way of reply. She wasn't thinking of his guilt or innocence, just then. She was thinking how cold he had looked and how hungry. And she was wondering how far away Corrigan the detective was at the moment.

CHAPTER VIII.

From a distance Illsley watched Claudia Ramsay until she disappeared from the park and then under the light of a lamp-post he drew the ten-dollar bill from his pocket and eagerly eyed it. He hadn't eaten all day and here it was close to six o'clock in the afternoon. He was cold, tired and hungry but these feelings were absorbed in the new sensation of the acquisition of money.

Ten dollars! It meant food; good food and lots of it; all he could eat. And a clean bed. It was respectability for a short time again. His emotions were mostly elemental now; they had been for weeks. Hunger, weariness and fear—the fear of capture, of a sudden hand upon his shoulder at any moment—he was down to these primal emotions and the feel of actual money in his cold hand made his long sodden spirits rise suddenly, crazily. He laughed aloud in his temporary joy and relief, so that an elderly man passing at the moment turned and glanced at the ragged, damp young man curiously.

But the first thing was a barber shop and a badly needed hair cut and shave. He'd do the thing right—get warmed up and dry, too, before going to a restaurant—and then he'd really dine. He could stave off his hunger that long, he decided.

He left the park, walked rapidly south two blocks in Tenth Avenue and near Twenty-fifth Street the lights of a barber shop glittered out through the murky drizzle. Illsley knew the place. There was a pool room in the rear and it was a hang-out for suspicious characters of various kinds. Dope was secretly peddled there and it was a casual rendezvous for more than one gang of shady ilk. Illsley grinned dourly at the thought. It was the logical place for his barbering now. He was down to that.

He entered the shop and a deep sigh of relief escaped him as the stifling warmth of the place came over him. He hugged the stove in the rear of the shop while waiting his turn at a chair and softly chuckled in sheer contentment at the comfort the hot stove was bringing as his clothes began to dry and the heat crept over his chilled body.

Presently an empty chair awaited him and as the barber plied his scissors Illsley fell into a semidoze. He was roused from it some minutes later, however, by the noisy entrance of a new customer who bustled into the shop, called out a noisy, "Hello," closed the door with a bang and sat at the table to await an empty chair.

This newcomer was a little man, lithe, active, energetic in movement and fidgety. Illsley didn't particularly notice him at first but the latter's restlessness soon caught his attention and he looked into the mirror before him to catch the other's reflection.

It was the little man's eyes that held Illsley. They were small eyes, bright, black, shifty and furtive; and they reminded him of buttons set in a ferretlike face of putty. They were, somehow, familiar eyes, too. The young man vaguely felt that he had seen them before. He lazily searched his memory to place them but at the moment was unsuccessful and in sheer weariness he desisted and soon was in a state of semi-dozing once more as the barber's busy scissors clicked rhythmically about his head.

But again he was brought from his drowsy state by the newcomer. This time the latter was tapping the table with his knuckles. *"Tap-tap-tap—tap—tap-tap-tap-tap"* went the hand on the table top again and again. The cadence seemed faintly familiar to the young man in the barber's chair.

The tapping was regular. Illsley listened carelessly at first, then, in spite of himself he was listening closely to the sounds. There was the same cadence, again and again. *"Tap-tap-tap,"* then a pause, another *"tap,"* another pause and then four *"taps"* in quick succession. Over and over this was repeated. After further scrutiny of the little man's face Illsley once more racked his memory. The face was familiar; the sounds were vaguely familiar.

And then he recalled where he had seen this alert little individual. He had seen him three different times outside the alarm-company building, evidently waiting for some one. The little man had seemed furtive and impatient at these times, too. Moreover he had appeared to want to avoid being observed. Then, a moment later, as he glanced again at the tapping man's reflec-

tion in the mirror Illsley saw that the other's gaze was fixed upon the barber chairs—fixed so intently that it couldn't be casual or accidental.

For a moment the young man thought the intent gaze was directed at him. Perhaps, thought Illsley, he had been seen and remembered by the little fellow. But closer scrutiny in the glass before him disclosed the fact that the gaze was fastened not upon himself but upon the man in the chair to his left. The little man waiting at the table was very evidently trying to attract the attention of Illsley's neighbor in the chair without its being observed by any one else in the shop. The situation was becoming interesting.

Illsley now studied this neighbor of his in the chair at his left. He saw a big man, young, about thirty, he judged, with strong, regular features and crisp, black hair. The man was good looking—handsome, even—in a strong, bold way that was striking. His dark eyes were calculating, his mouth unscrupulous and the angle of his jaw was almost brutal in its bold strength. Yet, withal the face was an engaging as well as a striking one. A distinguishing mark was a large mole upon the man's left cheek.

The barber was very nearly through with the big man's hair cutting and would soon have him out of the chair, Illsley saw. The nervous little man evidently saw this, too, for his gaze became more intent than ever and his knuckles began to work anew in a very frenzy of tapping.

Illsley glanced again at the big man's reflection in the mirror and saw that his neighbor had become suddenly alert. He had evidently caught the tapping sounds and as he glanced, in his turn, at the mirror before him to observe the tapping individual at the table his eyes narrowed in a recognizing glance and his body became tense.

The two evidently knew each other. Then the big man in the chair began tapping on the arm of his barber chair. The man at the table tapped in response. This continued for some moments. They were signaling to each other, thought Illsley; the Morse code, perhaps, which he didn't understand. Evidently the ferret-eyed one was afraid that if he got in a barber chair, now, the big man would be finished and out of the shop before he could communicate with him secretly. And they obviously felt the need of secrecy; perhaps they were crooks and afraid of disclosing the fact that they knew each other.

Up to now the situation had been merely an interesting one for young Illsley, but when the big man resumed his tapping again and gave the familiar-sounding series of taps the thing suddenly assumed a decidedly personal aspect to the burglary suspect, for of a sudden he knew why the little man's tapping had seemed familiar. Familiar! Why wouldn't it be? *It was the Pelham private signal to the alarm company.*

The cadence was the same. When the jewelers opened or closed their shop they always sent in a signal to the alarm company. They sent it by pressing the lever on the electric instrument near the door. The signal registered on Galvo 49 by swings of the needle. And the swings were three quick ones, one slow one and then four quick ones. Three-one-four! Of course it was Pelham's opening and closing signal!

His nerves atingle, Illsley rapidly considered. They were discussing Pelham's, in their signal code. Perhaps they were talking of the robbery itself. He'd have to follow one of these men and see where it took him. It looked like an opportunity—a heaven-sent one, almost.

By this time the big man was out of the chair and the little man got in. A glance of understanding passed between them as their eyes met.

"Once over and jazz it up a bit," Illsley ordered his barber as the latter, finished with the hair cutting, lathered him for the shave.

"Same here," ordered the little man who seemed as impatient now as Illsley and it became a race, it seemed, between the two barbers. Illsley's proved the more speedy workman of the two and he had paid his bill and was out of the shop just as the shifty-eyed man got out of his chair.

Illsley waited in the doorway next the shop until the other came out and then followed him. The latter evidently had no fear of pursuit for he looked neither to right nor left nor the rear but walked briskly south to Twenty-third Street. There the big man met him and the pair took an eastbound crosstown car which Illsley also boarded. At First Avenue the two alighted, followed by Illsley and then the three boarded a southbound car.

At East Houston Street the two alighted with Illsley cautiously bringing up the rear and walked briskly east in East Houston

Street and entered an Italian restaurant, Giliano's. Illsley knew the place which was typical of that foreign section. The food there was excellent and privacy could be had by occupying one of the stalls at the rear of the long restaurant dining room.

The signaling pair entered one of these stalls and then carefully drew the curtain while Illsley, at their heels, entered the stall adjoining. He was almost faint with hunger now and the odor of well-cooked food in the place made him fairly ravenous.

"Regular dinner, sir?" inquired the waiter who presently entered.

"Anything, anything at all," replied Illsley. "Only bring it on fast and bring lots of it." When the waiter left he carefully inspected the thin partition separating his stall from the adjoining one. He located a slit about a quarter of an inch wide between two panels, and fixing his eye to this peered into the next stall. There he saw the two, giving their orders to a waiter. When the latter had left, Illsley placed his ear to the slit to catch the conversation in the next stall but it was conducted in such carefully guarded, low tones that save for a word here and there he was unable to understand anything.

A little later, after his food was brought, he was more successful. At intervals between mouthfuls of food he listened at the slit and once caught the word "Pelham," and then several other words that indicated the robbery at the jeweler's. It wasn't until the ragged young man had finished his meal, the first real meal he had consumed in days, that he was really successful in overhearing the next stall conversation, however. He had finished with his dessert and his coffee, had leaned back luxuriously and lit a cigarette when the voices in the next compartment brought him around to the opening in the partition in a hurry.

The voices were louder now and angry. The two were evidently quarreling about something. Illsley peered into the stall and saw the pair glaring at each other. Again he heard the name "Pelham." Again he heard mention of the robbery and then after a short wait he heard another name that caused him to start and almost cry out in surprise. The pair were squabbling over a division of the spoils. There were drinks on the table and their faces were flushed.

"I gotta have more or I'll squeal," Illsley heard the little man exclaim.

The big man snorted angrily at that. "Don't go making any cracks like that, Soapy, or I'll get you bumped off so fast you can't squeal!" was the response in a savage bass that had real threat and venom in it.

"You can't get away with nothin' like that, Joss," snarled the little beady-eyed man called Soapy. "They know me at headquarters an' I know where I stand."

"You don't stand anywhere with me, you little stool," came the vibrant bass again.

"I don't, hey? Well, lemme tell you you come across an' you do it damn fast! You couldn't of pulled off this job without me gettin' that dope from the alarm company outfit," replied Soapy.

The big man rose excitedly and placed a hand over Soapy's mouth. "Not so loud, you little fool," he snarled. "We can't discuss it here. Come up to my apartment and let's talk it over there. We'll be safe."

Tingling with excitement Illsley watched until they had paid the waiter and left and then he followed them out carefully and some discreet paces in the rear.

He trailed them to First Avenue, took the First Avenue surface car uptown with them and alighted with them at Twenty-third Street. Turning into Twenty-fourth Soapy glanced around furtively and Illsley quickly dodged into a doorway, his heart beating violently. He saw them finally enter an apartment house near Second Avenue and after waiting a while sauntered by and made note of the number.

Illsley sauntered slowly west, his mind in a quandary, his brow corrugated in thought. His first instinct was to follow the pair into the apartment house and locate the apartment. Perhaps, he thought, he might be able to surprise them. Reflection, however, told him that that would get him nothing. He would surprise them, all right enough, but he couldn't overpower them without an effective weapon and he had no revolver. They, furthermore, undoubtedly had. Also, even should he gain access to the big man's apartment, there was no assurance that he would be able to locate the stolen jewels. Perhaps they were hidden somewhere else. And once discovered in the act, even though he safely got away, they would be more on their guard than ever; would flee, perhaps, and his chance would be gone.

He must be careful and he must form some plan. "Pretty soft for those chaps,"

thought Illsley as he sauntered slowly along. "They've got the stuff and I'm in hiding from the police for the robbery." Then he thought of Claudia Ramsay—and some words of hers came to his mind with sudden force.

"Make use of your friends," she had admonished him. And, "Make use of your pals," was what Brick Hartigan and Slick Benny had also advised. Of a sudden it came to him. He would accept this oft-proffered advice. He'd make use of his friends. The plan flashed through his brain. He had the very friends for it, too. Friends who could help him put it over if any one could--a professional safe cracker and a forger!

Illsley hurried to Twenty-third Street, took the surface car west, alighted at Tenth Avenue and rode uptown. At Thirty-ninth Street he got out and walked rapidly to the room in which he had lived for a short time with Hartigan and Slick Benny.

Hurriedly scrambling up the two flights to the apartment he pressed the bell and, getting no immediate response, pressed it again and again. He was in a torment of anxiety. What if the place was vacant? But after some minutes he heard footsteps within and Mrs. Hennerty, the woman from whom they rented the room, peered out at him.

"Oh," she said shortly, "so it's you, is it? Your two friends been lookin' for you. They was mad when they found you beat it away."

"Are they in?" he asked anxiously. "I've got to see them, right away. It's very important."

"No they ain't in," she replied. "But you just better go on in their room and wait for 'em. They'll be real mad if they know you was here an' I didn't keep you."

He went into the room he had occupied with them and waited, trying to possess his soul in patience the while. He nervously smoked cigarette after cigarette as he mentally went over the events of that evening and at short intervals went to the window and glanced down into Tenth Avenue for sight of their approach.

It was now ten o'clock. After an agonizing wait that seemed hours eleven o'clock passed and still no sign of the two. At twelve o'clock, Illsley, tired and hardly able to keep his eyes open despite his excitement, was about to make ready for bed when he heard a heavy step outside and the next instant the door opened and Hartigan and Garstein stepped into the room.

They stared in surprise at Illsley and then grinned their pleasure at seeing him.

"Say," rumbled the big man in his vibrant bass, "where you been? What's happened to you? We been keepin' an eye peeled for you ever since you beat it away from here. What was the matter? Didn't you like our hotel, bo?"

"We thought maybe the bulls got you," said Garstein. "That's a swell way to treat a coupla pals."

"We thought maybe you turned yegg. Got with a safe mob or something," joked Hartigan, lighting a pipe.

Illsley grinned, then instantly sobered. "That's what I'm going to do," said he. Hartigan laughed, then noted the tense expression on the other's face. His own immediately became businesslike.

"Is this on the level?" he asked.

"The straightest thing I ever said," was the reply. The big man glanced at his associate and then at Illsley.

"Damned if I don't think you mean it," said he.

"Of course I do," said Illsley. "That's why I came here. I've got a job all laid out. I got on to it to-day. It's a real one. And I need you two to put it over. But we'll have to work fast. And we'll start doping it out right now—if the terms suit you. I'll pay you three thousand, Brick, and you two thousand, Benny."

Hartigan and Garstein glanced at each other. Then they keenly scanned Illsley's expression, noted the suppressed excitement in his face, his determined mouth and his feverish, blazing eyes.

"Well I'll be switched!" said Hartigan softly. "He does mean it."

"I sure do," replied the ragged young man. "Are the terms satisfactory?"

Hartigan and Garstein looked at each other again and then back at Illsley.

"Sure!" they replied in chorus.

CHAPTER IX.

"Where is this job?" asked Hartigan when the three were comfortably seated in conference about the table.

"In a private apartment in Twenty-fourth Street—I think."

"How big is it?"

"Ought to be a hundred and fifty thou-

sand dollars' worth of stuff—jewelry. A necklace worth thirty-five thousand, another worth twenty-five and rings and pins."

The big man whistled softly. "Say," he demanded, "how'd you get onto this?" The other told him.

"It's the Pelham stuff," he explained. "This big fellow's got it somewhere—a young fortune—and I'm hiding from the cops for it."

The eyes of Hartigan and Garstein opened wide in surprise at this statement. They knew that Illsley was wanted by the police but they didn't know that it was for the Pelham robbery and he had never told them he was innocent.

"Say," rumbled the big man, "what made you beat it then, if you wasn't in on it?"

Illsley snorted.

"You fellows ought to know," he replied. "You know as well as I do there are chaps doing time right now in the 'pen' who are innocent. But they can't prove it. And I couldn't prove it. They found a fountain pen of mine on the premises and Corrigan, a detective, swore he'd get me. Said he had enough to send me up. I was up against it and maybe I didn't know it. I wasn't taking any chances on being railroaded by a detective just to make out a good case for himself. And anyway I was broke and couldn't have got a decent lawyer; couldn't even have got out on bail waiting trial. So I just beat it."

"Well, what's your idea?" asked Slick Benny, lighting a cigarette.

"The idea is this: Those fellows stole this stuff—with the help of some one in the alarm company; *and I'm going to steal it right back from them.* If that isn't poetic justice there isn't any this side of heaven."

"How d'you know there's still a hundred an' fifty thousand dollars' worth of stuff? Maybe they split already with this alarm company bloke?" said Hartigan.

Illsley shook his head.

"I know they haven't. He won't touch his share until it's turned into money. He isn't taking any chance of having the stuff found on him. And they haven't dared to dispose of it yet. That came out in their conversation."

"Who are these blokes?" asked Benny.

Illsley described them. "The little runt was called Soapy. The big man had a mole under his left eye. He was called Joss and Josser." Garstein's eyes glistened knowingly at this. "That's 'Soapy' Rehg," he said with angry contempt. "I know all about him—the little rat! He's so crooked he uses a corkscrew for a ruler an' I got an idea he's a stool for a headquarters guy. Abe Sonnberg's his mouthpiece. An' Abe beat a case for me not long ago—a dick planted a gun on me—an' I saw this Soapy in Abe's office; but he didn't pipe me."

"Is this Abe a detective?" asked the innocent Illsley.

Garstein grunted his disdain of such ignorance. "Naw; he's a mouthpiece, I'm tellin' ya. A lawyer. But I don't know the big guy," he added. Neither, evidently, did Hartigan.

"Well," said the latter, "how'd you know this stuff's in that big bloke's joint? An' if it ain't planted there, how're we gonna get it? We gotta know where they got it planted to lift it."

"I don't know for certain that it's in the apartment," replied Illsley, "but I'm betting it is, all right, from the way they spoke. But I do know this Josser's got it somewhere. I've got it all doped out. Isn't there some one this Soapy chap might be expecting a note from at almost any time?"

"Sure," replied Slick Benny. "Abe Sonnberg. Soapy's a witness right now in one of Abe's cases."

"And would Soapy think it natural for Sonnberg to ask him to meet him some other place than his office?"

"Sure. Abe's as crooked as Rehg. He's liable right now to be wising up Soapy on some crooked evidence to cop his case. An' he wouldn't pull that stuff in his own office unless he was alone with Soapy. Sure. He'd be apt to ask Rehg to see him most anywhere down on the East Side—on some street corner or in the back room of a gin mill."

"Well, then," continued Illsley, "here's my plan: get this Soapy to come here—and we'll give him the third degree and sweat the hiding place of these jewels out of him."

"How'll we get him up here?" asked the other scornfully. "Slip him an invite to tea, maybe?"

Illsley frowned impatiently. "Oh, I've got that all planned out. You can forge Sonnberg's name can't you? That's part of your—er—profession. We'll write a note, purporting to come from Sonnberg, asking him to call here and you sign the lawyer's name to it. But of course you'd have to

have some writing of Sonnberg's to work from."

"I got it," replied Garstein promptly. "I got letters from Abe; from the time he got me off that gun-packing case."

"But we ought to have it on his office letterhead too, I suppose, to make it more convincing," suggested Illsley who had planned the thing to the smallest detail. "I don't suppose you have any of the letterheads."

Garstein grinned. "Nope. How would I?" he asked. "Except the ones he done his letters to me on. But I'll get some. It's a cinch. I'll phone up his office to-morrow morning, after ten—when he'll probably be in court. I'll make sure he's out. Then I'll go down there an' ask for him on some excuse an' before the dame there gets through tellin' me when Abe'll be back I'll lift a couple letterheads an' envelopes. That's easy."

"That might work," observed Hartigan thoughtfully as he filled his evil-smelling pipe. "Say," he said with a complimentary grin, turning to Illsley, "you got a real knob on you, kid. You can lay out a job swell."

The following morning by eleven o'clock the dapper Jew was back in the Tenth Avenue room with several of the lawyer's letterheads and office envelopes. Illsley with great care wrote the note, asking Rehg to call at the room, Garstein took it to a public stenographer to be typed on Sonnberg's stationery and then he forged the lawyer's signature to it.

The sealed note was then dispatched by a telegraph messenger to Soapy's East Side address and the trio, after notifying their landlady to direct any one inquiring for Sonnberg to their room, waited for results.

It was about one-thirty o'clock when the note was sent off and at six that evening there had been no sign of the awaited little man with the beady eyes. Seven o'clock passed, then eight, with still no Soapy in sight.

"Hope he didn't wise up to the fake," growled Hartigan as he lit the gas.

"I hope he didn't try to get Sonnberg on the phone to verify it," said Illsley anxiously.

"Naw, he wouldn't do that," consoled Garstein, "unless he thought it was phony. He'd think Abe wrote the note saying to call here instead of the office just because he didn't want to talk over the wire or at his office about it." And then, as the three were talking in subdued voices and Illsley was beginning to fear a slip-up in the plan a rap sounded at the door.

The trio leaped to their feet. Hartigan motioned the others to keep quiet and noiselessly went to the door. As the rap was impatiently repeated he opened the door and then quickly stepped behind it, out of sight of the visitor.

The shifty-eyed Soapy stepped into the room, an inquiring look in his eyes, when Hartigan quickly grasped him tightly in his powerful arms and then gagged the surprised visitor by deftly inserting a handkerchief into the latter's mouth as he opened it to cry out.

Garstein locked the door. Hartigan forced Rehg into a chair, tied him to it securely with a rope and brought a revolver from his bureau drawer. The amazed little man grunted and struggled violently for several moments, darting venomous glances at the trio meanwhile but after a short interval his struggles ceased and he sat there quietly enough, withal, but with hatred as well as amazement in his shifty, black little eyes.

"Now, you little rat!" rumbled Hartigan, holding the gun on the prisoner menacingly. "We got you here for some info. Tell us where this Josser's got that Pelham stuff planted or I'll tear you apart!" He removed the gag from the prisoner's mouth. "An' don't try to yell any for help," he threatened, "'cause there's no one in this joint but us to hear you, anyway, an' I'll blow your roof off if you do. Now, c'm'on!" the burly, red-haired man rumbled. "Come through. Where's that stuff planted?"

The beady-eyed little man in the chair gulped a few times with the removal of the gag, glanced brazenly at the three and then grinned evilly.

"Aw, can that stuff!" he said, not at all frightened. "I'm wise you're a bunch of dicks in a bum disguise. I ain't sayin' a word to give myself away. You can't bluff me."

"Where's it planted?" repeated Hartigan, cruelly twisting the little man's arm. "C'm'on now—kick in with the dope."

"Nothin' stirrin'," whined the other, grimacing with the pain. "I know my rights. Youse birds can't pull no third-degree stuff on me. The newspaper's been pannin' hell outa the commissioner for that, last week. An' youse guys know it, too.

You dassen't pull that stuff no more. Besides I'm solid with a headquarters guy. He'll hear about this! He'll have you all canned! I ain't leavin' no mob o' plain bulls get away with nothin' like that."

Again Hartigan applied the twist but it merely raised additional cries of pain, murderous glances and threatenings to have the trio discharged. The evil-eyed Soapy stubbornly refused to give the wanted information.

"That's right. Keep right on," he yelped at each twist of his arm. "But youse just wait'll I squeal to the papers. You'll get yours from headquarters then!"

Continued threatening and additional pain failed to bring any results from the alternately wailing and derisively grinning Soapy. He was firmly convinced that the three were detectives and he was just as firmly convinced that with the recent exposures of the police third-degree methods by the newspapers and the public clamor against them his captors wouldn't dare go very much further with their torture.

After several minutes of futile attempt the big man left the prisoner and motioned the other two to a distant corner of the big room.

"What'll we do?" demanded Hartigan in a low voice of anger. "This little rat won't squeal. He thinks we're plain bulls an' he knows they gotta be damn careful what they do with prisoners now, with the administration here gettin' panned proper by the papers. We can't croak him," he added in a whisper. "It wouldn't get us nothin' an' besides I ain't ever bumped a guy off yet an' I don't begin here."

Slick Benny swore, softly but fervently. "Well," said he with a baleful glare at the tied-up little man who was now derisively grinning at them, "if we can't make him squeal I guess it's all off. But I'm gonna hand him a couple just for luck before we turn him loose."

Illsley stepped forward at this. "We aren't turning him loose," said he grimly. "Give me that gun."

"What are *you* gonna do?" asked Hartigan, noting the other's grim expression.

"Make him come through—or something's going to happen," was the quiet response. "Give me that gun."

Hartigan gave it to him.

Illsley's feverish-looking eyes were blazing with an unnatural brightness. His haggard face was tense and drawn and more grim with purpose than it had ever been before in all the young man's erstwhile carefree life. He was really ill from exposure to cold and undernourishment and only his determination was keeping him going now.

He visioned the stolen jewelry. A hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth! Here was an opportunity to get it—an opportunity that seemed to be swiftly slipping away. With the thought his feverish eyes blazed again. He didn't know himself, at the moment, exactly what he was going to do to make this prisoner talk; but he meant to get this much-wanted information—somehow.

He strode over to the prisoner in the chair, the other two following. "Now," he said, his mouth a straight line and his jaw outthrust, "where's that Pelham stuff? I know this Josser's got it. I heard you two in Giliano's. I was in the booth right next to yours."

The prisoner grinned widely at Illsley. "Say," he said contemptuously, "*you* gotta fat chance of knowing, angel face! You must be new on the force," he added derisively as he keenly noted the difference between the ragged young man with his cultivated accent and the two others. "Go an' ask Information!"

Illsley jammed the gun against the prisoner's stomach so that it hurt. "Now listen, carefully, you," he snarled. "*And get this!*" He snapped off each word viciously. "We're not the police—or detectives. We're three crooks. We want that stuff as bad as you do and we're going after it the same way. So don't get off any more bunk about the newspapers and the third degree. You haven't got the police with an audience of newspaper reporters to deal with now. We don't have to be as considerate as they do. We're out for this stuff and we're going to get it—or we'll get *you!*"

He thrust his haggard, gaunt face close to the beady-eyed little man's.

"Take a good look at me," said Illsley with ominous quiet. "Do I look like a cop? Did you ever see a cop starving—or a detective? Look at me. I've been half starved for days. With the pen in front of me and the police behind me. There's a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in front of me—now—with only you between. I'm not playing a cop's game. I'm playing *your* game. And I don't care any more for life than you

do. You know what that means! I'm desperate and I'm going to make you tell me where that stuff is or I'm going to the chair for your murder. Now you come across, you crooked little weasel, and come fast or I'll drill this bullet clean through your guts!" and he jammed the gun once more against the other's stomach.

"I don't know where——" began the other.

"Where is it?" snapped Illsley viciously with another painful jab of the gun.

"I tell you I ain't got it," insisted Soapy, his face now serious as he cautiously watched Illsley's unnaturally bright eyes.

"Where *is* it?" repeated Illsley. His face was white and his tone was quiet now, and nasty. He was working himself up into a state where anything might happen.

"I can't tell you nothin'," stubbornly cried the prisoner as concern slowly crept into his shifty eyes at sight of Illsley's face. He rather thought that Illsley was either slightly demented or perhaps doped. And he was becoming more nervous each instant. Hartigan, in full possession of his faculties, even with a gun, was safe. He wouldn't kill, Rehg was sure. But this white-faced, gaunt, quiet-voiced youth! Anything might happen. The gun might go off unintentionally as he worked himself up into a quiet passion and nervously fingered the trigger.

"All right," said Illsley, quietly. But the look in his blazing eyes brought sudden fear into the little man's heart. "Brick, you and Benny get ready to beat it. I'm going to kill this little rat if I sizzle for it, if he won't come through. And I don't want you two implicated. Now"—and he turned again to Soapy—"you've got just one minute to start your story or say your prayers. Which is it?"

The little man hesitated.

"Which is it," was the quietly repeated demand, with a prod of the gun.

"Wait," Soapy yelped as the gun again touched his stomach. "Take that rod away, damn you." There was fear in his shifty eyes. "Wait—I'll—tell."

"That's better," said the other evenly. "Now, just one thing more," he continued as Soapy was wondering how far a story of incorrect facts would be believed. "*Give it straight.* I'm going to keep you here while we go for it. If we don't get that stuff you'll never get out of this room by yourself. So you'd better be as helpful as you can."

"That stuff's in Josser Randolph's apartment, on the second floor in the rear; it's in the middle room," said Soapy, slowly as the three gathered closely about him.

"Exactly where?" demanded Illsley.

"In the safe. It's a little safe. It's in a corner, made into a seat, with a cloth cover over it and some cushions on it. They's a picture in a gold frame, of a dame in a blue dress with red roses on her hangin' over the safe."

"What's the combination of the safe?" demanded Illsley.

"I don't know that," was the reply. "Randolph'd never leave me have it."

"What is it?" barked the other, danger in his tone. "Come through!"

"I don't know," whined Soapy. "Before Gawd I don't. An' take that damn rod away from me. It'll go off!" There was that in the little man's fear-filled eyes which meant he spoke the truth. But the three had the information they wanted.

"Now," said Illsley, "one thing more. When is this Josser Randolph apt to be away from his place. You'd better give this straight, too. Because if we go there and find you've double crossed us and Randolph's waiting for us, we'll tell him how you've squealed on him—and if we don't happen to get you he will. Now shoot."

The little man gulped once or twice. It came hard. But he told what was wanted.

"He's most always out at night till after twelve. But it's sure that he'll be out tonight pretty late. I happen to know that. But I don't know when he'll blow back."

"All right," said Illsley and he turned to Hartigan. "Now the job itself is up to you, Brick. But I'm going along. How'll you arrange it?"

"Easy," replied the big cracksman. "We'll leave Benny here with a gun to keep Soapy from gettin' too frisky while we're gone. Me, I'll beat it down in the saloon an' telephone a guy I know to come with a car. He'll drive us over an' keep the bus waitin' while we're in there, ready for a fast get-away. I better bring up some grub for Benny, too, I guess, while I'm downstairs. He might starve to death if we don't get back on time," and he was gone.

A half hour later he returned with a cold lunch for Garstein and motioned to Illsley to get ready.

"Mike'll be here with his car in about an hour," he explained, glancing at his watch.

"That'll be about half past ten if he's on time. We can wait around a little then; don't wanna be too soon." He went to a drawer and got out a steel drill and brace and two pieces of steel, each piece nearly two feet in length, one with an end like a crowbar and the other with a strong steel hook attached to it. He wrapped the articles in oilcloth, ready to carry under his overcoat.

"You look sick, kid," said he, glancing keenly at young Illsley. "You oughta be in bed. S'pose you go there, huh? I can do this job alone."

But Illsley stubbornly shook his head. "I'm all right," he replied grimly. "I'm going with you."

"All right," agreed Hartigan carelessly. "You're the boss."

It was considerably more than an hour later when the sound of an auto horn was heard and Hartigan glanced outside to receive a signal from his friend in the car. And it was close to midnight before the two left the room, ready for the job in Josser Randolph's apartment. The big cracksman seemed cool, even casual in manner as he left. But Illsley's pulse was racing madly as he thought of the coming expedition. And as he thought of the Pelham loot his feverish eyes blazed brightly.

"A hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth," he muttered to the big red-haired man as they left the room together.

CHAPTER X.

The big cracksman leaned forward in the powerful car, built for speed, and gave his directions to the driver, a capable-looking individual with bold eyes and a determined cast to his hard-bitten face. The fellow nodded curtly.

"All right. I gotcha, Brick," he said and they were off, rolling easily down Tenth Avenue.

"Some boat we got," said Hartigan admiringly to Illsley. "This bus moves if we hafta get away from the bulls."

"Good!" muttered Illsley, hoping that sort of speed wouldn't prove necessary.

Down to Twenty-third Street they drove, across Twenty-third to Second Avenue, and back through Second Avenue to Twenty-fourth, where the car stopped.

Hartigan got out. "Stay here at the corner a while," he ordered the chauffeur. "Wait about ten minutes, then bring the bus up to the second house from the corner here, on Twenty-fourth. Keep the engine runnin', too, bo. We might hafta make a quick get-away if something happens."

Again the chauffeur nodded his bullet head.

"Gotcha, Brick," said he. Hartigan motioned Illsley out of the car. The latter alighted and the pair walked slowly toward the second building from the corner, a good-sized, modern apartment house.

"There's a fire escape in back," whispered Hartigan. "So this Soapy says. We'll try it there, first." Illsley silently nodded. His heart was beating a tattoo. His eyes were like burned spots in his head and his lips were tightly drawn.

Hartigan made a quick, expert survey of the premises, glanced cautiously about and then motioned to his companion. He led the way along the side of the building to the rear. There, as far as the pair could gather in the darkness, all was clear.

"Follow me up, easy an' quiet," whispered Hartigan and began to ascend the fire escape. Illsley carefully followed, his nerves atingle. Here was burglary indeed, he realized. If he were caught now, breaking and entering, and the jewelry by any chance was not in the apartment or if Josser Randolph perchance should surprise them, not a thing in the world could save the two from being held on a charge of attempted burglary. Then, indeed, thought Illsley, would he be apprehended by the police and do time for a real offense.

Hartigan stopped on the second-floor landing at a window.

"It's this one—the Josser's," he whispered as Illsley came up. The latter nodded. "How'll we get in?" he asked.

The big cracksman gave a low laugh.

"That part's a cinch," he replied softly. "Here, you keep a lookout while I jimmy this window." There was a slight noise as the big man inserted the end of the jimmy under the window sash, a slightly louder sound of something breaking as he applied the great strength of his huge forearms to the small crowbar; the window catch gave and Brick glanced cautiously around.

"Safe so far," he whispered, and carefully raised the window and stepped inside. Illsley was at his heels. Once inside the cracksman carefully lowered the window shade, then twinkled a flash light about.

"It's the middle of the three rooms," said Illsley hoarsely.

The other nodded. "Yeah, I know," he said. "But we gotta fix everything for a get-away back here." He raised the window to its full height, removed a chair in the path of retreat and turned to Illsley.

"If we hafta move fast you beat it right straight through here," said he. "Take a good look. It'll be dark—I'll douse any light there is—so remember the layout." Illsley nodded.

His flash light twinkling ahead of him the big cracksman went through the entire three rooms. He seemed to the excited Illsley insanely cautious for one so cool before beginning his operations. But Hartigan, schooled by experience, was taking no chance of a surprise. When he discovered that the place was empty except for themselves he stopped in the middle room, which Randolph evidently used as a sitting room, and drew the shade there, too. The last room from the rear—but the first room as one entered from the hallway—was evidently the Josser's bedroom, though there was no bed there but a cot, with a cover over it by day, to give it the appearance of a divan in a lounging room. Here, also, the big man drew the window shade.

"Here's the picture of the dame with the red roses," whispered Hartigan as he flashed his light upon the wall of the center room and disclosed a painting in a gilt frame.

"And this must be the safe," said Illsley in a whisper as he removed two cushions from a square-shaped object that had a light linen covering over it. "It's hard. It *is* the safe," he chuckled softly in pure delight. "He's got it covered like a chair. Oh, boy; nothing but luck!"

Hartigan closed the door between the room that opened off the fire escape and the middle room. Then he turned on the electric light.

"Safe enough now," he whispered. He removed the cover from the safe and carefully examined the square, solid-looking affair.

Illsley's face was dripping perspiration despite the coolness of the night, yet he was more intensely fascinated, in spite of his suppressed excitement, than he had ever before been in his life.

"How're you going to open it?" he asked, glancing helplessly at the safe which looked formidable to him. "Blow it?"

Hartigan grunted. "Naw. Not to crack this little box. I could almost bite it open," he said. "I brung a can opener along." He drew the steel drill and the two pieces of steel, which he had carefully wrapped in oilcloth back in his own room before leaving, from under his overcoat and then bolted the two steel rods together. It now made a steel bar about three and a half feet long with a crowbar effect at one end and a steel hook near the other.

"That it?" asked Illsley, examining the tool.

"That's it—a can opener," grinned Hartigan. Then he put on a pair of gloves, turned the small safe upside down and picked up his steel drill and brace.

"Can you drill through that?" asked Illsley, watching, fascinated, but with doubt in his drawn face. The other grunted.

"Pipe!" he replied. "Some o' these boxes 're a crime to sell. They got a thin sheet of cast iron on the bottom, some of 'em, an' then a layer of concrete. Easy stuff." He drilled through the metal laboriously, then through the concrete layer. Illsley watched breathlessly, forgetting in his interest all danger of a possible surprise. The big man was as calm and cool as though he were at work on a day's job in a factory.

"What now?" asked Illsley huskily.

"Rip the door right off," replied the other in a businesslike tone. He inserted the crowbar end in the hole, applied leverage against the safe door until the steel bulged slightly and presented a slight opening, then he caught the strong steel hook into the opening and wrenched and tugged. There was a grating, tearing sound and after a series of subdued grunts the big, red-haired man had ripped the safe door open.

Illsley reached into the safe, felt a soft object and withdrew it. It was a velvet bag. Opening it he glanced at the contents. His eyes glistened as brightly as the precious stones themselves.

"It's the Pelham stuff, all right," said Illsley. Hartigan leaned over and gazed, his hard eyes glinting.

"It's all here," he replied in a whisper as he drew out a handful of the contents. Pearls and diamonds met his calculating eyes. They were in necklaces and in rings, pins and brooches.

"Lord!" exclaimed the cracksman as he

returned them to the velvet bag. "A fortune—and right in our mitts."

Illsley nodded and wiped the dripping perspiration from his fevered face.

"It's almost worth doing time for," he whispered in awe. Hartigan put the velvet bag in his overcoat pocket, unjointed his can opener and wrapped it up again in the oilcloth with his steel drill.

"Now let's make a get-away," he said briskly after a careful glance about. "This Josser's li'ble to bust in most any minute."

Almost with the words they heard a click at the front-room door, a key turned in the lock and they heard a heavy tread. Hartigan sprang for the electric-light button and the place was in darkness.

"Cripes!" he muttered. Then, "To the back window, kid! Fast!" he rumbled and led the way. In a mad scramble the pair reached the window, climbed out and were on the fire escape. They saw the rooms lighted after them and the big figure of Randolph running to the window just as they scurried down the fire escape.

A vile epithet was hurled after them, then a shot rang out in the night. Illsley felt a hot, stinging pain along his cheek but kept on going. The shot aroused the apartment house. Heads came out of windows; cries floated down to the racing pair. Then a police whistle sounded, loud and clear upon the night air.

The two sped along the building, were across the sidewalk in front in a jump and into the waiting auto. In a second the fast motor car, which had its engine running, was speeding up Madison Avenue and after zigzagging through several blocks the driver turned west to Broadway and sped up that thoroughfare at a law-breaking speed. It was not until they were uptown on Riverside Drive that the car slowed down and then came to a stop.

"A clean get-away," exclaimed Hartigan as he glanced about. "We're lucky. We should of been out o' that joint long before." Then he glanced at Illsley and whistled softly. That young man was weakly leaning back in his seat, a faint grin on his lips and blood trickling in a steady stream down his right cheek and onto his coat.

"He got ya!" exclaimed the big man.

"It isn't bad, I guess," replied Illsley, grinning faintly.

"Here, I'll tie it up," said Hartigan, getting a large handkerchief from his trousers pocket. He tied it about Illsley's face to stop the flow, then leaned forward to the driver.

"We gotta get to a doctor, Mike, quick," said he. "This kid might be hurt bad. An' we gotta get to one who won't get nosey an' talk or we'll all be in stir to-night."

Illsley roused himself at that. "Drive to Stuyvesant Square—if it's safe," said he. "I know a doctor there. He won't talk." The phlegmatic driver nodded and the car turned and sped south. At Illsley's direction it turned into Stuyvesant Square and stopped before the old-fashioned house across from the park which the latter knew so well.

Hartigan got out of the car, helped the other out and supported him to the stoop. Then he rang the doctor's bell violently and insistently. For some time there was no response. The house was in darkness, its occupants in slumber, evidently. The big man knocked loudly; then, still getting no response, he kept up an insistent ringing and knocking for several minutes. By this time the first two floors were aroused. A girl's head showed from a front window above and Doctor McLeod in pajamas and bath robe opened the door narrowly and peered out at them.

"What's wanted?" he called through the half-opened door as he saw the figure of a big man holding a smaller, drooping form.

"There's a guy here; he's hurt," answered Hartigan.

"Tell him it's Chad," said Illsley.

"It's Chad," rumbled the big man. "He's hurt. Maybe bad."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated McLeod and came out on the stoop. "Bring him in," he ordered as he went back inside to light up.

The pair entered the doctor's apartment as he turned on the lights and Illsley sank into a big easy-chair with a sigh of relief.

"Good heavens! What's happened?" asked the medico as he glanced at the gore-smeared young man.

"I've been shot," replied Illsley with a weak grin.

"Here, drink this," ordered McLeod, placing a glass to the other's drawn lips. He removed the blood-soaked handkerchief and made a hasty examination. "Nothing serious," said he lightly. "I'll go heat some water."

Stepping into the hallway he met the two girls from the apartment upstairs, bundled up in dressing gowns and sleepy-eyed. They

had also been aroused by the racket on the stoop.

"We heard some one call, 'Chad,' What is it?" asked Claudia Ramsay.

"It *is* Chad, the young devil," said the doctor with a grin he couldn't repress. The two girls hurried into the parlor and stopped short at sight of the young man in the chair and the big, red-headed man with the long scar on his hard face standing near by.

"Hello," greeted Illsley as they entered. In a moment the smaller girl was beside him, feeling a little faint as she looked at his crimson-stained face and the dark, thin stream that trickled down onto his dirty coat.

"Chad!" she gasped. "What's happened?"

He smiled at her weakly. "I've been shot. Nothing serious. Don't worry about me, Claudia," said he. "Just look at *this*," and he piled the contents of the velvet bag upon the table just as the doctor returned.

Two pearl necklaces, diamond brooches, diamond rings, diamond pins and diamonds in bracelets—the profuse pile of jewels lay there glittering and glistening in the electric light from the table lamp.

The little painter, in her bright-colored dressing gown, with her long, heavy, chestnut hair hanging to her waist in a rich profusion, stood and gazed, big-eyed, first at the jewels and then at the young man and then at the big, red-headed man with the hard face and the ugly scar. And a sudden suspicion flashed through her mind.

"Chad, where did you get them?" she asked in a dry voice as the doctor dressed the youth's cheek. "Whose are they?"

"Mine," he replied, "now."

"Whose *were* they?" she asked fearfully.

"Pelham's," was the laconic response.

"Chad, dear," she said, coming to him and looking down into his eyes, "tell me the truth. You didn't *steal* them? You *didn't*, did you? *Please* say you didn't, Chad!" she begged, a pleading note in her warm voice.

He nodded, a bit proudly. "I stole them," said he, smiling up at her.

"Not the Pelham jewels?" gasped Helen Brokaw, awe in her tones.

The doctor and the two girls stared, first at the fortune glistening and twinkling in brilliant lights upon the table, then at the young man and finally at the big cracksman.

"I went after these things—and I've got them," said Illsley, his voice growing fainter. "I've used my friends, at last, as you folks have continually advised me to. And I'm not broke any more, believe me. Luckily I had the right kind of friends for the job; an expert safe cracker and a forger; scratcher is the technical term in the trade, I find. To say nothing of myself, who had enough luck to get on to it, enough imagination to conceive it and enough brains to plan it. By the way"—and he waved his arm toward Hartigan—"let me present my friend, Mr. Brick Hartigan, one of the most expert safe men outside of captivity. They won't squeal on you, Brick," he assured the latter. "They're all friends of mine, if they *are* honest."

"Chad! Please say you didn't steal them. You're not a *burglar!*" pleaded the little painter, a catch in her voice, her soft eyes pleading.

"Lady, you don't know this guy," said the big cracksman with a broad grin. "I actually cracked that safe but this young bloke laid out the hull joint. If he ain't one of the smartest guys to smell an' frame a job I ever seen then a harness bull ain't got flat feet. You gotta admit it. He sure is some clever gopher, that kid."

The girl's eyes blazed. "Then you *are* a thief," she exclaimed. "You intimated that you would steal, if you hadn't already done it, that day in the park. But I didn't believe you meant it. Oh—Chad——" The anger left her face. There was pain in her eyes and agony in her voice.

"I'll explain, Claudia," he interrupted, with a faint smile. "Of course I committed burglary to get that stuff. But—honey—I——"

The sentence was never finished. His face went dead white, his voice trailed away to nothing and he collapsed in his chair.

The two girls turned pale. "Larry—he isn't—dead?" whispered the Ramsay girl.

"Of course not. He's merely fainted. Loss of blood and undernourishment; the latter, mostly. He'll be all right soon. But I guess I'd better get him to bed."

With Illsley safe in bed Hartigan unobtrusively left the place, jumped into the car outside and was driven back to the Tenth Avenue room. There he found Garstein still guarding the little, shifty-eyed Soapy.

"How'd you come out," asked the former. "Safe to untie this bird?"

Hartigan nodded.

"Yeah, he slipped us the straight dope.

We got the stuff. We can let this little runt beat it now."

They untied the little man and, after attempting to get the kinks out of his stiff joints, he turned to them with a baleful look on his face.

"Wait'll I squeal on you two blokes," he threatened. "I'll turn the bulls on you!" And he shook his fist at them. Hartigan grinned but Garstein turned in reply.

"How about you an' this Randolph gun, hey?" he queried pleasantly. "I s'pose the bulls wouldn't like to get wise to who actually cracked that Pelham box, hey? The kid's got the stuff now but who was it first laid out that joint, huh?"

"Well, wait'll I squeal to Josser, then," howled little Rehg, almost beside himself with rage. "He'll get youse bot' bumped off, believe me, when he gets this!"

Again Garstein grinned good-naturedly. "Say," he drawled, contemptuously, "when you wise Josser Randolph how you squealed on him an' left a hundred an' fifty thousand cold get lifted right from under his beezer your carcass won't be worth a year-old Third Avenoo transfer. He'll be some glad to hear who wised us up to his joint, hey? Oh, he'll think it's one helluva swell joke, the Josser will. But *you* won't do no laughing, you little stool you! An' anyway I——"

But further comment was unheard by Soapy, as he had left the place.

"So you got that stuff all right, huh?" asked Slick Benny again, turning to the other.

Hartigan nodded.

"But where's the kid gone to?"

"He got shot—makin' our get-away."

"Croaked?"

"Naw; got pinked in the cheek by this Randolph when we're beatin' it down the fire escape. He had me take him 'round to a sawbones in Stuyvesant Square."

Slick Benny Garstein glanced shrewdly at the big, red-headed man with his lazy-lidded eyes.

"Say," said he slowly, a sly grin creeping over his thin face, "ain't we overlooked a nice little bet?"

"How come?" grunted the other.

"That stuff—all that ice—an' the necklace—the Pelham haul. What's wrong with *us* ownin' that?" The other glanced back keenly at his associate. The thought had been in his own mind, also, but only vaguely as yet. There was a silence between them.

"We ain't exactly Santa Claus—or damn fools. Why should we pull this job for that kid—an' leave him get the gravy?"

"Well," replied Hartigan, his calculating eyes narrowed in thought, "I ain't got that stuff, you know. This kid's got it."

"Sure, I know. What's wrong with *us* coppin' it off *him* now?" He laughed. "There'd be a triple play on this thing, then."

"Too risky," replied the big man, finally "There's apt to be some plain bull after that kid right now. We got ours comin' from him safe, now. An' if we try for another crack at it we might get a nice, long stretch instead. An' even if we could cop it off this guy, he's got the goods on us. What's to keep him from squealing?"

"That's right," agreed the other after some reflection. "He's got it on us."

"Anyway," continued Hartigan, "we get in on this; three grand for me an' two for you. An' you remember this kid was gonna take all the blame an' do the time for all three of us if it didn't come off right an' we got lagged. An' I'll say that's the only cop-proof job I ever touched. The pay ain't so bad for that, is it?"

"Nope," agreed Garstein, becoming reconciled to necessity.

"Anyway," went on Hartigan, "he's a pretty good guy at that. He's a leveler. He'd of kept his word with us if we slipped up on the job. An' we wouldn't of got wise to the thing at all except for him." And the pair, the victims of virtue for once, despite themselves, glanced at each other with rather smug satisfaction at their decision to refrain from robbing young Illsley in his turn.

"I guess we better blow this joint now," suggested Slick Benny. "One of them crooks might be so damn sore he'll blow to the bulls anyway."

Hartigan nodded. "I guess so," he replied and began to pack.

Two hours later the room in Tenth Avenue that had seen the planning of the robbery at Josser Randolph's had also seen the last of Brick Hartigan and Slick Benny Garstein.

CHAPTER XI.

Soapy Rehg left the room in Tenth Avenue with curses upon his lips and rage in his heart. He was nearly beside himself with anger; a snug fortune had suddenly

been taken from his grasp. Also, he was as perplexed as angry. He feared to notify Randolph as to the manner by which he came to be robbed. That individual had a temper of his own and was extremely apt to do violence upon the person of little Rehg once he knew of the manner of the affair. And he hesitated to notify the police, personally, at least. That would mean an investigation which was the last thing Soapy desired.

He went to his room down on the East Side with his thoughts a turmoil of indecision and torment. As he went to bed he was cursing the big man with the ugly scar, the dapper Garstein and most of all the ragged young man with the cultivated voice and the compelling gun. And he was cursing them when he awoke a few hours later. He went to a restaurant in Avenue A for breakfast, still raging against the trio. And then, his desire for revenge overcoming his innate sense of cautious self-protection, he decided to set some one upon the three who had robbed Randolph's apartment.

He wouldn't go to the police, he decided. But he'd phone the jewelry shop itself and leave a message and then get away before his identity could be discovered. Of course, sooner or later, his name would be involved in the affair if the police got onto the trail of the trio, but by that time he'd be out of New York. The city wasn't safe for him, now, anyway, with Josser Randolph in it—once he learned of Rehg's part in the Hartigan robbery.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning when he went into a drug store and called up Pelham's in Brooklyn.

The sedate Seamon answered the telephone.

"If youse guys wanna know somethin' about that job at your joint—that jewel robbery—you better go to Tenth Avenue in New York," said Soapy through the phone to Seamon, and he gave the Tenth Avenue number and the location of the room. Then, before he could be questioned further he rang off.

"That'll start somethin'," reasoned the irate Soapy as he left the booth. "Some one'll be on their tracks soon," he sputtered as he left for his room to prepare for his departure from the city.

Meanwhile, down at the old-fashioned house in Stuyvesant Square there had been excited conversation about the same affair.

Claudia Ramsay awoke late that morning after a restless sleep, troubled by dreams in which a ragged young man with blood-streaked face was alternately pounding rocks, attired in a striped suit and cap, and living in slothful ease, grinning wickedly as he contemplated an ill-gotten fortune. And all through her dreams the determined figure of Corrigan the detective was in the offing. She awoke with a start and a shiver and then a little sigh of momentary relief escaped her as she sat up in bed, realized that it was broad daylight and that she had been dreaming.

As she brushed her hair and dressed, her mind was still full of the scene downstairs at two o'clock that morning. She could still vision Illsley, gaunt, weak, and grinning as the others gazed at the diamonds and pearls heaped upon the table. Again she saw the big man with the livid scar along his cheek. But always the picture of Illsley came uppermost in her thoughts.

He really had stolen those jewels—he *was* a thief, was her constant thought. Even the big, red-headed man had admitted that. Not only admitted it but had even bragged about it. He had said that Chad was a clever thief! And the latter had been so cheerful, brazen, in fact, over the whole terrible affair!

Her eyes snapped with anger at the thought. And she made a decision: she'd talk with Chad first; reason with him; plead, even, if necessary, and try to get him to return the stolen property. He could send it back anonymously and still escape. But if that failed—her determined little chin was in the air and she clenched a fist—she'd steal them from Chad and return them herself.

At breakfast with Helen Brokaw the conversation was all upon the affair of the night before.

"Think of it—all that wealth! It's a fortune!" exclaimed Helen, her eyes glistening with the excitement. "And to think that Chad stole it, after all. He looked terrible, didn't he?" she added.

"And I'm glad of it," replied Claudia stormily. "I'm glad of it. If he'd been even a little ashamed of it, it wouldn't have been so bad. But he was brazen—positively brazen about it." But the anger left her eyes and a sob came into her voice as she said it.

After breakfast they went down to McLeod's office to inquire after Illsley.

"He's asleep," said the doctor. "I went in at seven o'clock and he was all right. Sleeping soundly. It was merely a flesh wound."

"What I can't understand is how he happened to be chased and shot and to have that stolen property with him last night—so long after the Pelham robbery," said the Brokaw girl.

"Maybe some oth—ah—some crook's been after him to steal it from him—and he just managed to escape after being shot at," replied McLeod. "Anyway"—and he waved a hand futilely—"it's all beyond me. I don't know what to think now. He admitted himself that he stole the jewels."

"And he seemed even *proud* of it," put in Claudia Ramsay bitterly.

"What are we going to do with him?" asked Helen. "I suppose we ought to hide him even if he *is* a—a—well, dishonest."

"It's some mess," said McLeod, lighting a cigar. "The police'll probably look for him here. At least this fellow Corrigan will."

"Perhaps we could persuade him to send them back," suggested Miss Brokaw.

"And equally perhaps we can't," was the doctor's reply. "He isn't going to all that trouble of getting shot and pursued by the police and all that sort of thing only to be talked out of it by us."

"But we *might* persuade him," said the other hopefully.

McLeod grunted. "No chance. He's so darned obstinate we couldn't persuade him in a year."

Claudia Ramsay frowned.

"I'm going to persuade him," said she angrily. "He has no right to that property. He'll simply *have* to send it back. That would help some. But," she added, with a gulp, "Chad would still—be—a—thief."

"What if you can't do it?" asked McLeod.

"Then I'll *steal* them myself," declared the little artist with determination. "I'll steal them from him and send them back myself. I'll talk to him right now," she added, suddenly springing to her feet.

"Let's wait a while—until he wakes up. And we'll go for him tactfully," suggested the doctor, attempting to restrain the other.

"No; I'm going in there right now. I'm going to talk to him first; but if he won't listen to reason I'll simply take that property. Where is it?"

"In the lower bureau drawer in the room," replied McLeod.

The girl left only to return a few moments later, her lips parted in surprise and disappointment in her eyes.

"Why," she stammered, "he's gone—and so are the *jewels!*"

"Gone!" echoed the others.

"Yes," she replied.

"Well, I guess that's the last of *him,*" said McLeod.

The medico was wrong for at about five o'clock Illsley walked into his office. He came in with a grin on his face and a slight trace of swagger in his walk. He was clearly pleased with himself. He greeted McLeod and Claudia Ramsay, who had happened in a short time before, with a confident, "Hello," lighted a cigarette and coolly grinned at the two.

"He's as brazen as ever," thought the girl as her angry eyes met his laughing ones.

"Aren't you afraid the police'll get you?" asked the doctor, a bit nettled. "Gentlemen with such—er—taking ways can hardly afford to go about openly, I should say." McLeod's remark glanced off the bold-eyed young man like hail bouncing off an icy gable. "We don't want to turn you over ourselves—in spite of the circumstances," added McLeod.

Illsley grinned in answer. "That for the cops," said he, flicking his cigarette ashes in the air.

"And there's Corrigan, you know," pursued McLeod, who feared the presence of the detective or a policeman at almost any moment.

"And Corrigan"—there was jovial contempt in Illsley's tone—"why that fathead can go and take a nice long jump in the Hudson River for all of me. That thick head couldn't catch the flu. If he's a detective then I'm the secret service."

"He must be drunk," thought McLeod, "or he'd not take such chances."

Claudia Ramsay glanced at him stormily.

"You might at least be a little ashamed of yourself," she said. Then, her fears for him intruding upon her feeling of wrath, she stepped close to him.

"Please go away somewhere—where it's safe," she begged. "You mustn't be taken—if you are a—a—thief." The last word

came out with difficulty. "They'll be looking for you here. That awful Corrigan—he still has this place in mind, no doubt. And he may have been watching it right along. Don't let him get you."

Illsley laughed. He was evidently enjoying the situation hugely.

"Corrigan!" he repeated with gusto. "Say, I want to tell you something about Corrigan. He's a boob. He's comical in his conning tower. He couldn't trail an elephant down Broadway. If he's all I have to watch out for I'm as safe as Rockefeller's bank roll."

"Chad," said the girl, her eyes pleading now as she glanced up at him, "please return that property—and then go where you'll be safe. You can return it secretly. Won't you do that—please?"

"I can't," he replied, his bold eyes laughing down at her.

"Why not?" she asked with an angry stamp of her foot.

"Because I haven't it any more."

"You've disposed of it?"

"Yes."

She looked up at him witheringly, her chin in the air and scorn in her eyes. So that was what made him so self-satisfied. He was a thief and he intended to remain one! And he was perhaps wealthy, now, with the disposal of his stolen loot. But still, he mustn't be caught—even now.

"You'd better leave here—right away," she advised, her voice lifeless and her face a little weary. "Corrigan might——"

"Corrigan's a dumb-bell, I tell you," replied Illsley. "He's a double-action boob. He's a——"

Further words about the detective were cut short by the opening of the office door. The three turned toward the doorway—and Corrigan walked in. His face was red with anger, but at sight of Illsley his eyes lit up in triumph.

"Thought I'd find you here," said he. "They generally do try to get back to see their girls before they blow." He walked up close to Illsley and glared at him. The latter coolly returned the stare.

"So I'm a boob, huh?" bellowed the detective. "I'm a fathead dumb-bell, hey? I couldn't trail an elephant down Broadway, what? Well," he blazed angrily, "I can trail *you*, you dirty crook and I can run you right into the pen. And I'm going to do it. Come along," and he grasped Illsley's arm. "You're under arrest."

"What for," demanded the other quietly, as he blew out a smoke ring.

"For stealing that Pelham stuff," barked Corrigan. "I s'pose you got the crust to deny it."

"No—I don't deny it," was the cool answer.

Claudia Ramsay gasped.

"Oh, the fool!" she said under her breath. "The *fool*—to admit it to *him*."

Corrigan attempted to put handcuffs on the young man but Illsley violently shook himself free. "No you don't," he snapped. "Where's your authority? You're nothing but a private detective. I know my rights. You can't make a pinch any more than I can."

Corrigan grinned.

"Here's my authority! He'll make the pinch," and he called out of the doorway. A big policeman entered. "Arrest this bird," said Corrigan. Then to Illsley. "You see I've come all ready. Got a warrant, too, of course."

The policeman put the handcuffs on Illsley and the latter turned to the doctor and the girl and grinned. "Got 'em on at last," said he. "I've got to compliment Mr. Corrigan; didn't think it was in him. But how *did* you get on to me?" he asked the detective.

"Some one squealed on you and your gang," admitted Corrigan. "Pelham's got a phone call this morning with the tip that a certain joint over in Tenth Avenue might prove interesting. They turned the tip over to me. I went there but you crooks had beat it. The dame there—guess she must be a crook too—wouldn't open up on you and——"

"Good old Mrs. Hennerty," murmured Illsley with a smile.

"But I nosed around and learned something——"

"At last," said Illsley softly.

"I didn't really expect you was in that room," explained Corrigan. "But I talked to a fruit peddler with a stand on the corner there and he wised me to the fact that two guys had driven away late at night in a car—and he described 'em to me; and blast my eyes if one of those descriptions didn't fit *you*. So I nosed around a little further—and then decided you'd be fool enough—even after knowing, maybe, that some guy

squealed—to try and see your girl"—he looked meaningly at Claudia Ramsay—"before you tried to light out again. Now c'm'on!" and he grabbed Illsley's arm roughly and dragged him to the doorway.

"Just a minute," said Illsley, the laughter gone from his eyes now and the bravado from his posture. "Turn me loose. I'll tell you the whole thing. I want to make an explanation to these people. They think I'm a crook."

"I know you are. No you don't. You don't get away again!" And before the protesting Illsley could say any more he was out on the sidewalk between the policeman and the detective.

"Corrigan," said Illsley determinedly as they walked down the street, "at least, before you take me to jail, if you're ass enough to, take me over to see Kelly at the alarm company. I'm giving you good advice. You'll be letting a real crook go if you don't."

The detective wavered. There was something in the other's tone that made him believe him.

"Kelly won't be there. He's on days."

"He'll be there to-night. He arranged it with me."

"With *you*?"

"Yes. I saw him to-day—him and old Pelham. And it was arranged that I was to be back at the alarm company by eight."

Corrigan stopped in the street and stared.

"Say," he bellowed, "what in hell is this? You trying to slide something over on me?"

"No; as I live," replied Illsley. "And you don't have to take any chance on it either. Keep these bracelets on if you insist. But let me get over to Brooklyn by eight o'clock. If you don't the real crook'll be apt to get away. There's a couple of cops waiting outside to take him but he'll be desperate if he gets suspicious and you never can tell. They want me there, with the dope I have on him, to try and get a confession from him before they take him away."

The obstinate detective was impressed now, but his stubbornness prevailed. "Nope," said he. "You just come along with us. We don't take any chances with you."

"At least, then, phone Kelly," begged Illsley. "Don't be an utter idiot." Corrigan hesitated. Then, "All right," said he and the trio went into a corner drug store and the detective went into a phone booth. He emerged a few minutes later with surprise on his face.

"Kelly says to bring you over there," said he.

"Did he say to take the cuffs off of me?" asked Illsley. "I don't want to travel all over New York with these things on."

"No, he didn't," said Corrigan brusquely. "I didn't ask him. All he says was to bring you over. Time enough to take 'em off when we see how things are. Who's this guy over there you say is wanted?"

"Going to take these bracelets off?" demanded Illsley, parrying the question.

"Nope. Not till we get over there and see what happens. Who's the guy who's a crook over there?"

"None of your damned business," said Illsley. "No release from these things, no info for you." And the trio—the big policeman, the pugnacious detective and the young man with the bandaged face—the latter two now openly glaring at each other—got into a taxicab for Brooklyn.

CHAPTER XII.

There was astonishment in the faces of all but Kelly as the three entered the office of the Electric Burglar Alarm Company. Pomeroy, the night manager, Berndt, the runner, Haydock, the inspector and the sleepers, all looked their astonishment as the ill-clothed figure of young Illsley, handcuffed to the big policeman, came through the doorway.

"How about these things, Kelly?" asked Illsley abruptly, looking down at the handcuffs. "Corrigan wouldn't take 'em off."

"Take 'em off," ordered Kelly as the others gazed at Illsley in surprise.

"But, say, he might——" began the protesting Corrigan.

"Take 'em off," snapped Kelly. "This story's straight. He isn't the one. He's here to prove who is."

Corrigan removed the handcuffs.

"Now," said Kelly quietly, "let's hear who engineered that job on Galvo 49, Illsley. I know, but the rest, save one, don't. Who was it tried to put it on you?"

Illsley cleared his throat. There was silence now, as the others waited. Corrigan glanced keenly at the sardonic Haydock. Pomeroy, Berndt and the sleepers were glancing alternately at Illsley and at Haydock, too. They all recalled that there had

been bad blood between the two. Berndt huskily cleared his throat. Pomeroy looked at Haydock and smiled. The sleepers merely stared at Illsley now, waiting for the reply.

Illsley fingered the bandage on his face, coughed and then pointed toward the night manager's desk.

"Pomeroy," said he, quietly. "He gave the layout of Galvo 49 to two crooks."

Pomeroy, his nerve good and his self-possession still intact glanced coolly at Illsley. The others looked their astonishment at the self-reliant night manager.

"This is a joke. A rotten joke," said Pomeroy easily. "Why, they even found your fountain pen on the premises after the robbery."

"No—it isn't much of a joke—for you," said Illsley slowly. "You had that pen planted there—to get me to go up for the job. I very nearly did, too. If I'd been taken before this week or if I'd waited here to try and prove I was innocent, Corrigan would have got me." He turned from Pomeroy and favored the detective with a glare.

"Say, you don't swallow that, do you Kelly?" asked Pomeroy, with a light laugh. "Why, he was with the company only a few months. How can you take his word for this? He might have had a record before he came here."

"Want particulars?" asked Illsley. "Well, ever hear of a little, shifty-eyed weasel named Soapy Rehg?" Pomeroy started slightly at that. "Or a handsome brute called Randolph? Josser Randolph?"

Pomeroy laughed, but the laugh was dry, now, and mirthless.

"Never," said he.

"You lie! And what's more you knew 'em long before you got with this company, three years ago. Little Rehg told me that—at the point of a gun—just last night. He told me something else, too. You had a little record that you didn't give this company when you gave your other records in business. How about San Quentin? Twelve years ago? You were Harry Somers, then. You'd better come through, Pomeroy. I've got it on you."

Pomeroy, still self-controlled, grinned. "Where's your proof?" he asked. "Any one can dope up a cock-and-bull story like that. But for real evidence you can't get away from that fountain pen of yours."

"There's rogues' gallery evidence in San Quentin right now," replied Illsley. "But anyway," he added, bluffing, "there's that little rat Soapy not far away and he'll tell more than I can. He's a stool pigeon. Want me to get him?"

Pomeroy sobered at that. He glanced quickly about, his face suddenly hard set. Then he sprang up and made a leap for the door but before he had reached the elevator outside two policemen, who had been concealed, flung themselves on him and brought him back to the office.

"Better tell everything," said Kelly as Pomeroy stood sullenly looking at Illsley, a policeman at either side of him.

"How did you get on to all this?" asked the night manager.

"I followed Rehg from a barber shop in Tenth Avenue," replied Illsley. "I remembered having seen him outside this building a couple of times before and his face was one you wouldn't forget. I watched him in the glass in front of my chair. Then he began tapping, with his knuckles, on a table—he was signaling—to another chap in the chair next to me. The man was Josser Randolph. And the taps were the same as the signal for Galvo 49."

"The little fool!" muttered Pomeroy.

"How about it?" asked Kelly. "Going to come across? We've got it on you."

"Where's the stuff?" inquired Pomeroy. "Rehg and Randolph might have said anything but unless you got the stuff on 'em, you haven't any proof still."

Kelly smiled. "Pelham has it. Illsley turned it over to him to-day, in my presence." There was a stare of surprise from the other.

"How'd *you* get it?" he demanded.

"I stole it," answered Illsley. "From Randolph's apartment."

Pomeroy's attitude of bluff vanished at that. His figure sagged. His face became resigned.

"All right," he said slowly. "You've got it on me. I'll tell you the entire thing. I *was* in San Quentin, twelve years ago. Embezzling. I went straight when I got out. I intended to go straight when I got with this company, too. But Illsley's coming here gave me the idea. He was always so broke and seemed so desperate and he used to say when the sleepers were playing pinochle at night that he'd commit burglary if he was sure he could get away with it. I knew he didn't mean it. But it got me to thinking and gave me the idea. Then, one day

I ran into Soapy. When he learned I was with a burglar-alarm company he got after me to pull something off. About that time we were urging Pelham to have the bottom of his safe wired but he always laughed and insisted it was unnecessary. So I figured out the way to beat the system by tunneling into the store and getting at the safe through the bottom."

Pomeroy passed a weary hand over his face. His feaures were tense now. His eyes were tired looking.

"But," he continued, "I didn't dare do anything then. I waited and waited for something—a piece of luck or a break in my favor—to turn up. And it came the night Illsley's fountain pen was returned by the cleaning woman. Haydock laid it on the desk as he said. And there was a fraction of a minute's interval between the time that Severance, who was sitting there, left for the dormitory and returned to the desk. But in that time I got the pen. Haydock got up to signal a closing subscriber on the Galvo board and when his back was turned I lifted the pen.

"That gave me what I wanted. I could put it on Illsley. Also it was his night off—Saturday. That would be still more incriminating for him. I decided to put it over right away. We had to work fast. So when I got off the job in the morning I got hold of Rehg and Randolph, gave them the layout of the place, told them what they'd have to avoid to prevent giving an alarm and they did the job and planted the pen at the back entrance when they left.

"That idiot Soapy gave the thing away in the barber shop by tapping Pelham's signal. Except for that you wouldn't know even now who did that job. I was playing it absolutely safe, I thought. There was a chance, a slim one, but still a chance that some one from Pelham's, the porter or somebody, would be sent down there to open up while Rehg and Randolph were working. If they came I had that fixed, too. I gave them Pelham's signal. Told them to grab the Pelham man and tie him up the minute the door opened. Then go to the signal instrument and send in the signal themselves. When some one from the office came for the signature Randolph was to sign the card with the porter's name. I got the porter's signature from our company card for that."

"And Soapy gave the thing away—aroused Illsley's suspicions in that barber shop?" asked Kelly. Pomeroy nodded, wearily.

"Yes. I remember he wanted to write that signal down but I wouldn't let him. I was cautious about everything. I was going to make it an accident-proof job where I simply *couldn't* be caught. But Rehg had difficulty remembering the signal so I made both Randolph and Rehg practice it time after time, tapping the table in the saloon where I met them until it was so firmly fixed in their memories they couldn't forget it."

"And Rehg didn't forget it," said Kelly.

"No," said Pomeroy, with sudden savagery. "The little fool! He learned it so well that he tipped off his hand with it, damn him." He glanced over at Illsley. "What's happened to him and Josser Randolph?"

"They've lit out," replied Illsley. "Randolph must have beat it right after he shot at me when I took the stuff from his apartment. And Soapy beat it, too—if he has any sense."

"The Josser'll kill him," said Pomeroy quietly, "when he finds out it was Rehg gave the thing away and then let you sweat him out of the hiding place of those jewels."

"They'll get Randolph, too," observed Illsley. "They've wired to Jacksonville to get him when he lands. They traced him to a steamship office. He's taken a boat for there. He may be arrested on the boat, now, for of course they wirelessed, too."

There was silence for several moments after that. The two policemen on either side of Pomeroy and the officer who had come with Corrigan stared stolidly ahead of them. Corrigan gazed interestedly at the night manager and Kelly and the others glanced from Illsley to Pomeroy. The latter's face was beaded with perspiration. His jaw was set and a peculiar look crept slowly over his features. He glanced nervously to the right and left of him, at the policemen and then over at the window near his desk. There was no way of escape. He was in for it. He thought of San Quentin, the confinement, the hardship, the hopelessness of it. And this job would mean a stretch of several years.

"Well," said one of the policemen, abruptly turning to Pomeroy, "I guess we better go." The other policeman nodded.

"Yeah," said he and motioned to Pomeroy. He got out a pair of handcuffs. At

sight of them Pomeroy's face went white. His lips tightened. The peculiar look again crept into his eyes.

"Get your hat and coat on," said the officer.

Pomeroy nodded and slowly walked toward his desk, put on his coat and reached for his hat. Then, suddenly, with a catlike leap he was on the window sill of the open window at his desk.

"You'll never take me alive," he shouted, a wild look in his eyes as he stepped outside on the broad ledge.

The policemen made a rush for the window. "Grab him!" yelled one.

Berndt sprang heavily from his chair near the desk toward the night manager. The others all rushed forward. But it was too late. Before they could reach him Pomeroy poised himself on the ledge, waved his arms wildly and leaped.

Kelly and Illsley had reached the window first. What they saw was a figure hurtling through the air and an instant later there was a dull thud as the body struck the pavement of the courtyard and then lay still. The others rushed and looked out and saw the body of the unfortunate night manager, nine flights below, spread-eagled on the court.

"Good Heaven!" whispered Illsley, as he gazed down and then turned away. His head felt suddenly queer and he thought he was going to faint. Corrigan, the three policemen, Kelly and Illsley then rushed out to the elevator, shot to the ground floor, rushed out of the elevator, out of the building and around into the courtyard to the fallen body. A policeman turned the body over and examined it.

"Dead," said he stolidly.

Illsley turned abruptly away. "Good Heaven!" he whispered again.

"Case for the ambulance instead of the patrol," said Corrigan. A policeman nodded. "I'll phone for one," said he and entered the building.

The burly Kelly, his usually pleasant face grim, turned to Illsley.

"Too bad," he said huskily. "Too bad—but they'll do it for money and get an end—like this." Illsley nodded. And as the rest entered the building he slowly walked away, his face colorless, his body limp.

He had liked Pomeroy. And even at the last, when he had learned that the night manager had framed him, had tried to land another in the penitentiary for his own crime, though he had been angry, somehow he had not felt as bitter as might have been expected.

He walked slowly to Fulton Street in a daze, then along Fulton and entered the subway. His mind was still a maze of confusion as he entered a train for New York. He had had his adventure; and it was a grim one, as it turned out. Robbery—and death!

He mopped the sweat from his forehead and stared stupidly ahead.

"Poor Pom," he whispered huskily, as the train started and he sank onto a seat.

CHAPTER XIII.

Illsley alighted from the subway in New York and walked toward Stuyvesant Square in a far different mood from what he had expected when he left in company with a detective and a policeman some time before. He had expected to return feeling triumphant. Instead he was grave. And he felt a bit sick. He couldn't keep his mind off Pomeroy. He could still see the lifeless figure in the courtyard of the building in Willoughby Street.

As he walked up the stoop of the old-fashioned house he noticed that the first-floor apartment was dark. The doctor was out or upstairs calling upon the girls, he concluded. So he ascended the first flight and rang the bell to the studio rooms.

"Who is it?" came Claudia Ramsay's voice through the door, after an interval.

"It's me—Chad," replied Illsley. There was a moment of silence but no sound of a key turning in the lock to open. "It's Chad," he called again. "Aren't you going to let me in, Claudia?" He heard a little exclamation of surprise from behind the door at that.

"How—how did you get back?" came her voice from behind the door. "Weren't you—arrested?"

"No," he replied. "Let me in. It's safe. There are no cops here." Again there was silence. He tried the door but it was still locked. "Claudia, let me in, please. I want to see you," he insisted. "Aren't you going to let me?"

"No," came the response firmly.

"Why not?"

"I don't care to associate with burglars," she replied.

"But I've got to see you," was the now firm demand.

"I'm sorry; go away, please," she replied. "It's late—and I don't let safe robbers in anyway." He thought he detected a little catch in the voice at the last.

"Look here, don't be ridiculous," he called, his voice rising with his impatience. "Let me in—I've simply got to see you." There was no response to this and he considered a moment. Then, "Are you going to let me in or not?" he demanded at last.

"Please go away," she replied. "I don't want to see you at all. I'm glad you got away. But I can't see you. Take all your money—that you got for those jewels and leave. Please. I mean it."

"All right," said he firmly. "I'm going to stay outside here if it's all night, until you let me in."

"Go away!"

"Listen, Claudia," he called. "I've got a jimmy here and a gun. If you don't open up I'll jimmy the place. And I'll raise the neighborhood, too. I'll fire that gun until the neighbors come out. If I'm a burglar I might as well act like one. Here goes the jimmy—are you going to open that door?" Again there was silence. "Are you?" he repeated, his voice a demand.

"Oh, all right, come in," came the voice wearily, and the key was turned in the lock. Illsley followed her into the studio and waited as she picked up a paint brush and nervously toyed with it. A semblance of his old levity was returning as he looked at her standing near an unfinished picture, her face stern as a Spartan's and her trim little figure tense and straight as a soldier's. She turned and faced him, scorn in her eyes and her chin uplifted.

"Well?" said she, ice in her tone but fire in her gaze.

"Well," he grinned, "may I have a chair?"

"If you like, I suppose," she replied frigidly.

"May I smoke?"

"Oh, I suppose so. I expect you'd use your pistol and make me allow you to, anyway."

"I probably should," he chuckled. "I find you have to go after most things to get them—even with a gun, sometimes."

Claudia bit her lip in her anger. It was bad enough to be a burglar, but to be proud of it—and flippant! She started to speak, her voice broke, her chin trembled a little and then a big, hot, glistening tear raced down her cheek.

Illsley glanced at her in surprise at this and his flippancy instantly vanished. He rose and came over to her, all tenderness, now.

"Why, Claudia," he exclaimed contritely, as he placed a tender arm about her, "I didn't mean to hurt you, dear."

"Well, you have! Terribly! Oh, Chad, why did you do it? I've thought of you and thought of you ever since you came here last night. I couldn't believe it of you—I just *knew* you couldn't do it—and then you admitted it—even to that brute Corrigan."

"But you don't understand, dearest," he replied softly, all desire to joke her gone. "I didn't rob Pelham's."

She gazed at him in surprise.

"But you said you did."

"Not Pelham's; their jewelry was what I robbed. Two of the cleverest crooks in the country robbed Pelham's," he explained. "I merely robbed the crooks of it." And he explained how he had come to follow Soapy Rehg. "That big, red-headed chap with the scar you saw here with me last night—that's Brick Hartigan; and another fellow, a forger, helped me. You folks always have told me to make use of my friends and so I did. They're friends of mine. And that's how I happened to come here with the jewelry."

"Then you *aren't* the burglar the police are looking for?"

"Of course not—I'm the burglar the burglars were looking for."

"But that's dishonest. You can't keep those jewels, Chad. Promise me you'll go right over now and return them to Pelham's, or rather to Mr. Kelly, seeing Pelham's is closed," she begged.

He smiled. "I can't, dear——" he began.

"Chad, if you don't go this instant I'll never speak to you again," she stormed.

"I can't," he explained, squeezing her hand, "because I've already done so. That was why I left here in the morning. I gave them to Pelham himself in Kelly's presence."

"Oh, I'm so *glad!*" she breathed thankfully. And somehow she found herself nestling into his arms. "I knew all along you *couldn't* be dishonest—in spite of that big red-headed man's talk that you were a clever thief." She glanced up at him and then,

for the first time, noticed how really tired his face looked and how grim his eyes were despite the joking words of the last few minutes.

"Chad, dear," she said soothingly, stroking his hand, "don't look so glum. You *have* been through a lot and I suppose you're worried about money again; but don't you care, dearest. Things'll be all right."

"It isn't that," said he, smiling gravely. "I can't keep from thinking of poor Pom." And he told about the night manager's part in the burglary and the end of it all. "There was a kind of sob in his throat as he jumped. Poor Pom!"

They sat there for several minutes in silence, their thoughts on the tragic end of the Pelham affair.

"Chad, dear," said Claudia finally, "what made you run away when you never were guilty, at all? Why didn't you stay and face the thing out?"

"I couldn't. When they found that pen I was sure some one there was out to get me. I thought it was Haydock—we never got along—instead of poor Pom. And it made me mad. I made up my mind that Haydock wouldn't have even the satisfaction of seeing me taken. And then I might have been railroaded by that evidence. And I couldn't stand it to have you know I was in jail—even if I was innocent."

"But what made you get in that awful fix in the first place, losing all your money—gambling it away like that?"

"I thought I was doing it for you."

"You foolish, foolish Chad," said Claudia softly. "Don't you know that money wouldn't make *any* difference with me?"

"Do you mean that—still?" he asked, gazing gravely down at her.

"Of course!" She smiled. He bent and kissed her.

"You darling!" he said softly.

"I know you haven't a cent now—not even a position. But that doesn't bother either of us, does it dearest?"

"It would me," replied Chad, "if that were the case. But it isn't." He reached into his inside coat pocket and drew out a businesslike-looking check. "Read this, Claudia," he said, with a slow smile.

She looked at the check. "Why!" she exclaimed. *"Twenty thousand dollars!"*

He nodded.

"There was a reward offered for the recovery of that Pelham property," he explained. "Pelham's offered fifteen thousand and the Electric Burglar Alarm Company five thousand. And they paid it to me immediately when I handed the stuff over to old Pelham and Kelly. Pelham's drew the entire check at my request and the company drew one right off and turned it over to Pelham's to reimburse 'em for the five. You see," he added, "I couldn't be bothered with a small check for five thousand."

"Oh, *Chad!*" she exclaimed. *"Twenty thousand!"*

"It isn't all mine," he explained. "I've got to pay off some workmen with part of it."

"Who are they?"

"A couple of specialists, a safe blower and a scratcher—forger—you know. Brick and Slick Benny. But it won't be much. They only get five thousand between 'em; Brick three thousand and Benny two; you see it was my job. I dug it up, I laid out the joint, as they expressed it, and I was going to do time for it, perhaps, if things had come out differently."

"Where are they now?" she asked. He laughed.

"Neither the cops nor I know," he replied. "But I will. They're going to get in touch with me so I can get the money to them."

"But won't they be arrested—they're against the law—even if they are kind of nice?"

"They probably will—in time—if they don't get regular jobs, as I intend to. But even at that they'll be safe," he added, as he hugged her tightly, "if they get one chap I know on their trail."

"Who's that, dear?" she asked, snuggling closer to him.

"Corrigan," replied Illsley, as he bent down to kiss her.

Resolved—

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "Peace and Good Will," "Blood of Warriors," Etc.

The beauty of Yellow Horse's social diversions was that you never could tell where they would end from where they started. Or was it a beauty? At any rate, the community's attempts to dispel winter boredom always seem to accomplish their end

THE old-time placer camp of Yellow Horse was dull; there was no doubt about it. The long winter dragged. The white monotony of mountain ranges and valleys choked with an exceptionally heavy snowfall which blocked all trails got on men's nerves. But the worst of it was that there was nothing to do and nothing new. Poker and faro became mere matters of habit, no longer evoking enthusiasm. Everybody knew the opinions of everybody else on most subjects. Droll stories went the rounds, ending by being retold to the original narrator. And saddest of all, with little exercise and a steady heavy diet, even tried-and-true beverages began to fall down in their mission of cheer and uplift, producing, instead, gloom and depression.

Thus one night a citizen named Soames, standing at the bar of the Golden Light saloon, which was the general rendezvous of the camp, shared the general boredom. Mr. Soames was a gentleman of pronounced views which, conjoined with an obstinate and contradictory disposition, militated against his popularity; but none the less he was a prominent citizen. His gaze wandered around the room in hopeful quest of something new, even a strange face, but found nothing. Still, Mr. Soames did not despair, for he had an idea of which he was somewhat proud and merely awaited a favorable opportunity to bring it forward.

Near him a listless poker game was struggling for breath. In it, facing the door from force of prudent habit, sat "Bad Bill" Stevens, hirsute, forbidding of countenance, the ivory handles of his twin guns peeping from their holsters; also "sat in" his friend Ed Tabor, young, slim, insolently humorous of blue eye, grim of mouth; "Cock-eye" Wilson, of oblique gaze; "Uncle Billy" Webster, patriarchal of beard, frosty of eye, but upright and tough in spite of his seventy-odd years; and Zeb Bowerman, by common consent the camp's leading citizen, grizzled, calm and judicial of front, deliberate in all things, but deadly in action.

Other citizens sat along the wall, chairs tilted back, toes hooked in rungs, or sat clustered around the giant, air-tight heater. The bar was doing little or no business. Behind it French Joe leaned on both elbows, reading a month-old newspaper. Yes, the clouds of depression hung low.

The poker game breathed its last, to the general relief of the players.

"I don't want to play nohow," Bad Bill remarked, voicing the common sentiment. "Give the boys a drink, Joe. On me. Durn it," Mr. Stevens remarked further as he splashed the liquid of his beverage against a toughened palate, "I wisht there was something *to* do."

Mr. Soames grasped his opportunity.

"The trouble with this camp," he said, "is that she's threatened with a outbreak of ennui."

"Who's got that?" Mr. Stevens asked in some alarm. "I'll bet them half-breeds brought it in. I said——"

"Ennui," Mr. Soames interrupted, "ain't a disease. She's a French word meanin' there ain't nothin' to do and we're all plumb sick of doin' it."

"Well, why don't you say what you mean?" Mr. Stevens growled. "But the camp needs something to shake her up."

"F'r instance?" Mr. Soames queried, craftily withholding his own plan.

Mr. Stevens, thus put squarely up against the problem of enunciating a constructive policy, scratched the abundant hair which thatched his springs of thought. Nobody could have accused Mr. Stevens of mental

activity. He was serious of mind, literal. But his gun hand—or, rather, both his hands—worked in inverse ratio to the speed of his mind.

"Offhand," he observed cautiously, "and merely as a sightin' shot, I'd say this camp needs a change of whisky."

"What's the matter with this whisky?" French Joe demanded.

"I ain't pickin' no flaws whatever in her quality, Joe," Mr. Stevens explained. "I don't say she ain't good whisky. Only she's got sorter monotonous."

"What you-all describes as monotony, Bill," said Uncle Billy Webster, "is maybe merely another name for stability and even performance, like measured and struck powder charges fillin' ca'tridges. You know what your load's goin' to do."

"Gunpowder and whisky is diff'rent propositions," Mr. Stevens returned. "While you want even performance and no kick in a gun, it's my opinion that whisky which don't contain some element of surprise forfeits public confidence."

"When you're as old as I be," said Uncle Billy, shaking his head, "you'll re'lize that stiddy results in liquor is a virtue. In the cl'ar light of age and experience I regards sudden changes of whisky almost as dang'rous as total abstinence. In fact, I classes 'em with earthquakes, cloud-bursts, Republican gov'ments, and sim'lar onnat'ral and onsettlin' doin's. Bearin' in mind what happens to Andy Lewis, you want to be plumb cautious how you change your whisky."

"Who's this yere Andy Lewis, and what happens to him?" Bill asked with curiosity.

"Whoever he is and what happens to him don't bear none on the present situation," put in Mr. Soames, who saw the conversation slipping into irrelevant channels.

Bad Bill regarded him coldly.

"You hears me ask for information concernin' this party," he said, "and I aims to get it full and ample."

Mr. Soames had a perennial verbal feud with Uncle Billy, whose sometimes-startling reminiscences he classed as straight fiction. He was wont to comment thereon caustically. But as it was imprudent to engage in an altercation with Mr. Stevens, especially when complaints as to whisky indicated frayed nerves, he waived opposition.

"I'm curious myself," he said, "to hear if this is a new romance or one of the old lot worked over."

Uncle Billy, however, merely withered him with a glance of scorn and began.

"Andy Lewis," he said, "lives back along whar I'm foaled, and he's level-gaited and a man of reg'lar habits. He rises and beds down by the sun. He runs the bacon rind around the skillet from left to right before he cooks his flapjacks, and from right to left before he hangs it back on the same nail whar she's hung for fifteen years. He has a good log cabin, a coon dog, two hounds, and a bay five-year-old, Morgan blood. He ain't never married and he's peaceful and contented.

"'I regards it as providential,' he says to me one night when we're settin' together, 'that I never gives way to them wild and momentary impulses of youth to the extent of endowin' a wife with this live stock. Chances is, with the notions women has, she'd object to them dogs sharin' my blankets.'

"'Women is onsociable that a way about dogs,' I admits.

"'I'm a man that likes intelligent company,' says Andy.

"Andy's fixed habits includes one brand of whisky which he's relied on for years. Under his belt she's as stiddy and true as a Sharps' sights. If it's cold, about four drinks enables Andy to sniff the balmy airs of spring; if it's hot, he disregards the temp'rature after three; if it's rainin', the same number brings the sun peepin' through the clouds; if he's hungry and shy of grub, a couple assuages the pangs of hunger; and if he ain't hungry, two whets his appetite to a bowie aidge. This whisky is equal to all Andy's emergencies she's called on to cope with. She's a benef'cent bev'rage. Andy understands her, and she understands him. It's a partnership nothin' short of ideal.

"About two miles from Andy's cabin lives Sally Dexter, who's a widder, 'count of Joe Dexter missin' 'Bud' Darby when they's endeavorin' to settle the ownership of a shote which Bud's dog has by the year. As Bud says himself, he can't account for how Joe comes to miss, it's a plain case of accidental death. When Joe cashes in abrupt that a way, Andy sa'nters over neighborly and helps Sally round the farm. Not that she's plumb helpless, for she's able-bodied, with snappin' black eyes and curly hair; and while she has the sympathy of all, thar's an undercurrent of feelin' that unless Joe's gone

to heaven he don't note no real change. But, as I says, Andy helps his widder. By and by he gets it down to a system, like he does everything. And part of this system is to call ev'ry Wednesday night, at which times he fortifies himself in advance with six drinks.

" 'Six drinks,' he explains to me, 'is the exact dose my system responds to best for social purposes like this yere. With six drinks I can listen plumb attentive. Whereas, it takes five for a dance and eight for a buryin'.'

" 'How many for a weddin'?' I asks.

" 'I told you eight, didn't I?' says Andy.

"This system Andy's been playin' for about three years, and, as it win stiddy, it's regarded as safe. In the fall of that third year I'm away somewheres for mebbe it's a month. Comin' back, along by the ford of the South Prong, I meets up with Sam Harper, who tells me Andy has met with a accident.

" 'What for a accident was she?' I asks.

"Sam says he ain't heard the details, only Andy ain't able to leave home much yet. So when I come to the trail leadin' to Andy's cabin I turn in.

"As I ride up I see the coon dog and the two hounds. But instead of r'arin' forth in a open-jawed bluff like they always done they don't flop a year. When I speak to 'em they tuck their tails and slink out of view like they've done encountered a skunk and injured their pop'larity. The cabin door is shet but thar's smoke from the chimbley, so I knocks soft so's not to disturb no invalid. In a minute the door is opened by Sally Dexter.

"I'm sorter s'prised, but nat'rally I figger she's thar in the capacity of ministerin' angel, that a way.

" 'I hears Andy's run into some hard luck, ma'am,' I says. 'I hopes it ain't serious and he gits over it soon.'

" 'Be you tryin' to insult me or merely to be funny, Bill Webster?' she says, her black eyes snappin' at me like a buckskin popper on a bull whip. 'If you want my husband, he's down somewheres by the corn cribs.'

" 'I wouldn't insult no woman, Missus Dexter,' I says, gawpin' at her; 'and as for wantin' your husband, I shorely don't, havin' helped plant him three years back.'

" 'Don't you call me Missus Dexter!' she snaps. 'I'm Missus Lewis now. And you ain't nothin' but a brute to call up them sad mem'ries to a bride!'

"She slams the door in my face, and I go off down to the corn cribs. Thar's Andy, shuckin' corn sorter lifeless, and them three dogs settin' beside him with their years droopin' and the Morgan five-year-old standin' hip-shot and mournful. It's shorely sad to see this once-happy family facin' the dark future. Words of sympathy seems like rubbin' it in, so I sets down silent among them outcasts.

" 'You're wonderin',' says Andy, breakin' the sad silence, 'what's responsible for breakin' up this home. It's changin' whisky does it. By accident I busts the jug that contains my last quart the exact night "Hank" Beamish's tavern burns down and destroys his stock, so's I can't get no more till it's freighted in. So to hold myself over I has to take a new brand. I takes six drinks of it and goes to see Sally Dexter like I been doin' with impunity for three years. And this yere is the result!'

"Andy looks at the dogs and shakes his head; and them three dogs shake their heads and the coon dog starts to scratch but ain't got the ambition. What's fleas in the face of sech disasters?

" 'On my way over,' Andy continues, 'I ain't conscious that thar's a diff'rence in my social system. But when I been thar a little while I see that Sally don't weigh no hundred and seventy-six, but at the outside a short hundred and thirty. Instead of bein' thirty-seven she's a short nineteen. She's slender and willowy and her eyes is tender and appealin' and intelligent as a hound's. When I re'lize these things and how she's left alone in a hard world, a wave of pity surges over me to that extent I plumb forget these yere pore dumb animiles; or if I remember 'em it's to think how they'll enjoy women's cookin'. In this mood I possess myself of Sally's little, helpless hands —which I've saw swing a steel-beam plow around in the headlands and lambaste the daylights out'n a mule team with a two-by-four scantlin'. What happens subsequent is sorter foggy. I emerges from the fog to smash down kerslam upon the rocks of matrimony.'

"Andy Lewis looks at me solemn for a moment.

" 'You take warnin', Bill Webster,' he says to me. 'A change of whisky biteth like

a sarpint and stingeth worse than a bald-face hornet, like the Good Book says!'

"And rememberin' these words of wisdom, backed as they be by holy writ," Uncle Billy concluded, "I've always been cautious how I change my brands; and my advice to this camp is sim'lar."

"What becomes of them dogs?" Mr. Stevens asked with interest. "The picture you draws of the onmerited sufferin's of them pore dumb brutes is shore affectin'."

"And their finish is more tragic yet," Uncle Billy replied promptly. "That coon dog—and, mind you, he's a wise, experienced canine—delib'rately tackles a porky-pine and gits so full of quills he has to be shot, preferrin' death by his master's hand to the lot of a outcast; while them two hounds, after toughin' married life and exile from blankets halfway through the winter, makes what the noospapers alludes to as a 'suicide pact.' They actually backtracks Andy's footsteps three miles to whar he's set out some wolf baits, swallers 'em, and goes tow-rowin' off to the happy huntin' grounds, thar to await their beloved master."

The admiring silence which greeted the conclusion of this narrative was broken by Bad Bill.

"Uncle Billy," he said, "hardened as I be, this tragedy moves me to that extent I feels the need of something. We now drinks to the mem'ries of them faithful dogs."

But when this tribute had been paid, Mr. Soames, who possessed a single-track mind, reverted to the original issue.

"This yere long-winded romance don't help the present situation," he declared. "Apart from its merits or otherwise, a change of whisky ain't possible, because the trails ain't open. Anyway, it'd be only a temp'rary relief. What this camp really needs is culture of the mind. Keep the mind busy, and time slides by like a log in a chute. I suggests that we put the run on ennui and defy her by developin' the latent resources of our intellects, therein findin' both profit and amusement."

"Without bein' pers'nal at all," said Uncle Bill, who was somewhat ruffled, "the resources of some folks' intellects—if they got any—is shorely latent a lot."

"Likewise without being pers'nal," Mr. Soames retorted, "it's a scientific fact that the human mind is like a buck's horns—stiffenin' with age; till in the case of some hold-overs that Providence so far has neglected to garner in, the remains of their intellects is plumb petrified."

"You don't want to assume, however," Uncle Billy returned, "that their gun hands shares in them petrifications."

Zeb Bowerman intervened.

"Gun plays in this camp, with the ground froze 'bout six feet down like it is, don't go," he announced. "If you got any scheme, Soames, for livenin' things up, let's hear it."

"My scheme," said Mr. Soames, casting a contemptuous glance at his enemy, "is a plumb good one. I suggests we form a lit'ry society."

Mr. Soames' auditors stared at him.

"Is this yere intended for humor?" Bowerman asked.

"Certainly not," Mr. Soames replied. "The suggestion is both serious and practical."

Bad Bill broke a thoughtful silence.

"In view of this yere suggestion," he said, "I regrets the departure of that British author which lands in on us last summer, for if there's a lit'ry gent left in camp I don't know him."

"A lit'ry society, Bill," Ed Tabor pointed out, "ain't nec'ssar'ly lit'ry in the sense of writin' lit'rature or even readin' it. Former, while I'm still dwellin' beneath the parental roof, us boys finds it a strain explainin' continual to our parents how and where we spends our evenin's. So we forms a lit'ry society with a constitution and by-laws by which white chips is half a cent, the limit is ten, and straights is barred. And it answers a double purpose. Our old folks is satisfied; and though it's a small game, yet it's good trainin' for the battle of life."

"I ain't suggestin' a poker club," said Mr. Soames. "A lit'ry meetin', say once a week, with a program of songs, rec'tations, speeches, and also debates on subjects of public interest would be educative and a boon to this camp."

"As for songs," said Bowerman dubiously, "our citizens is too public-spirited to attempt 'em when sober. As for rec'tations, them's possible."

"To my mind," said Mr. Soames, "debates is the main feature. Debates is attractive and improvin'. You get both instruction and practice in public speakin'. To get somewheres and to put the matter

squarely before this meetin', I move we form a Yeller Hoss Lit'ry and Debatin' Society."

"Second the motion," said Tabor. "A lit'ry society undoubted makes for mental improvement."

"That thar is undoubted," Uncle Billy approved, "and though me and Soames don't always see eye to eye, this time I has pleasure in supportin' his suggestion. When I'm a boy——"

"There's a motion before the meetin'," Mr. Soames reminded him suspiciously.

"I'm speakin' to that thar motion," said Uncle Billy firmly. "As I says, when I'm a boy we has a Lyceum and Lit'ry Society, though I'm too young to be a member. But I attends these programs and listens to how brave Marco Bozzaris loses a heap of blood and gets the gaff final; how Patrick Henry prefers liberty to death; and how three sports armed with bowies stands off a gang of outlaws on a bridge outside Rome. Also thar's music and two-minute speeches whar the speaker draws his subject extemporaneous out of a hat, like when Walt Henry, who's plumb bashful, draws 'Girls' —and after standin' dumb for one minute of his time, gits mad at the laughter of the audience and says: 'Ladies and gents: The subject I have drawed is "Girls." You-all seem to think this is funny as hell. So's girls. I thank you.' And sets down.

"It's when the s'ciety sorter runs shy on other material that somebody suggests debates. The idee takes holt, and after studyin' and pawin' over subjects for a while the committee decides on one, which is: 'Resolved, that the progress of civ'lization has made war between civ'lized nations a impossibility.'

"This creates a heap of interest because it looks to give lots of room for argument. Clem Garvey upholds the affirmative, while Milt Davis represents the negative. When it comes down to the night of the debate the schoolhouse is crowded. Clem, who leads off, bows to old Squire Naseby in the chair, rests one hand on the table, and sticks the other negligent inside his coat. As he does this he happens to look squar' at Polk Watkins, with whom he's had a disagreement over a young lady, which ain't settled yet. As his hand goes inside, Polk flips forth a cap-an'-ball six-shooter.

" 'Stop your hand whar you got it, Clem Garvey!' says Polk.

"It takes time to convince Polk that Clem ain't packin' a gun under his arm and that this yere gesture is oratorical merely. When quiet is restored Clem says:

" 'Mister Chairman, as I was about to remark when interrupted by my friend down yander, to whom I want to say that though I ain't heeled now I will be when lookin' for him later, the side I'm on to-night don't need much argument and I'm sorry for Milt Davis. Still, though there ain't no doubt I'm right and he's wrong, it's necessary to tell you why.

" 'Let's tackle this yere subject from the beginnin'. When and whar did war start? Her beginnin's is lost in the dawns of them early days before this great country shook off her chains and flung wide the flag of freedom from the rockbound coast which witnessed the comin' of them good old people, as related of in "Pilgrim's Progress," to whar the Pacific surges down on the golden sands of Californy. War begun in barb'rous times, the people of them days eatin' their foes, scalpin' being a later refinement an' convention of warfare. Them simple days folks beat out each other's brains with rocks and clubs, which, as civ'lization had not yet conferred on mankind the blessin's of six-shooters, was probable the best they could do. War was barb'rous then, and it's been the same right along, killin' a lot of folks and bringin' sorrer and widderhood onto a heap of innocent women. That's war.

" 'Then along comes civ'lization, sorter cleanin' up the mess and makin' the wilderness blossom as the rose. Through the medium of them benef'cent inventions to which I alludes she enables folks to kill each other clean and at long range, instead of havin' to sweat and pound away with clubs. Now, havin' shown that war's barb'rous, I don't need to show anybody that's got a dictionary that civ'lization's the exact opposite. Civ'lization is opposed to barb'rism, and you-all knows that when a civ'lized race fights a barb'rous one thar's only one outcome.

" 'But I think I hear some one ask what's to hender two civ'lized nations from lockin' horns. The answer is, civ'lization itself. We has now reached a point whar war is regarded with horror as a proposition that don't pay. In the race of civ'lization thar ain't no doubt that this nation leads. Educated and civ'lized to a feather aidge as this

community is, she's just a sample of our native land. While I ain't sayin' that thar's ary other nation as civ'lized as we be, I states that a nation that would start a fuss with us ain't got no sense and accordin'ly can't be regarded as civ'lized. But if we are first in war we are also first in peace, and as soon as we kill off all them Injuns and wallop Mexico we won't have no trouble with nobody. Wharfore I submits that I have proved conclusive that war is a thing of the past and, in the words of the poet:

"'Now dove-eyed Peace triumphant reigns
And o'er the cultivated plains
In converse sweet fair maids and swains
Contented rove.'

"Clem sets down amid applause and Milt Davis gits up.

"'Mister Chairman,' says Milt, 'I has listened with pityin' amusement to the puerile theories of the previous speaker, which, b'iled down and put through the strainer of hoss sense, which this audience possesses in plenty, ain't argument at all. Of course, war begun barb'rous, because civ'lization them days was barb'rous also. What's civ'lization depends on when you live. We ain't the first folks by a durn sight that's thought themselves civ'lized. I s'pose when the first savage took a second-growth hick'ry and shaped her into a bow and strung her with deer sinews and laid a arrer tipped with flint across her and slammed the same into a feller armed only with a club, he was a heap proud of himself. "Them club-and-rock boys is still sunk in barb'rism, but I'm shorely civ'lized a lot!" remarks this yere savage to himself.

"'It's true that wars nowadays ain't conducted with them primitive weapons; but it's also true that it don't make no difference to a dead gent whether he's constructed with a club or a Hawkenses rifle; and his widder's in equal luck. After every war in hist'ry you'll find folks weak-minded enough to think that it's shore the last one, and usual they persists in this delusion till they wakes up some night with the cabin door bustin' in and the war whoop in their ears. Even that old warrior Alexander the Great fools himself that way when, after he's made a clean-up of his enemies and married the Queen of Sheba, he says his occupation is no more.

"'But the cold fact is that war and civ'lization runs hand in hand. The civilizeder the nation the bigger the war she's capable of puttin' up, and she puts it up accordin'. Comin' down pretty near to modern times, take Napoleon and them warlike enterprises he conducts against all Europe, which is tol'able civ'lized. Take——'

"'I rise to a p'int of order,' says Clem. 'When the speaker refers to Europe as civ'lized he's away off.'

"'I said "tol'able civ'lized,"' says Milt.

"'I objects to sech a statement,' says Clem. 'Them European nations still speaks their barb'rous languages which nobody can't understand; and they can't even understand plain English when it's spoke or wrote to 'em. Also I'm informed they're that benighted they still clings to smoothbore weepons. Tharfore they ain't civ'lized, and I asks the rulin' of the chair.'

"'This yere p'int of order looks to me to be well taken,' says ol' Squire Naseby. 'Them nations has maybe emerged some from their orig'nal benighted state, but if they ain't developed to a p'int whar they can understand and be understood, and don't re'lize the advantages of a rifled bar'l, they can't be described as civ'lized.'

"'Bowin' to your rulin' as to some European nations, like, f'r instance, Rooshia and Turkey, Mister Chairman,' says Milt, 'I yet holds respectful that it's too sweepin'. F'r example take England. Though you wouldn't think it, English is the mother tongue of them Britons. They write it almost as good as we do, and it's only when they attempt to express themselves verbal that they fail. But a intelligent Englishman will understand most of what you tell him. I'd go so fur as to say that if he'd only say his words a little diff'rent he'd talk real English. And another reason I holds that England's civ'lized is because of her whisky.'

"'I objects again,' says Clem. 'That thar whisky comes from Scotland.'

"'Well, ain't Scotland in England?' Milt demands.

"'Certainly not,' says Clem plenty superior. 'Scotland's in Scotland and has been ever since it was throwed out of Ireland.'

"'Merely to test your knowledge, which I finds superficial,' says Milt, who is took aback by this information but is game, 'I'd admire to know if you're also aware who throwed it out and why?'

"'I gladly enlightens you and calls your bluff,' says Clem. 'In them moral and religious reforms Saint Patrick institutes agin'

snakes he finds Scotch whisky a drawback. Besides which, them Scotch is Presbyterians and averse to pants. Also Ireland is plenty tough enough without 'em. So they has to go. But instead of backtrackin' home to Jerusalem they goes circlin' round till they runs onto Scotland; and, findin' it a good country for moonshinin', feuds, and cattle rustlin', they settles thar.'

"This historical knowledge is too many for Milt, but he holds a bold front.

"'If this yere Saint Patrick is so set agin' snakes, why don't he run out Irish whisky, too?' he demands.

"'Because he ain't out to ruin home industries and whack off prosperity at the roots,' Clem replies. 'Without the manufacture of whisky thar ain't no market for the potato crop, and without the potato crop thar ain't no whisky. In all his election campaigns Saint Patrick stands firm on a platform of a home market for the home product. Besides which, a country without whisky ain't even thinkable.'

"'We are not here to-night,' says Milt, who sees he's gittin' the worst of it, 'to discuss the outwore policies of them old politicians, but to settle once and for all the question of war. Before you introduces these irrelevant issues I was claimin' that England's civ'lized. I still claims it, and I asks the rulin' of the chair.'

"'This yere rulin' I'm called on for,' says Squire Naseby, scratchin' his bald head, 'is a heap delicate and technical. Livin' in Europe like she does, and 'specially in between Scotland and Ireland, civ'lization in England has a hard racket. But on the whole, in spite of them drawbacks of environment, and even though she speaks English sorter defective, I got to hold that England's civ'lized enough for the purposes of this debate.'

"'Thar you be!' says Milt to Clem.

"'This yere rulin',' says Clem, 'is both rank and unpatriotic; also the chairman's in his dotage.'

"As Squire Naseby's been married three times and is figgerin' on makin' it four with the help of a lady present, he's sensitive to remarks about age. With the beller of an old buffler bull he plucks a 'leven-inch bowie from his boot laig and endeavors to project himself onto Clem. But Milt catches holt of him.

"'Turn me a-loose and let me at him!' howls the old gent, who's been a zealous knife fighter in his youth, shakin' the big bowie. 'Starvin' wolves an' brindled wild cats! I'll l'arn him my cyarvin' ain't suffered none with age. I'll make him think he's tangled up with them b'ars which avenges sim'lar insults to Elisha!'

"But Milt herds the old warrior back.

"'What do you mean,' he demands of Clem, 'by sech unsalled-for slanders on a fair-minded, impartial chairman who's patriotic till he can't rest and merely in the prime of life?'

"'So thar won't be no doubt about my meanin',' says Clem, shuckin' his coat, 'I states that, bein' outargued to a standstill, you figgers on winnin' this debate on a technicality. But it don't go. I appeals from the rulin' of the chair!'

"'As for argument,' says Milt, 'I got you skun a mile, and I'm here to sustain the rulin' you complains of. Also, you're a liar!'

"It's a combat like grizzly b'ars. When Clem and Milt rolls off'n the platform down among the audience some interferin' gent tries to separate 'em and gits involved himself. In no time the fuss is gen'ral, extendin' from platform to door and overflowin' onto the schoolhouse yard, while the gentler sex, shocked and terrified at this brutal exhibition, climbs up on benches, from which they hollers to their beaus and husbands to chaw and gouge. When the fuss ends the schoolhouse is a wreck and a lot of the boys is sim'lar.

"When peace prevails Squire Naseby raps for order with the hilt of the bowie.

"'Impromptu features like this yere in which everybody takes part livens up a set program a lot, and also shows that the community takes an interest in this s'ciety,' he says. 'As Milt Davis has licked Clem Garvey fair an' squar', the rulin' of the chair is sustained, and I decides the debate in favor of the negative. And as thar ain't no more items on the program, the Reverend Jackson Pounder will now dismiss the meetin' with pra'r.'

"And rememberin' them old meetin's," Uncle Billy concluded, "and the entertainment and intellectual improvement we derives tharfrom, I views this yere suggestion of Soames' with approval and supports her to the limit."

"This community," said Mr. Soames, who had several times endeavored to interrupt Uncle Billy's flow of reminiscence, "has its

mental sights raised sev'ral notches higher than that one of which you relates. If you re through condactin' both the affirmative and negative and also actin' as chairman of them post-mortem debates of your youth, and unless you desires to inform us on the views of the neighbors that time when Noah starts in to build a keel boat, I'd remind everybody that there's a motion before the meetin', and I'd ask Bowerman to put her."

The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting turned its attention to the election of officers.

"Bowerman for president," Bad Bill suggested amid applause.

"Gents," said the leading citizen, "thanking you all the same, my acquaintance with lit'rature is confined to a few slices out'n the Good Book, mem'rized in my youth, and the perusal of sheriffs' notices describin' fugitives from justice. Also I'm coroner and chairman of the rope committee; and though I don't suggest them offices will conflict with this, I'd ruther see somebody else. I'd suggest Mr. Soames."

But Mr. Soames declined, and in the end the office was added to Bowerman's responsibilities and a strong executive chosen.

"We've overlooked one thing," said Mr. Soames when this had been done. "We'd orter have a critic."

"What for?" Tabor asked.

"The job of critics," Mr. Soames replied, "is obviously to criticize."

"But what does he criticize?" Tabor persisted.

"The programs," Mr. Soames returned, "and also them that take part in them; like how they talk and if they spit when they're doin' it and what they do with their hands."

"I regards such criticisms as impertinent," said Bad Bill. "A gent done has to spit somewheres when he's talkin'; and long as he sights his shots there's no ground for criticism. As to what he does with his hands, they're his to play as his judgment dictates, and criticisms merely makes him fretful, 'specially if he's behind the game."

"I ain't alludin' to poker hands," Mr. Soames explained, "but to the actual, physical hands. Where a gent has his hands in public and on the stage is important. F'r instance, he shouldn't stick them in his pockets."

"It depends on how he's organized," Mr. Stevens returned judicially. "A gent whose hardware is in the form of six-shooters merely sticks his thumbs in his belt; whereas one who is framed up with a brace of derringers nat'rally keeps his hands in his pockets a lot. On the stage, 'specially if the route is infested with hostile Injuns or holdups, he's likely ridin' with a rifle or a double bar'l full of buckshot across his knees and, as you says, he don't put his hands in his pockets at all."

Mr. Soames looked his disgust; but Bowerman went to the root of the matter.

"In my opinion," he said, "we gets along more harmonious without criticisms. S'pose we sets a date for our first meetin' and arranges a program."

The date was set for a week thence, but when it came to a program there was a sad lack of volunteers. Yellow Horse, to a man, shied from platform publicity.

"We can't hold a meetin' without a program," Bowerman pointed out. "Let's have some suggestions."

"Well," said Mr. Stevens, after a thoughtful pause, "there's that half-breed which gives it out his name's Tom Woods—though among his mother's folks he's known as 'Leanin' Pine' and we calls him 'Dogface' for obv'ous reasons. This Dogface can throw a knife plum' fancy. I sees him doin' it once, and I notes this talent of his for future reference. Maybe he'd give us a exhibition."

"Put him down," Bowerman nodded. "And as it might be well to show him how a six-shooter outclasses a knife, s'pose you illustrates with some fancy shootin', yourself?"

"All right," Mr. Stevens consented cheerfully. "The way he's been actin', likely I has to down him before long, anyway."

"I ain't suggestin' that you down him," said Bowerman.

Mr. Stevens shook his head dubiously.

"You mean that I'm merely to bust his throwin' arm? Now, I tells you, Zeb, this yere breed is plum' sudden and acc'rate with that knife, and such wing shootin' is takin' a chance. However, if the camp desires, I takes it."

"I don't mean for you to shoot at him at all," Bowerman explained.

"I got to shoot at something," Mr. Stevens pointed out. "Anyway, he's part Injun."

But Bowerman negatived Mr. Stevens'

disinterested proposal. He looked hopefully in the direction of a lean, saturnine gentleman who owned exceedingly well-kept hands.

"Maybe," he suggested, "Dave Roberts would illustrate for us the possibilities of a deck of cards?"

Mr. Roberts pulled his mustache in some embarrassment.

"While I'd like to help," he said, "I ain't sure it wouldn't be a breach of professional etiquette. For, though you-all knows my game is square, nat'rally I has to protect it by a knowledge of ways of beatin' it. But if I publicly exhibits my knowledge of these short cuts to fortune, maybe it leads to criticisms which I has to resent."

"On the contrary," Bowerman pointed out, "showin' what you can do with a deck if you like is proof that you don't stoop to sech tactics durin' business hours."

"Well," Mr. Roberts consented, after a moment's reflection, "if you-all looks at it that way, and in the int'rests of lit'rature —which I'm an admirer of, though differin' from Mister Hoyle and other classical writers on some points—I obliges."

"And the camp's obliged to *you,*" Bowerman acknowledged. "That's settled. Who's next?"

"As a suggestion merely," said a gentleman named Tobin, "there's them two Scandinavians workin' a claim above the Bend, which can imitate a pair of mountain lions almost perfect. Give 'em enough whisky, so's they enters into the spirit of the occasion, and they fights for the possession of a quarter of deer meat, yowlin' and spittin' and clawin' and bitin' plum' nat'ral. Bein' tough that a way, the loss of a little ha'r and hide in these imitations don't affect their subsequent friendship. Also they devours meat raw. In the int'rests of lit'rature I stands ready to furnish a quarter of venison for this purpose."

"Believin' as I do in encouragin' lit'ry genius wherever found," said Cock-eye Wilson, "I gladly donates enough whisky to tune up these gifted Scandinavians. Also, I has a suggestion of my own to offer, said suggestion bein' pie eatin' for a prize, all eatin' tools bein' barred. If these pies is made deep enough and plenty juicy, out'n dried blueberries or such, the results is a heap mirth-provokin'."

"Looka here," exclaimed Mr. Soames, who had been restraining himself with difficulty, "are we framin' up a lit'ry program or a orgy? Which the suggestions I hears so far points to the latter. If mountain lions and pie eatin' is lit'ry features I'm an Injun!"

"Nat'ral hist'ry bein' an important branch of lit'rature," Mr. Wilson argued, "the study of the habits of wild animals is lit'ry a lot."

"Is these Scandinavians wild animals?" Mr. Soames demanded crushingly.

"They will be if there's enough whisky in camp," Mr. Wilson prophesied with unquenched optimism. "You bet nat'ral hist'ry ain't goin' to be let fall down for lack of stim'lant. And as to your remarks about pie, views which excludes pie from the lit'ry field is narrow. While maybe pies ain't exactly lit'rature, there's a heap of inspiration in 'em. Which if some authors would eat more pie their mental outlook would be broadened and brightened a lot."

"While, as Wilson gen'rously admits, pies by themselves ain't lit'rature," put in Bowerman soothingly, "yet they undoubted has lit'ry value in the way he points out. Authors bein' human their intellects responds to the gentle stimulus of pie, which I'd recommend special to poets and to them saddened and depressed writers which holds that the world's gone plum' to hell, whereas she's a pretty good place to live in, 'specially when you're faced up with the prospect of ceasin' to do so. But while these things is so, pie wolfed down and scattered among the features in public loses in lit'ry value, and I hopes Mr. Wilson will withdraw his suggestion."

"She's a suggestion merely," Mr. Wilson consented, "and I lets her go. I hopes, however, that them lion imitations ain't open to sim'lar objections."

"Them imitations stands on a diff'rent footing," Bowerman decided. "They're drama; and lit'rature and the drama has their horns locked so's you can't separate 'em. Thar's lit'rature, such as Shakespeare turns out, which finds its best expression on the stage. Sim'larly, nat'ral hist'ry is due to benefit by the interpretations of these Scandinavian actors. And then I want to see 'em myself. So far the program is all right. Now, if Mr. Soames would make a suggestion of his own, we'd regard it."

"My suggestion," said Mr. Soames with fine sarcasm, "while perhaps lackin' in the lit'ry values of them heard so far, is that we holds a debate on some broad topic of

public int'rest, like, for instance, Resolved: that the printing press has done more for civ'lization than the steam engine."

"I gives it as my opinion," Uncle Billy commented, "that as agents of civ'lization whisky and canned goods is a better pair to draw to."

"Mention of printin' presses and steam engines ain't aimed invidious at other triumphs of civ'lization," Mr. Soames explained. "I ain't wedded to this subject of debate, and I suggests another—Resolved: that woman's intuition is superior to man's reason."

"Sech a resolution don't form no subject for debate," Uncle Billy commented. "Thar's only one side to it, and that's the negative."

"You think so!" Mr. Soames retorted; "but I'll tell you what I'll do: if you'll uphold this negative which you deem a cinch, I'll argue the affirmative. Also, I'll bet fifty dollars on the result."

"While I don't claim to be no debater," Uncle Billy returned, "you ain't no Cicero yourself, and you can't bluff me a little bit. I accepts that offer and that bet, which last I tilts another fifty that if the decision is left to the audience I negatives you to a standstill."

"This yere," Bowerman approved, "rounds off a most exc'lent lit'ry program due to confer a heap of culture on this camp and likewise to banish ennui from our midst. With two such orators—and them side bets—this debate will furnish an intellectual feast, no matter which wins. Between now and the meetin' the committee will sorter prospect round for further lit'ry float and see that no one renegs—'specially them Scandinavians. The meeting will now take a drink with the chair and stand adjourned."

In the intervening week the interest of Yellow Horse was fairly divided between the coming debate and the exhibition of natural history by those gifted exponents, Lars Sunberg and Knute Neilsen. As to the former attraction, the more impressionable citizens were inclined to support Soames, while case-hardened celibates and gentlemen with private and unfortunate experiences of the intuitions of the gentler sex, were for Uncle Billy and the negative. Bets were offered and taken and argument raged.

"This debate," Bad Bill observed to Bowerman, "is bein' debated in advance. Arguments is waste of time. They ain't convincin'."

"The mission of argument, Bill," the leading citizen observed sagely, "ain't to convince, but to express diff'rences of opinion and to confirm folks tharin. The only time argument is what you might term conclusive is when it ceases to be verbal."

But during this time little was seen of Soames and Uncle Billy. Rumor had it that they were preparing their speeches, getting ready to annihilate each other with verbal high explosives.

"When they turn loose," Wilson predicted to Tabor, "it'll be like a combat between a buffler bull and a ol' he grizzly. Soames is a heap bitter verbal and he'll shore pour the leather of argument into Uncle Billy's hide."

"Freightin' with eight mules like Uncle Billy does," Tabor responded, shaking his head, "don't stunt his vocabulary none. Maybe Soames shines at long range, but at close work Uncle Billy holds his own."

And so on the night of the meeting the room in the rear of the Golden Light was crowded. The citizens of Yellow Horse were there to a man, for at that time the camp did not boast the presence of ladies. There was, however, a touch of Oriental color in the persons of Lee Yet, who did washing for the more fastidious, and Lum Lee, who cooked food as the phrase is understood in China. The aboriginal was represented by half a dozen Snake bucks, relatives on the distaff side of Tom Woods, alias Dogface.

Bowerman, seated behind a table on an improvised platform, opened proceedings.

"Feller citizens and literatoors," said the leading citizen, "we are here to-night to boost lit'rature by the inaugural meeting of this society. This yere is a new racket onto the camp, but we play her wide open, nevertheless.

"Now, I don't need to say much about lit'rature as a pasture for the mind. With a good book and a bottle of whisky any gent able to read can put in an evening when thar ain't nothing else going on. It's lit'rature in the form of hist'ry that enlightens us on what's happened in this old world before we come into it; and it's lit'rature in the form of the Scriptures which posts us concernin' the trails out of it leadin' to that land of pure delight whar saints immortal dwell, and also to that other place

whar they don't dwell. It's lit'rature that improves the mind of youth with the stories of Robinson Crusoe and Captain Kidd and Sixteen-string Jack; and it's lit'rature settin' forth the invig'ratin' effects of somebody's root-and-yarb remedies which fascinates in our declinin' years. Lit'rature ain't confined by sech boundaries as time and place. Like that magic kyarpet of the Genius of the East, she transplants us from the present to the past, and from the pole to the tropics, easy as settin' off a coffee-pot.

"Lit'rature is divided into two kinds—prose and poetry. Prose is what we read mostly, which goes straight ahead. It's easier to write than poetry but suffers from the drawback that except in scientific writin's it's got to make sense. Poetry don't suffer from them lim'tations. The last words of lines of poetry used to have to rhyme, but this yere restriction has been removed recent and now no holts is barred. Prose is the main structure of lit'rature; poetry is the dec'rations. Prose is the funeral orations, and poetry is the hopeful commem'ration, unhampered by fact, on the tombstone.

"If I might say a word about authors it would be that mostly they can't help it. As the poet says, authors and good coon dogs is born and not made. But while this is true it's also a fact that learnin' to write writin' has a good deal to do with authorship, lack of which accomplishment has compelled many a gent of lit'ry ability to go through life with merely a local rep'tation as a notorious liar. As Solomon truly remarks, the paths of glory lead but to the grave, and too often fame imitates a buzzard by refusin' to perch on an author's brow till he's kicked his last.

"Now, as this is our first meetin', it ain't onlikely that gents which takes part in the program is a shade nervous. Tharfore, I'd ask the audience to refrain from any criticisms not in the nature of applause, as bein' in the interests of public safety in a crowded room whar innocent and neutral spectators can't dodge. The evenin's lit'ry entertainment will start with an exhibition of chuckin' the bowie by Tom Woods, who's better known around camp as Dogface and in Injun social circles as Leanin' Pine."

Thus introduced, Mr. Woods, a dark, squat gentleman with a lowering brow and lifting upper lip, which explained his sobriquet, gave an exhibition of his art by throwing a formidable knife at playing cards tacked upon a pine board. He threw with force and accuracy and received applause qualified by an undercurrent of thought which was expressed by the chair.

"Though you're all right with a knife, Dogface," said Bowerman, "you don't want to fall into the error of considerin' yourself a virtuoso. Though useful, that weepon is a heap primitive and when stacked in against a six-shooter op'rated by a white man it don't win, and you make a note of it. Also, it'll pay you to watch Bill Stevens, who's next on the program."

Bad Bill proceeded to furnish an exemplification of the merits of the six-shooter handled by an expert. It was two-handed shooting which impressed even critical judges. When the smoke had partially cleared, Mr. Roberts took the platform and with the aid of a deck of cards illustrated various forms of what is technically termed "the old thing" with an ease and familiarity which gave rise to private misgivings in the minds of gentlemen who were accustomed to sit on the public side of his layout.

"And now," Bowerman announced, "we come to one of the star lit'ry features of the evening, said feature bein' a representation of the daily lives of two mountain lions by our gifted feller citizens, Lars Sunberg and Knute Neilsen. Lars and Knute, bein' afflicted with artistic temp'raments, like most actors, the committee has had a heap of trouble gettin' 'em in shape to make these yere imitations realistic; but as a result of their labors we're due to witness a valuable contribution to nat'ral hist'ry."

Bowerman paused and looked expectantly toward the door as a Roman emperor might have looked at the barred dens from which living sepulchers devoted Christians were wont to emerge. But the door remained closed.

"Whar's Wilson?" the president asked impatiently. "He's responsible for this feature."

But it was some minutes before Mr. Wilson made belated appearance, and when he did so he was alone. Also, his mien was downcast.

"On behalf of the committee," Mr. Wilson stated apologetically, "I regrets to report that in our endeavors to tune up these performers to concert pitch we inadvertent keys 'em up too high. Nat'ral hist'ry bein'

silent on how much liquor Scandinavian lions can carry, we has to blaze out a trail for ourselves, and while pursuin' them original scientific investigations we ain't informed that the subjects tharoi has been drinkin' hard and steady by themselves for mebbe it's a week. With the result that just as we're rounding them up for this intellectual feast, Lion Sunberg emits a screech so realistic it's gratifyin' to the committee until it discovers that this yere vocalism is due to a delusion that the cabin is full of rattlers and pink jack rabbits with blue wings; and though Lion Neilsen don't share them hallucinations, he falls into his bunk and the voice of lit'rature calls to him in vain. Under these circumstances which has too much control over said lions, there's no other course open to the committee but to ask to be discharged from its duties."

"This yere loss to nat'ral hist'ry is plum' disapp'intin'," said Bowerman, frowning. "However, though it shortens down our program, there's nothing to do but discharge the committee and go ahead with the next feature, which is the debate. This oratorical contest, as we're all aware, is also for a side bet. The decision the participants has mutually agreed to leave to the audience, confident in its intelligence. I will now call on that eloquent orator, Mr. Soames, to state his case."

"Mister Chairman, feller citizens, and others," Mr. Soames began, striking an attitude at once careless and graceful, "the subject of debate to-night is, 'Resolved: that woman's intuition is superior to man's reason.' I claim and intend to show that it's superior in two ways; namely, in the results woman gets from her intuition and because its exercise don't involve no mental effort, which woman nat'rally shrinks from as outside her sphere.

"Now, science proves that the mental outfit of woman is diff'rent from that of man. A man is a heap slower on the trigger, mental, and is prone to dwell on his aim and peer along his sights a lot, which half the time results in his prey gettin' behind a tree; whereas a woman plays as a system intellectual snapshootin' without conscious aim. While man is ponderin' about and millin' around with reason, woman just slams away with intuition, and half the time it's center shootin'.

"Speakin' gen'ral, in the game of life man skins his hand careful and plays it close to his vest, while woman merely glances at her cards casual and holds 'em away from the feminine equivalent of said garment. And though I've been speakin' figgerative, I'll leave it to any gent who's been rash enough to sit into a game which includes ladies if he's emerged winner once. I'll gamble he ain't. Though woman busts ev'ry rule of the game, she wins, nevertheless."

"Not desirin' to interrupt my eloquent friend," Uncle Billy interjected, "I'd point out that women wins at poker, when they condescends to play sech, not so much because they busts established rules as because they makes new ones as they goes along and is likewise forgetful to ante. I once beholds a lady rake in every chip in sight with two pair, kings and queens, over a full of jacks and treys, calmly statin' that sech is the rule whar she comes from. Which a gent makin' sim'lar claims would get notice to hustle for his harp forthwith."

"I'm obliged to my friend for this interruption," said Mr. Soames, "for it furnishes the very illustration I want, bein' a cl'ar case of womanly intuition. That lady divines that her bluff won't be called and she makes it accordin'. Against that intuition man's reason, even though backed by a full house, is powerless. When intuition can accomplish feats like this it don't need argument to show its superiority. Intuition in woman is like instinct in a hound. Shut a hound up in a box and ship him off somewheres two or three hundred miles and turn him loose. Is he lost? Not any, he ain't. Maybe he likes his new location or his new master and decides to adopt both. But if not he merely smells around some, sits up and looks round a little, and pulls out for home. Mostly he gets there, though nobody knows how.

"And that's the way with woman's intuitions. Nobody knows how, but the fact that they gets there is undeniable. Also, the exercise of this intuition don't involve mental effort to compare with the strain on man on them occasions when he brings reason to bear on situations. Strong as man's reason is and irresistible when it gets goin', nevertheless, it's a hard load to start and woman ain't organized mental for such labors. That a way man's a freight wagon, while woman's a light buggy.

"Again, it's this intuition of woman which enables her to distinguish between good and

bad in a way that man's reason can't do. Which women and children, dogs, and some hosses knows a bad man every time. They smells bad off'n him. Everybody here has seen a hoss lay back his ears or a dog stand back and growl at some gent, whereas with another they're friends immediate. And it's infallible. The first gent will stand watching, while the second will do to cross the plains with. This yere mysterious quality woman shares with them higher animals. Man ain't got it, it bein' common knowledge that he's bein' continual skinned by brace games op'rated by his feller man. In spite of his reason, which he ain't got intuition enough to use, he's easy to fool, and he's fooled accordin'.

"Now, Mister Chairman and gents, provin' conclusive as I has that woman's intuition, both in results and in ease of op'ration, is superior to man's reason, I can afford to be gen'rous; and I therefore asks your pityin' tol'ration for my aged opponent, who has my sympathies in his hopeless task."

Mr. Soames sat down amid applause, and Uncle Billy arose somewhat stiffly, casting a frosty eye at his rival.

"Mister Chairman and gents," he said, "if my task was to show that Mr. Soames' reason is superior to woman's intuition it would shorely be hopeless, and I'd throw in my hand without callin' for cards. But luckily for me and for mankind in gen'ral that ain't the case. When we speak of man's reason we mean the reason of a man of av'rage intelligence.

"Now, admittin' at the outset that woman has to have something to take the place of reason, her intuitions that a way is far too light in the pull. Shootin' into the dark with them ha'r-trigger intuitions, as is her playful habit, while occasional she nails a night prowler, she's more apt to down her husband or a pony. Hist'ry shows that the results of woman's intuition mostly comes under the headin' of gun accidents.

"I once myself tracks up on a case of woman's intuition which makes a profound impression on me to the extent I'm shy of it ever since. It's in Blaney, years ago, that thar's a most egregious murder committed on a ol' prospector named Jordan. This Jordan is strong mebbe two thousand dollars in dust when he sets out for Blaney to pay his s'loon bills and store accounts. He's discovered 'bout five miles out on the trail, drug into the bushes, with a forty-four slug through his head and nary ounce of dust on him. As he's an old man which wouldn't hurt a fly, and likewise indebted, as I states, his murder creates a heap of unfavorable feelin' among the business men of the community.

"'If gents comin' in with dust to pay for the drinks they've had is to be wiped out it destroys that credit which is the life of trade,' says they; and thereupon they offers five hundred dollars reward for the murderer's scalp. But thar's no clews, not so much as a moccasin track, and while undoubted thar's plenty of murderers to choose from, thar's no tellin' which one sets Jordan across the stream which bears his name.

"Them days Jim Sands is marshal and he's jest married, which you'll say and I agrees is rash in a marshal, 'specially in Blaney. However, he is. A week after the murder he's walkin' down street with his wife, when she grabs his arm.

"'Jim,' she says, all eager, 'thar's Jordan's murderer!'

"Sands looks whar she indicates and sees a hairy and desperate-lookin' party with consid'rable obtrusive hardware standin' by the door of a s'loon across the street.

"'What makes you think that's him, Polly?' he asks.

"'I jest reckons he is,' says Polly Sands. 'Throw a gun on him, Jim, and take him in.'

"But Jim shakes his head. 'That ain't enough to go on, Polly,' he says.

"'I've asked you to, ain't I?' says his wife, beginning to pout, 'and that ought to be enough. Before we was married you'd have did it in a minute. I don't b'lieve you love me no more!'

"Jim ain't proof against this appeal.

"'Just keep walkin' on, Polly,' he says. And, sweepin' off his hat with a bow—for, as I says, he ain't been married long enough to re'lize it—he heads across the street like he aims to recuperate from the effects of female society.

"At close range this party looks a heap like a murderer. Which he's shorely hard enough lookin' to be night boss for Herod. So Jim allows he'll stand him up for luck.

"'What's this for?' asks the hardened-lookin' party when he's elevated his hands, which he does prompt, Jim havin' a rep'tation for issuin' instructions just once.

"'For murderin' ol' man Jordan,' Jim informs him.

"'But I don't murder him,' says the hard party.

"'If you don't,' says Jim, 'you'll have plenty of chance to prove who does. But, not bein' pers'nal at all, you couldn't look more like you did if you did.'

"But when the vig'lance committee is convened the murderer can't prove who does it. In fact, he's that guilty he ain't got no alibi beyond claimin' he was lyin' out somewheres drunk on the date of the crime. So the committee holds this circumstantial lack of evidence is conclusive enough for a party with his looks, and sends out for a rope.

"'How do you come to call this turn so acc'rate, Polly?' Jim asks when he comes home after swingin' off this hom'cide, who's that hardened he dies protestin' his innocence and expressin' hopes of meetin' the committee later on whar he's goin'.

"'Well,' says Polly Sands, 'I reckon it's mostly intuition, Jim. And then I wants that reward.'

"Now thar's a case which, if it stopped at this point, would stiffen up Mr. Soames' arguments a lot. But thar's more.

"The sad fact is that about a week after this hard party had gone before, Jim Sands is forced to sift some lead through a holdup; and this route agent, thinkin' he's goin' to die—and he's shorely right—confesses that he's the one which heads ol' man Jordan for bright mansions above.

"When it hears of this nat'rally the committee is plum' mortified. Though, rememberin' the looks of the hard party, it seems likely jestice was merely a mite premature or even delayed, nevertheless, they blames Jim Sands. 'After this,' says the committee, 'you skin your hand closer before bringin' innocent crim'nals before us. We ain't got time to hang everybody which looks as if he needs it.'

"As I states," Uncle Billy went on, "this instance of the results of woman's intuition leaves me shy of it ever since. And yet it's only one instance. From the beginnin' of time intuition has been fittin' rope neckties onto innocent gents. Go back to the beginnin' of things, when Adam is gardenin' all industrious in Eden, workin' happily among his corn and melons, and his wife wanders down into the orchard and holds conversations with the snake! Does her intuitions enable her to smell 'bad' off'n that serpent, like my friend argues? On the contrary; she deems him a polished and attractive buck, commits them horticultural depredations he suggests, and goes back and saws off some fruit on her innocent husband, tharby puttin' mankind in a hole from which it ain't emerged to this day.

"Woman's intuitions enables her to distinguish bad gents, says my friend! Which, if so, he'll maybe explain why is bigamists? Not only don't woman's intuitions fail to spot descendants of that scriptural serpent, but as often as not she stacks up a gent compared with which Saint Antony is a wild debauchee as a disciple of that onprincipled Mexican, Don Juan. That's all I has to say about woman's intuitions. They're friv'lous and onreliable as the heels of a grazin' mule.

"Now, take man's reason, of which he is justly proud. A gent possessed of reason in full bloom ain't the prey of friv'lous notions. He don't indulge in no emotional snapshots and his mental lead carries straight to centers. When a hard play comes up he takes a few drinks, convenes his intellectual committee, and goes into executive session, which may consume an hour or a week. But at the end of it his course is cl'ar. That gent's done made up his mind, and tharafter nothing changes his vote. He's solid as the eternal hills. Tharafter he's shootin' from the rest of those decisions he's come to as the results of reason.

"I feels," Uncle Billy concluded, "that with an audience of this intelligence, which is likewise showin' signs of dryness, I don't need to 'laborate these arguments. To put the matter in a figgerative nutshell, let me ask you, 'Would any man here swap his reason for intuition?' With this yere query, which admits of but one answer from any gent blessed with reason, however feeble, even includin' my opponent, I thanks you for your hearin', quits, and calls it a day."

"Gents," said Bowerman, rising on the heels of the applause which rewarded Uncle Billy, "I'm glad it ain't my duty to decide between these gifted speakers which has thrilled us to-night. As I already states, the decision will be by pop'lar vote, by ballot into a hat. To see that both parties gets a squar' deal I app'ints Wilson for Soames and Bill Stevens for Uncle Billy. This vote will decide all bets."

Messrs. Wilson and Stevens having established a poll by the simple method of put-

ting the latter's hat on a table near the door where they happened to be standing, balloting proceeded. All went smoothly until the electoral officers were confronted by the local representatives of the Orient, Lee Yet and Lum Lee, who announced a desire to vote.

"Vote!" Mr. Stevens repeated with indignation. "I like your nerve!"

"I sh'd say so!" Mr. Wilson agreed. "Who do you think you want to vote for?"

"Wanchee vote Missuh Soames," Lee replied, and Mr. Wilson's views as to the franchise broadened.

"Oh!" he said. "While, of course, I agrees with you, Bill, that chinks can't vote in reg'lar alections, this is diff'rent. This is a lit'ry question and the Chinese is lit'ry to beat the band. It looks to me like these boys has votes here."

"A chink," Mr. Stevens ruled with Occidental conviction, "ain't got a vote no place."

"Havin' fifty dollars on Soames," Mr. Wilson protested regretfully but firmly, "it's clear to me these intelligent and progressive Orientals has a right to express their views by ballot. And they're goin' to."

"You don't want to let your judgment be warped by them bets," Mr. Stevens returned, keeping a wary eye on Mr. Wilson, who was known to be no amateur with a gun. "Havin' a hundred on Uncle Billy myself, this franchise ain't goin' to be extended to pipe slaves if I knows it. These chinks don't vote none whatever."

This electoral deadlock might have been submitted to the arbitrament of Colonel Colt but for Lum Lee, who put in a verbal oar.

"Wanchee vote fo' Uncle Billee!" he announced blandly.

Whereat the electoral officers exchanged glances of some relief mingled with disgust.

"In that case," Mr. Wilson admitted, "I reckon the view that chinks ain't got votes prevails. If they're onprincipled enough to split tickets there's no need of further argument."

"That's what," Mr. Stevens agreed. "We shorely ain't got time to waste in votin' saw-offs. Git, you Canton roustabouts, and don't bother us no more!"

With the hasty departure of the almond-eyed pair voting proceeded quietly and was almost completed when the knife virtuoso, Mr. Woods, presented himself in company with the half dozen Snake bucks.

For some months Mr. Woods had been making his presence felt around Yellow Horse. He had been, as gentlemen of Southern extraction phrased it, "actin' biggoty." His half blood gave him a certain status among the Indians but none among the whites, with whom, nevertheless, he had assumed to claim a democratic equality. In fact, Mr. Woods lacked judgment. Generally he was beginning to be regarded as a nuisance; and though nobody had undertaken to abate him, it was, as Bad Bill had pointed out to Bowerman, merely a matter of time. Though Mr. Woods did not realize it, he was a poor risk.

"What are you and these bucks crowdin' up to this poll for?" Mr. Stevens asked.

"Me and these Injun," replied Mr. Woods, who spoke colloquial though somewhat guttural English, "is goin' to vote."

Which frank statement of intention displeased Mr. Stevens.

"Oh, you be!" he said. "Now just let me inform you of something: You votes if we lets you; and otherwise you don't."

"I votes," said Mr. Woods truculently, "or I knows why."

Both officers surveyed him with disapproval. They held exceedingly brief conference, the result of which was announced by Mr. Stevens.

"Our rulin', Dogface, is that you can't vote a little bit. It's true you're part white; but you're also part Injun. So it's a stand-off and you ain't nothin'. These bucks, bein' all Injun, is barred, too. So pull your freight."

Mr. Woods received this dictum with lowering brow and a sinister lifting of the upper lip which exposed a wolfish dental exhibit.

"You don't run no blazers on me," he announced. "I'm int'rested in this votin', and I'm goin' to drop my ballot into that hat."

Mr. Stevens' cold glance rested for an instant on the big bowie which hung at Mr. Woods' right side.

"Yes?" he commented with mild interrogation. "And yet, Dogface, enthusiastic and all worked up as you be at the moment, it's my theory that if you puts anything in that hat—and, in fact, if you don't pull your freight like I've told you to do—the results of this votin' ain't goin' to int'rest you a little bit."

"You don't want to back that theory for

much," Mr. Woods snarled. "And don't you call me Dogface no more!"

Mr. Stevens grinned, and a close observer might have noticed that he tensed slightly.

"I finds that name handy and also a plum' acc'rate description," he said. "Therefore, I keeps right on alludin' to you as Dogface. Also, you answers to it!"

Mr. Woods' reply was sudden and incisive. Abandoning further verbal argument, he dropped his hand to the hilt of his formidable knife and his arm flashed up and back.

Mr. Stevens was standing in a negligent posture, his hands hanging loosely by his sides, an attitude which without undue advertisement kept them contiguous to the ivory-handled field artillery he wore somewhat low on his thighs. As Mr. Woods' arm went back, the lamplight glinting on the blade of the bowie, Mr. Stevens brought his starboard battery into action with the smooth speed of a sleight-of-hand artist. A pink flash stabbed a puffball of white smoke and as the heavy gun roared Mr. Woods' throwing arm jerked violently and the formidable knife fell clanging to the floor.

Now, when this took place most of the citizens had cast their votes and few were paying any attention to the poll. They were smoking, chatting, and awaiting the result. This idyllic peace was shattered by the bark of the six-shooter. That sound was by no means new, but in a room crowded with men who wore guns as part of their everyday apparel it was no joke, being pregnant with possibilities. It might signify anything from inadvertence to holocaust. Among those present were some who recalled occasions on which one shot had preceded by scant margin a room full of smoke and half a dozen dead men—the exact casus belli being unknown till afterward or not even then. Wherefore the more experienced, being quite aware of the fatal attraction for bullets exercised by innocent bystanders, frankly ducked for the nearest shelter.

It was during this temporary confusion that a Snake gentleman known as Three Eagles found himself thrust by a surge of the crowd alongside the table on which rested the ballot box in the form of Mr. Stevens' hat. The hat was a good hat, and presumably nobody was looking at it just then. Opportunity knocks but once, but it found Three Eagles at home.

With presence of mind highly creditable under the circumstances Three Eagles executed a possessory gesture which swept the hat, ballots and all, to his manly bosom, where he concealed it with a fold of his blanket coat and an air of hauteur. Making dignified but swift passage through the crowd Three Eagles took the air. Outside, at a safe distance, he shook a stage snowstorm from the hat, set the latter upon his previously unsheltered raven locks, and set out at a lope for home, just at the moment when Mr. Stevens, having pointed out to the rash Dogface that but for the inscrutable mercy of Hades he would have suffered more than a shattered right arm, turned to resume his electoral duties.

But the hat was gone, and with it had vanished the ballots. Nobody could throw any light on the mystery. Search and inquiry proving unavailing, Bowerman mounted the platform.

"Gents," said the leading citizen, "while our officers is protectin' the integrity of the ballot box, as is their duty, on the performance of which they're to be congratulated, it disappears mysterious as the ways of Providence. Nat'rally somebody rustles these polls, and in passin' I want to state that anybody noticed wearin' the same will have a short run of bad luck. But losin' these ballots brings the deal to a full stop. Ballotin' takes a heap of time, and as some of our members is plainly impatient, with your approval I'm goin' to call for a verbal show-down. Everybody who thinks woman's intuitions wins when stacked in agin' man's reason will holler, 'Aye;' contrairy minded, 'No.'"

The negative whoop drowned the affirmative.

"The 'Noes' has it by a workin' majority," Bowerman decided; "and, as always, man's reason emerges triumphant from its hour of trial. Also it wins them bets. In spite of drawbacks like the absence of them Scandinavian nat'ralists this inaug'ral meetin' has been a triumph for lit'rature, which henceforth can count Yeller Hoss as a case card. Gents, on behalf of those whose efforts to-night has contributed to that lit'rary culture in which the West stands pre-em'nent, I thank you. The meetin' stands adjourned."

The Red Redmaynes

By Eden Phillpotts

Author of "The Gray Room," "Children of the Mist," Etc.

"The Gray Room," by Mr. Phillpotts, which we published a little while ago, was the best mystery story written in years. In this new mystery of Dartmoor he again strikes twelve. Who killed the gentle Pendean? Was he killed? Mark Brendon only knew that he was faced with a problem which from seeming simple developed into one well-nigh insoluble. And for the first time, with Jenny Pendean, he was faced with the mystery of love. This is not just an ordinary mystery story, but a fine novel.

(A Five-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

THE RUMOR.

EVERY man has a right to be conceited until he is famous—so it is said; and, perhaps unconsciously, Mark Brendon shared that opinion.

His self-esteem was not, however, conspicuous, although he held that only a second-rate man is diffident. At thirty-five years of age he already stood high in the criminal-investigation department of the police. He was indeed expecting an inspectorship well earned by those qualities of imagination and intuition which, added to the necessary endowment of courage, resource and industry, had built up his present solid success.

A substantial record already stood behind him and during the war certain international achievements were added to his credit. He felt complete assurance that in ten years he would retire from government employ and create that private and personal practice which it was his ambition to establish.

And now Mark was taking holiday on Dartmoor, devoting himself to his hobby of trout fishing and accepting the opportunity to survey his own life from a bird's-eye point of view, take stock of his achievement and promise and consider impartially his future, not only as a police officer but as a man.

Mark had reached a turning point or rather a point from which new interests and new personal plans were likely to present themselves upon the theater of a life hitherto devoted to one drama alone. Until now he had existed for his work only. Since the war he had been again occupied with routine labor on cases of darkness, doubt and crime, once more existing only that he might resolve these mysteries, still living with no personal existence at all outside his grim occupation. He had been a machine as innocent of any inner life, any spiritual ambition or selfish aim as a pair of handcuffs.

This assiduity and single-hearted devotion had brought their temporal reward. He was now at last in a position to enlarge his outlook, consider higher aspects of life and determine to be a man as well as a machine.

He found himself with five thousand pounds saved as a result of some special grants during the war and a large honorarium from the French government. He was also in possession of a handsome salary and the prospect of promotion when a senior man retired at no distant date. Too intelligent to find all that life had to offer in his work alone, he now began to think of culture, of human pleasures and those added interests and responsibilities that a wife and family would offer.

He knew very few women—none who awakened any emotion of affection. Indeed at five and twenty he had told himself that marriage must be ruled out of his calculations, since his business made life precarious and was also of a nature to be unduly complicated if a woman shared life with him.

Love, he had reasoned, might lessen his powers of concentration, blunt his extraordinary special faculties, perhaps even introduce an element of calculation and actual cowardice before great alternatives and so shadow his powers and modify his future success. But now, ten years later, he thought otherwise, found himself willing to receive impressions, ready even to woo and wed if the right girl should present herself. He dreamed of some highly educated woman who would lighten his own ignorance of many branches of knowledge.

A man in this receptive mood is not asked as a rule to wait long for the needful response; but Brendon was old-fashioned and the women born of the war attracted him not at all. He recognized their fine qualities and often their distinction of mind; yet his ideal struck backward to another and earlier type—the type of his own mother who, as a widow, had kept house for him until her death. She was his feminine ideal—restful, sympathetic, trustworthy—one who always made his interests hers, one who concentrated upon his life rather than her own and found in his progress and triumphs the salt of her own existence.

Mark wanted, in truth, somebody who would be content to merge herself in him and seek neither to impress her own personality upon his nor develop an independent environment. He had wit to know a mother's standpoint must be vastly different from that of any wife, no matter how perfect her devotion; he had experience enough of married men to doubt whether the woman he sought was to be found in a post-war world; yet he preserved and permitted himself a hope that the old-fashioned women still existed and he began to consider where he might find such a helpmate.

He was somewhat overweary after a strenuous year; but to Dartmoor he always came for health and rest when the opportunity offered, and now he had returned for the third time to The Duchy Hotel at Princetown—there to renew old friendships and amuse himself in the surrounding trout streams through the long days of June and July.

Brendon enjoyed the interest he awakened among other fishermen and, though he always went upon his expeditions alone, usually joined the throng in the smoking room after dinner. Being a good talker he never failed of an audience there. But better still he liked an hour sometimes with the prison wardens. For the gigantic convict prison that dominated that gray smudge in the heart of the moors known as Princetown held many interesting and famous criminals, more than one of whom had been "put through" by him, and had to thank Brendon's personal industry and daring for penal servitude. Among those set over the convicts were not a few men of intelligence and wide experience who could tell the detective much germane to his work. The psychology of crime never paled in its intense attraction for Brendon and many a strange incident or obscure convict speech, related without comment to him by those who had witnessed, or heard them, was capable of explanation in the visitor's mind.

He had found an unknown spot where some good trout dwelt and on an evening in mid-June he set forth to tempt them. Certain deep pools in a disused quarry fed by a streamlet, he discovered, harbored a fish or two heavier than most of those surrendered daily by the Dart and the Meavy, the Blackabrook and the Walkham.

Foggintor Quarry, wherein lay these preserves, might be approached in two ways. Originally broken into the granite bosom of the moor for stone to build the bygone war prison of Princetown, a road still extended to the deserted spot and joined the main thoroughfare half a mile distant. A house or two—dwellings used by old-time quarrymen—stood upon this grass-grown track; but the huge pit was long ago deserted. Nature had made it beautiful, although the wonderful place was seldom appreciated now and only wild creatures dwelt therein.

Brendon, however, came hither by a direct path over the moors. Leaving Princetown railway station upon his left hand he set his face west where the waste heaved out before him dark against a blaze of light from the sky. The sun was setting and a great glory of gold, fretted with lilac and crimson, burned over the distant earth, while here and there the light caught crystals of quartz in the granite bowlders and flashed up from the evening sobriety of the heath.

Against the western flame appeared a figure carrying a basket. Mark Brendon, his thoughts on the evening rise of the trout, lifted his face at a light footfall. There passed by him the fairest woman he had ever known and such sudden beauty startled the man and sent his own thoughts flying. It was as though from the desolate waste

there had sprung a magical and exotic flower; or that the sunset lights, now deepening on fern and stone, had burned together and become incarnate in this lovely girl. She was slim and not very tall. She wore no hat and the auburn of her hair, piled high above her forehead, tangled the warm sunset beams and burned like a halo round her head. The color was glorious, that rare but perfect reflection of the richest hues that autumn brings to the beech and the bracken. And she had blue eyes—round, virginal, wondering. Their size impressed Brendon.

He had only known one woman with really large eyes, and she was a criminal. But this stranger's great, bright orbs seemed almost to dwarf her exquisite face. Her mouth was not small but the lips were full and delicately turned. She walked quickly with a good stride and her slight, silvery skirts and rosy, silken jumper showed her figure clearly enough—her round hips and firm, girlish bosom. She swung along—a flash of joy on little twinkling feet that seemed hardly to touch the ground.

Her eyes met his for a moment with a frank, trustful expression, then she had passed. Waiting half a minute, Brendon turned to look again. He heard her singing with all the light-heartedness of youth and he caught a few notes as clear and cheerful as a gray bird's. Then, still walking quickly, she sank into one bright spot upon the moor, dipped into an undulation and was gone—a creature of the heath and wild lands whom it seemed impossible to imagine pent within any dwelling.

The vision made Brendon pensive, as sudden beauty will, and he wondered about the girl. He guessed her to be a visitor—one of a party perhaps, or possibly here for the day alone. He went no farther than to guess that she must certainly be betrothed. Such an exquisite creature seemed little likely to have escaped love. Indeed love and a spirit of happiness were reflected from her eyes and in her song. He speculated on her age and guessed she must be eighteen. He then, by some twist of thought, considered his personal appearance. We are all prone to put the best face possible upon such a matter, but Brendon lived too much with hard facts to hoodwink himself on that or any other subject. He was a splendidly modeled man, of great physical strength, and still agile and lithe for his age; but his hair was an ugly straw color and his clean shorn, pale face lacked any sort of distinction save an indication of moral purpose, character and pugnacity. It was a face well suited to his own requirements, for he could disguise it easily; but it was not a face calculated to charm or challenge any woman—a fact he knew well enough.

Tramping forward now, the detective came to a great crater that gaped on the hillside and stood above the dead quarry workings of Foggintor. Underneath him opened an immense cavity with sides two hundred feet high. Its peaks and precipices fell, here by rough, giant steps, here stark and sheer over broad faces of granite, where only weeds and saplings of mountain ash and thorn could find a foothold. The bottom was one vast litter of stone and fern where foxgloves nodded from the masses of débris and wild things made their homes. Water fell over many a granite shelf and in the débris lay great and small pools.

Brendon began to descend, where a sheep track wound into the pit. A Dartmoor pony and her foal galloped away through an entrance westerly. At one point a wide moraine spread fanwise from above into the cup, and here upon this slope of disintegrated granite more water dripped and tinkled from overhanging ledges of stone. Rills ran in every direction and, from the point now reached by the sportsman, the dead quarry presented a bewildering confusion of huge bowlders, deep pits and mighty cliff faces heaving up to scarps and counter scarps. Brendon had found the guardian spirit of the place on a former visit and now he lifted his voice and cried out.

"Here I am!" he said.

"Here I am!" cleanly answered the granite.

"Mark Brendon!"

"Mark Brendon!"

"Welcome!"

"Welcome!"

Every syllable echoed back crisp and clear, just tinged with that something not human that gave eerie fascination to the reverberated words.

A great purple stain seemed to fill the crater and night's wine rose up within it while still along the eastern crest of the pit there ran red sunset light to lip the cup with gold. Mark, picking his way through the huddled confusion, proceeded to the extreme breadth of the quarry fifty yards northerly

and stood above two wide, still pools in the midst. They covered the lowest depth of the old workings, shelved to a rough beach on one side and, upon the other, ran thirty feet deep where the granite sprang sheer in a precipice from the face of the water. Here the crystal-clear water sank into a dim, blue darkness. The whole surface of the pools was, however, within reach of any fly fisherman who had a rod of necessary stiffness and the skill to throw a long line. Trout moved and here and there circles of light widened out on the water and rippled to the cliff beyond. Then came a heavier rise and from beneath a great rock that heaved up from the midst of the smaller pool a good fish took a little white moth which had touched the water.

Mark set about his sport, yet felt that a sort of unfamiliar division had come into his mind and, while he brought two tiny-eyed flies from a box and fastened them to the hairlike leader he always used, there persisted the thought of the auburn girl—her eyes blue as April—her voice so birdlike and untouched with human emotion—her swift, delicate tread.

He began to fish as the light thickened; but he only cast once or twice and then decided to wait half an hour. He grounded his rod and brought a brier pipe and a pouch of tobacco from his pocket. The things of day were turning to slumber; but still there persisted a clinking sound, uttered monotonously from time to time, which the sportsman supposed to be a bird. It came from behind the great acclivities that ran opposite his place by the pools. Brendon suddenly perceived that it was no natural sound but arose from some human activity. It was, in fact, the musical note of a mason's trowel and when presently it ceased he was annoyed to hear the heavy footsteps of a man in the quarry—a laborer he guessed.

No laborer appeared however. A big, broad man approached him, clad in a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers and a red waistcoat with gaudy brass buttons. He had entered at the lower mouth of the quarries and was proceeding to the northern exit, whence the little streamlet that fed the pools came through a narrow pass.

The stranger stopped as he saw Brendon, straddled his great legs, took a cigar from his mouth and spoke.

"Ah! You've found 'em, then?"

"Found what?" asked the detective.

"Found these trout. I come here for a swim sometimes. I've wondered why I never saw a rod in this hole. There are a dozen half pounders there and possibly some bigger ones."

It was Mark's instinctive way to study all fellow creatures with whom he came in contact. He had an iron memory for faces. He looked up now and observed the rather remarkable features of the man before him. His scrutiny was swift and sure; yet had he guessed the tremendous significance of his glance or with proleptic vision seen what this man was to mean during the years of his immediate future it is certain that he would have intensified his inspection and extended the brief limits of their interview.

He saw a pair of broad shoulders and a thick neck over which hung a square, hard jaw and a determined chin. Then came a big mouth and the largest pair of mustaches Brendon remembered to have observed on any face. They were almost grotesque; but the stranger was evidently proud of them, for he twirled them from time to time and brought the points up to his ears. They were of a foxy red and beneath them flashed large, white teeth when the big man talked in rather coarse, grating tones. He suggested one on very good terms with himself—a being of passionate temperament and material mind. His eyes were gray, small, set rather wide apart, with a heavy nose between. His hair was a bright fiery red, cut close, and of a hue yet more staring than his mustaches. Even the fading light could not kill his rufous face.

The big man appeared friendly, though Brendon heartily wished him away.

"Sea fishing's my sport," he said. "Conger and cod, pollack and mackerel—half a boat load—that's sport. That means tight lines and a thirst afterward."

"I expect it does."

"But this baliy place seems to bewitch people," continued the big man. "What is it about Dartmoor? Only a desert of hills and stones and twopenny halfpenny streams a child can walk across; and yet—why you'll hear folk blether about it as though heaven would only be a bad substitute."

The other laughed. "There is a magic here. It gets into your blood."

"So it does. Even a God-forgotten hole like Princetown with nothing to see but the poor devils of convicts. A man I know is building himself a bungalow out here. He

and his wife will be just as happy as a pair of wood pigeons—at least they think so."

"I heard a trowel clinking."

"Yes, I lend a hand sometimes when the workmen are gone. But think of it—to turn your back on civilization and make yourself a home in a desert!"

"Might do worse—if you've got no ambitions."

"Yes—ambition is not their strong point. They think love's enough—poor souls. Why don't you fish?"

"Waiting for it to get a bit darker."

"Well, so long. Take care you don't catch anything that'll pull you in."

Laughing at his joke and making another echo ring sharply over the still face of the water the red man strode off through the gap fifty yards distant. Then in the stillness Mark heard the pur of a machine. He had evidently departed upon a motor bicycle for the main road half a mile distant.

When he was gone Brendon rose and strolled down to the other entrance of the quarry that he might see the bungalow of which the stranger had spoken. Leaving the great pit he turned right-handed and there, in a little hollow facing southwest, he found the building. It was as yet far from complete. The granite walls now stood six feet high and they were of remarkable thickness. The plan indicated a dwelling of six rooms and Brendon perceived that the house would have no second story. An acre round about had been walled but as yet the boundaries were incomplete. Magnificent views swept to the west and south. Brendon's rare sight could still distinguish Saltash Bridge spanning the waters above Plymouth where Cornwall heaved up against the dying afterglow of the west. It was a wonderful place in which to dwell and the detective speculated as to the sort of people who would be likely to lift their home in this silent wilderness.

He guessed they must have wearied of cities, or of their fellow creatures. Perhaps they were disappointed and disillusioned with life and so desired to turn their backs upon its gregarious features, evade its problems, as far as possible, escape its shame and follies and live here amid these stern realities which promised nothing, yet were full of riches for a certain order of mankind. He judged that the couple who designed to dwell beside the silent hollow of Foggintor must have outlived much and reached an attitude of mind that desired no greater boon than solitude in the lap of nature. Such people could only be middle-aged, he told himself. Yet he remembered the big man had said that the pair felt "love was enough." That meant romance still active and alive, whatever their ages might be.

The day grew very dim and the fret of light and shadow died off the earth, leaving all vague and vast and featureless. Brendon returned to his sport and found a small "coachman" fly sufficiently destructive. The two pools yielded a dozen trout, of which he kept six and returned the rest to the water. His best three fish all weighed half a pound.

Resolving to pay the pools another visit Mark made an end of his sport and chose to return by road rather than venture the walk over the rough moor in darkness. He left the quarry at the gap, passed the half dozen cottages that stood a hundred yards beyond it and so presently regained the main road between Princetown and Tavistock. Tramping back under the stars, and his thoughts drifted to the auburn girl of the moor. He was seeking to recollect how she had been dressed. He remembered everything about her with extraordinary vividness, from the crown of her glowing hair to her twinkling feet, in brown shoes with steel or silver buckles; but he could not instantly see her garments. Then they came back to him—the rose-colored jumper and the short silvery skirts.

Twice afterward, during the evening hour, Brendon again tramped to Foggintor, but he was not rewarded by any glimpse of the girl. As the picture of her a little dimmed, there happened a strange and apparently terrible thing, and in common with everybody else his thoughts were distracted. To the detective's hearty annoyance and much against his will there confronted him a professional problem. Though the sudden whisper of murder that winged with amazing speed through that little, uplifted church town was no affair of his, there fell out an incident which quickly promised to draw him into it and end his holiday before the time.

Four evenings after his first fishing expedition to the quarries he devoted a morning to the lower waters of the Meavy River. At the end of that day, not far short of midnight, when glasses were empty and pipes knocked out, half a dozen men, just about to retire, heard a sudden and evil report.

Will Blake, "boots" at the Duchy Hotel,

was waiting to extinguish the lights and seeing Brendon he said:

"There's something in your line happened, master, by the look of it. A pretty bobbery to-morrow."

"A convict escaped, Will?" asked the detective, yawning and longing for bed. "That's about the only fun you get up here, isn't it?"

"Convict escaped? No—a man done in seemingly. Mr. Pendean's uncle-in-law have slaughtered Mr. Pendean by the looks of it."

"What did he want to do that for?" asked Brendon without emotion.

"That's for clever men like you to find out," answered Will.

"And who is Mr. Pendean?"

"The gentleman what's building the bungalow down to Foggintor."

Mark started. The big red man flashed to his mind complete in every physical feature. He described him and Will Blake replied.

"That's the chap that's done it. That's the gentleman's uncle-in-law!"

Brendon went to bed and slept no worse for the tragedy. Nor when morning came and every maid and man desired to tell him all they knew did he show the least interest. When Milly knocked with his hot water and drew up his blind she judged that nobody could by any possibility feel more interest than a famous detective.

"Oh, sir—such a fearful thing——" she began. But he cut her short.

"Now, Milly, don't talk shop. I haven't come to Dartmoor to catch murderers, but to catch trout. What's the weather like?"

"'Tis foggy and soft; and Mr. Pendean—poor dear soul——"

"Go away, Milly. I don't want to hear anything about Mr. Pendean."

"That big red devil of a man——"

"Nor anything about the big red devil either. If it's soft, I shall try the leat this morning."

Milly stared at him with much disappointment.

"God's goodness!" she said. "You can go off fishing—a professed murder catcher like you—and a man killed under your nose you may say!"

"It isn't my job. Now clear out. I want to get up."

"Well, I never!" murmured Milly and departed in great astonishment.

But Brendon was not to enjoy the freedom that he desired in this matter. He ordered sandwiches and intended to beat a hasty retreat and get beyond reach and at half past nine he emerged into a dull and lowering morn. Fine mist was in the air and a heavy fog hid the hills. There seemed every probability of a wet day and from a fisherman's point of view the conditions promised sport. He was just slipping on a raincoat and about to leave the hotel when Will Blake appeared and handed him a letter. He glanced at it, half inclined to stick the missive in the hall letter rack and leave perusal until his return, but the handwriting was a woman's and did not lack for distinction and character. He felt curious and, not associating the incident with the rumored crime, set down his rod and creel, opened the note and read what was written:

3 Station Cottages, Princetown.

DEAR SIR: The police have told me that you are in Princetown, and it seems as though Providence had sent you. I fear that I have no right to seek your services directly, but if you can answer the prayer of a heartbroken woman and give her the benefit of your genius in this dark moment, she would be unspeakably thankful. Faithfully yours, JENNY PENDEAN.

Mark Brendon murmured "damn" gently under his breath. Then he turned to Will.

"Where is Mrs. Pendean's house?" he asked.

"In Station Cottages, just before you come to the Prison woods, sir."

"Run over then and say I'll call in half an hour."

"There!" Will said. "I told 'em you'd never keep out of it!"

He was gone and Brendon read the letter again, studied its beautiful calligraphy and observed that a tear had blotted the middle of the sheet. Once more he said "damn" to himself, dropped his fishing basket and rod, turned up the collar of his mackintosh and walked to the police station, where he heard a little of the matter in hand from a constable and then asked for permission to use the telephone. In five minutes he was speaking to his own chief at Scotland Yard, and the familiar cockney voice of Inspector Harrison came over the two hundred odd miles that separated the metropolis of convicts from the metropolis of the world.

"Man apparently murdered here, inspector. Chap who is thought to have done it disappeared. Widow wants me to take up

case. I'm unwilling to do so; but it looks like duty." So spoke Brendon.

"Right. If it looks like duty, do it. Let me hear again to-night. Halfyard, chief at Princetown, is an old friend of mine. Very good man. Good-by."

Mark then learned that Inspector Halfyard was already at Foggintor.

"I'm on this," said Mark to the constable. "I'll come in again. Tell the inspector to expect me at noon for all details. I'm going to see Mrs. Pendean now."

The policeman saluted. He knew Brendon very well by sight.

"I hope it won't knock a hole in your holiday, sir. But I reckon it won't. It's all pretty plain sailing by the look of it."

"Where's the body?"

"That's what we don't know yet, Mr. Brendon; and that's what only Robert Redmayne can tell us by the look of it."

The detective nodded. Then he sought No. 3 Station Cottages.

The little row of attached houses ran off at right angles to the high street of Princetown. They faced northwest, and immediately in front of them rose the great, tree-clad shoulder of North Hessory Tor. The woods ascended steeply and a stone wall ran between them and the dwellings beneath.

Brendon knocked at No. 3 and was admitted by a thin, gray-haired woman who had evidently been shedding tears. He found himself in a little hall decorated with many trophies of fox hunting. There were masks and brushes and several specimens of large Dartmoor foxes, who had run their last and now stood stuffed in cases hung upon the walls.

"Do I speak to Mrs. Pendean?" asked Brendon; but the old woman shook her head.

"No, sir. I'm Mrs. Edward Gerry, widow of the famous Ned Gerry, for twenty years huntsman of the South Devons. Mr. and Mrs. Pendean were—are—I mean she is my lodger."

"Is she ready to see me?"

"She's cruel hard hit, poor lady. What name, sir?"

"Mr. Mark Brendon."

"She hoped you'd come. But go gentle with her. 'Tis a fearful ordeal for any innocent person to have to talk to you, sir."

Mrs. Gerry opened a door upon the right hand of the entrance.

"The great Mr. Brendon be here, Mrs. Pendean," she said; then Brendon walked in and the widow shut the door behind him.

Jenny Pendean rose from her chair by the table where she was writing letters and Brendon saw the auburn girl of the sunset.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROBLEM STATED.

The girl had evidently dressed that morning without thought or care—perhaps unconsciously. Her wonderful hair was lifted and wound carelessly upon her head; her beauty was dimmed with tears. She was, however, quite controlled and showed little emotion at their meeting; but she was very weary and every inflection of her pleasant, clear voice revealed it. She spoke as one who had suffered much and labored under great loss of vitality. He found this to be indeed the case, for it seemed that she had lost half herself.

As he entered she rose and saw in his face an astonishment which seemed not much to surprise her, for she was used to admiration and knew that her beauty startled men.

Brendon, though he felt his heart beat quicker at his discovery, soon had himself in hand. He spoke with tact and sympathy, feeling himself already committed to serve her with all his wits and strength. Only a fleeting regret shot through his mind that the case in all probability would not prove such as to reveal his own strange powers. He combined the regulation rules of criminal research with the more modern deductive methods, and his success, as he always pointed out, was reached by the double method. Already he longed to distinguish himself before this woman.

"Mrs. Pendean," he said, "I am very glad that you learned I was in Princetown and it will be a privilege to serve you if I can. The worst may not have happened, though from what I have heard, there is every reason to fear it; but, believe me, I will do my very best on your account. I have communicated with headquarters and, being free at this moment, can devote myself wholly to the problem."

"Perhaps it was selfish to ask you in your holidays," she said. "But, somehow, I felt——"

"Think nothing whatever of that. I hope that what lies before us may not take very long. And now I will listen to you. There is no need to tell me anything about what

has happened at Foggintor. I shall hear all about that later in the day. You will do well now to let me hear everything bearing upon it that went before this sad affair; and if you can throw the least light of a nature to guide me and help my inquiry, so much the better."

"I can throw no light at all," she said. "It has come like a thunderbolt and I still find my mind refusing to accept the story that they have brought to me. I cannot think about it—I cannot bear to think about it; and if I believed it, I should go mad. My husband was and is my life."

"Sit down and give me some account of yourself and Mr. Pendean. You cannot have been married very long."

"Four years."

He showed astonishment.

"I am twenty-five," she explained, "though I'm told I do not look that old."

"Indeed not, I should have guessed eighteen. Collect your thoughts now and just give me what of your history and your husband's you think most likely to be of use."

She did not speak for a moment and Brendon, taking a chair, drew it up and sat with his arms upon the back of it facing her in a casual and easy position. He wanted her to feel quite unconstrained.

"Just chat, as though you were talking of the past to a friend," he said. "Indeed you must believe that you are talking to a friend, who has no desire but to serve you."

"I'll begin at the beginning," she answered. "My own history is brief enough and has surely little bearing on this dreadful thing; but my relations may be more interesting to you. The family is now a very small one and seems likely to remain so, for of my three uncles all are bachelors. I have no other blood relations in Europe and know nothing of some distant cousins who live in Australia.

"The story of my family is this: John Redmayne lived his life on the Murray River in Victoria, South Australia, and there he made a considerable fortune out of sheep. He married and had a large family. Out of seven sons and five daughters born to them during a period of twenty years, Jenny and John Redmayne only saw five of their children grow into adult health and strength. Four boys lived, the rest died young; though two were drowned in a boating accident and my Aunt Mary, their eldest daughter, lived a year after her marriage.

"There remained four sons: Henry, the eldest, Albert, Bendigo and Robert, the youngest of the family, now a man of thirty-five. It is he you are seeking in this awful thing that is thought to have happened.

"Henry Redmayne was his father's representative in England and a wool broker on his own account. He married and had one daughter, myself. I remember my parents very well, for I was fifteen and at school when they died. They were on their way to Australia so that my father might see his father and mother again after the lapse of many years. But their ship, the *Wattle Blossom,* was lost with all hands and I became an orphan.

"John Redmayne, my grandfather, though a rich man was a great believer in work, and all his sons had to find occupation and justify their lives in his eyes. Uncle Albert, who was only a year younger than my father, cared for studious subjects and literature. He was apprenticed in youth to a bookseller at Sydney and after a time came to England, joined a large and important firm of old booksellers and became an expert. They took him into partnership and he traveled for them and spent some years in New York. But his specialty was Italian Renaissance literature and his joy was Italy where he now lives. He found himself in a position to retire about ten years ago, being a bachelor with modest requirements. He knew, moreover, that his father must soon pass away and, as his mother was already dead, he stood in a position to count upon a share of the large fortune to be divided presently between himself and his brothers.

"Of these my Uncle Bendigo Redmayne was a sailor in the merchant marine. After reaching the position of a captain in the Royal Mail Steamship Company he retired on my grandfather's death, four years ago. He is a bluff, gruff old salt without any charm, and he never reached promotion into the passenger service, but remained in command of cargo boats—a circumstance he regarded as a great grievance. But the sea is his devotion and when he was able to do so he built himself a little house on the Devon cliffs, where now he resides within sound of the waves.

"My third uncle, Robert Redmayne, is at this moment apparently suspected of having killed my husband; but the more I think of such a hideous situation, the less possible does it appear. For not the wildest night-

mare dream would seem more mad and motiveless than such a horror as this.

"Robert Redmayne in youth was his father's favorite and if he spoiled any of his sons he spoiled the youngest. Uncle Robert came to England and, being fond of cattle breeding and agriculture, joined a farmer, the brother of an Australian friend of John Redmayne's. He was supposed to be getting on well, but he came and went, for my grandfather did not like a year to pass without a sight of him.

"Uncle Bob was a pleasure-loving man especially fond of horse racing and sea fishing. On the strength of his prospects he borrowed money and got into debt. After the death of my own father I saw a little of Uncle Robert from time to time, for he was kind to me and liked me to be with him in my holidays. He did very little work. Most of his time he was at the races, or down in Cornwall at Penzance where he was supposed to be courting a young woman—a hotel keeper's daughter. I had just left school and was about to leave England and go to live with my grandfather in Australia, when events happened swiftly, one on top of the other, and life was changed for all us Redmaynes."

"Rest a little if you are tired," said Mark. He saw by her occasional breaks and the sighs that lifted her bosom, how great an effort Mrs. Pendean was making to tell her story well.

"I will go straight on," she answered. "It was summertime and I was stopping with my Uncle Robert at Penzance when two great things—indeed three great things, happened. The war broke out, my grandfather died in Australia and, lastly, I became engaged to Michael Pendean.

"I had loved Michael Pendean devotedly for a year before he asked me to marry him. But when I told my Uncle Robert what had happened he chose to disapprove and considered that I had made a serious mistake. My husband's parents were dead. His father had been the head of a firm called Pendean & Trecarrow, whose business was the importation of pilchards to Italy. But my husband, though he had now succeeded his father in the business, took no interest in it. It gave him an income but his own interests were in a mechanical direction. And, incidentally, he was always a good deal of a dreamer and liked better to plan than to carry out.

"We loved one another passionately and I have very little doubt that my uncles would have raised no objection to our marrying in the long run, had not unfortunate events happened to set them against our betrothal.

"On the death of my grandfather it was found that he had left a peculiar will; and we also learned that his fortune would prove considerably smaller than his sons expected. However, he left rather more than one hundred and fifty thousand. It appeared that during the last ten years of his life, he had lost his judgment and made a number of hopeless investments.

"The terms of the will put all his fortune into the power of my Uncle Albert, my grandfather's eldest living son. He told Uncle Albert to divide the total proceeds of the estate between himself and his two brothers as his judgment should dictate, for he knew that Albert was a man of scrupulous honor and would do justly by all. With regard to me, he directed my uncle to set aside twenty thousand pounds to be given me on my marriage, or failing that, on my twenty-fifth birthday. In the meantime I was to be taken care of by my uncles; and he added that my future husband, if he appeared, must be approved of by Uncle Albert.

"Though jarred to find he would receive far less than he had hoped, Uncle Robert was soon in a good temper, for their elder brother informed Uncle Bob and Uncle Bendigo that he should divide the fortune into three equal parts. Thus it came about that each received about forty thousand pounds, while my inheritance was set aside. All would have been well, no doubt, and I was coaxing my uncle round, for Michael Pendean knew nothing about our affairs and remained wholly ignorant that I should ever be worth a penny. It was a marriage of purest love and he had four hundred a year of his own from the business of the pilchard fishery, which we both deemed ample for our needs.

"Then broke the war, on those awful days in August, and the face of the world changed—I suppose forever."

She stopped again, rose, went to the sideboard and poured herself out a little water. Mark jumped up and took the glass jug from her hand.

"Rest now," he begged, but she sipped the water and shook her head.

"I will rest when you have gone," she an-

swered; "but please come back again presently if you can give me a gleam of hope."

"Be very sure of that, Mrs. Pendean."

She went back to her seat while he also sat down again. Then she resumed.

"The war altered everything and created a painful breach between my future husband and my Uncle Robert. The latter instantly volunteered and rejoiced in the opportunity to seek adventure. He joined a cavalry regiment and invited Michael to do the same; but my husband, though no more patriotic man lives—I must speak still as though he lives, Mr. Brendon——"

"Of course you must, Mrs. Pendean—we must all think of him as living until the contrary is proved."

"Thank you for saying that! My husband had no mind for active warfare. He was delicately built and of a gentle temperament. The thought of engaging in hand-to-hand conflict was more than he could endure, and there were of course a thousand other ways open to him in which he could serve his country—a man so skillful as he."

"Of course there were."

"Uncle Robert, however, made a personal thing of it. Volunteers for active service were urgently demanded and he declared that in the ranks was the only place for any man of fighting age who desired longer to call himself a man. He represented the situation to his brothers, and Uncle Bendigo—who had just retired, but who, belonging to the naval reserve, now joined up and took charge of some mine sweepers—wrote very strongly as to what he thought was Michael's duty. From Italy Uncle Albert also declared his mind to the same purpose and though I much resented their attitude, the decision of course rested with Michael, not with me. He was only five-and-twenty then and he had no desire but to do his duty. There was nobody to advise him and, perceiving the danger of opposing my uncle's wishes, he yielded and volunteered.

"But he was refused. A doctor declared that a heart murmur made the necessary training quite impossible and I thanked God when I heard it. The tribulation began then and Uncle Bob saw red about it, accusing Michael of evading his duty and of having bribed the doctor to get him off. We had some very distressing scenes and I was thankful when he went to France.

"At my own wish Michael married me and I informed my uncles that he had done so. Relations were strained all round after that; but I did not care; and my husband only lived to please me. Then, halfway through the war, came the universal call for workers; seeing that men above combatant age, or incapacitated from fighting, were wanted up here at Princetown, Michael offered himself and we arrived together.

"The Prince of Wales had been instrumental in starting a big moss depot for the preparation of surgical dressings; both my husband and I joined this station, where the sphagnum moss was collected from the bogs of Dartmoor, dried, cleaned, treated chemically and dispatched to all the war hospitals of the kingdom. A busy little company carried on this good work and, while I joined the women who picked and cleaned the moss, my husband, though not strong enough to tramp the moors and do the heavy work of collecting it and bringing it up to Princetown, was instrumental in drying it and spreading it on the asphalt lawn-tennis courts of the prison warders' cricket ground where this preliminary process was carried out. Michael also kept records and accounts and indeed organized the whole depot to perfection.

"For nearly two years we stuck to this task, lodging here with Mrs. Gerry; during that time I fell in love with Dartmoor and begged my husband to build me a bungalow up here when the war was ended, if he could afford to do so. His pilchard trade with Italy practically came to an end after the summer of 1914. But the company of Pendean & Trecarrow owned some good little steamers and these were soon very valuable. So Michael, who had got to care for Dartmoor as much as I did, presently took steps and succeeded in obtaining a long lease of a beautiful and sheltered spot near Foggintor quarries, a few miles from here.

"Meanwhile I had heard nothing from my uncles, though I had seen Uncle Robert's name in the paper among the recipients of the D. S. O. Michael advised me to leave the question of my money until after the war, and so I did. We began our bungalow last year and came back to live with Mrs. Gerry until it should be completed.

"Six months ago I wrote to Uncle Albert in Italy and he told me that he should deliberate the proposition; but he still much resented my marriage. I wrote to Uncle Bendigo at Dartmouth also, who was now in his new home; but while not particularly

angry with me his reply spoke slightingly of my dear husband.

"These facts bring me to the situation that suddenly developed a week ago, Mr. Brendon." She stopped and sighed again.

"I much fear that I am tiring you out," he said. "Would you like to leave the rest?"

"No. For the sake of clearness it is better you hear everything now. A week ago I was walking from the post office, when who should suddenly stop in front of me on a motor bicycle but Uncle Robert? I waited only to see him dismount and set his machine on a rest before the post office. Then I approached him. My arms were round his neck and I was kissing him before he had time to know what had happened, for I need not tell you that I had long since forgiven him. He frowned at first but at last relented. He was lodging at Paignton, down on Torbay, for the summer months, and he hinted that he was engaged to be married. I was as nice as I knew how to be and when he told me that he was going on to Plymouth for a few days before returning to his present home I implored him to let the past go and be friends and come and see my husband.

"He had been to see an old war comrade at Two Bridges, two miles from here, and meant to lunch at The Duchy Hotel and then proceed to Plymouth; but I prevailed upon him at last to come and share our midday meal, and I was able to tell him things about Michael which promised to change his unfriendly attitude. To my delight he at last consented to stop for a few hours; I arranged the most attractive little dinner that I could. When my husband returned from the bungalow I brought them together again. Michael was on his defense instantly; but he never harbored a grievance very long and when he saw that Uncle Bob was not unfriendly and very interested to hear he had won the O. B. E. for his valuable services at the depot Michael showed a ready inclination to forget and forgive the past.

"I think that was almost the happiest day of my life and, with my anxiety much modified, I was able to study Uncle Robert a little. He seemed unchanged, save that he talked louder and was more excitable than ever. The war had given him wide, new interests; he was a captain and intended, if he could, to stop in the army. He had escaped marvelously on many fields and seen much service. During the last few weeks before the armistice he succumbed to gassing and was invalided; though, before that, he had also been out of action from shell shock for two months. He made light of this; but I felt there was really something different about him and suspected that the shell shock accounted for the change. He was always excitable and in extremes—now up in the clouds and now down in the depths —but his terrible experiences had accentuated this peculiarity and, despite his amiable manners and apparent good spirits, both Michael and I felt that his nerves were highly strung and that his judgment could hardly be relied upon. Indeed his judgment was never a strong point.

"But he proved very jolly, though very egotistical. He talked for hours about the war and what he had done to win his honors; and we noticed particularly a feature of his conversation. His memory failed him sometimes. By which I do not mean that he told us anything contrary to fact; but he often repeated himself and having mentioned some adventure, would, after the lapse of an hour or less, tell us the same story over again as something new.

"Michael told me afterward that this defect was a serious thing and probably indicated some brain trouble which might get worse. I was too happy at our reconciliation, however, to feel any concern for the moment and presently, after tea, I begged Uncle Robert to stop with us for a few days instead of going to Plymouth. We walked out over the moor in the evening to see the bungalow, or rather the beginning of it, and my uncle was very interested. Finally he decided that he would stop for the night at any rate, and we made him put up with us and occupy Mrs. Gerry's spare bedroom, instead of going to The Duchy Hotel as he intended.

He stopped on and sometimes liked to lend a hand with the building after the builders had gone. He and Michael often spent hours of these long evenings there together; and sometimes I would take out tea to them. I'm sure Uncle Robert was happy here.

"Uncle Robert had told us about his engagement to a young woman, the sister of a comrade in the war. She was stopping at Paignton with her parents and he was now going to return to her. He made us promise to come to Paignton next August for the Torbay regatta; and in secret I begged him

to write to both my other uncles and explain that he was now satisfied Michael had done his bit in the war. He consented to do so and thus it looked as though our anxieties would soon be at an end.

"Last night Uncle Robert and Michael went, after an early tea, to the bungalow, but I did not accompany them on this occasion. They ran round by road on Uncle Robert's motor bicycle, my husband sitting behind him.

"Supper time came and neither of them appeared. I am speaking of last night now. I did not bother till midnight but then I grew frightened. I went to the police station, saw Inspector Halfyard and told him that my husband and uncle had not come back from Foggintor and that I was anxious about them. He knew them both by sight and my husband personally, for he had been of great use to Michael when the depot was at work. That is all I can tell you."

Mrs. Pendean stopped and Brendon rose.

"What remains to be told I will get from Inspector Halfyard himself," he said. "And you must let me congratulate you on your statement. It would have been impossible to put the past situation more clearly before me. The great point you have made is that your husband and Captain Redmayne were entirely reconciled and left you in complete friendship when last you saw them. You can assure me of that?"

"Most emphatically."

"Have you looked into your uncle's room since he disappeared?"

"No, it has not been touched."

"Again thank you, Mrs. Pendean. I shall see you some time to-day."

"Can you give me any sort of hope?"

"As yet I know nothing of the actual event, and must not therefore offer you hope or tell you not to hope."

She shook his hand and a fleeting ghost of a smile, infinitely pathetic but unconscious, touched her face. Even in grief the beauty of the woman was remarkable; and to Brendon, whose private emotions already struck into the present demands upon his intellect, she appeared exquisite. As he left her he hoped that a great problem lay before him. He desired to impress her—he looked forward with a passing exaltation quite foreign from his usual staid and cautious habit of mind; he even repeated to himself a pregnant saying that he had come across in a book of quotations, though he knew not the author of it.

There is an hour in which a man may be happy all his life, can he but find it.

Then he grew ashamed of himself and felt something like a blush suffuse his plain features.

At the police station a car was waiting for him and in twenty minutes he had reached Foggintor. Picking his way past the fishing pools and regarding the frowning cliffs and wide spaces of the quarry under a mournful mist Mark proceeded to the aperture at the farther end. Then he left the rill which ran out from this exit and soon stood by the bungalow. It was now the dinner hour. Half a dozen masons and carpenters were eating their meal in a wooden shed near the building and with them sat two constables and their superior officer, all in uniform.

Inspector Halfyard rose as Brendon appeared, came forward and shook hands.

"Lucky you was on the spot, my dear," he said in his homely Devon way. "Not that it begins to look as if there was anything here deep enough to ask for your cleverness."

Inspector Halfyard stood six feet high and had curiously broad, square shoulders; but his imposing torso was ill supported. His legs were very thin and long and they turned out a trifle. With his prominent nose, small head and bright little slate-gray eyes, he looked rather like a stork. He was rheumatic, too, and walked stiffly.

"This here hole is no place for my legs," he confessed. "But from the facts so far as we've got 'em, Foggintor Quarry don't come into the story, though it looks as if it ought to. But the murder was done here—inside this bungalow—and the chap that's done it hadn't any use for such an obvious sort of a hiding place."

"Have you searched the quarries?"

"Not yet. 'Tis no good turning fifty men into this jakes of a hole till we know whether it will be needful; but all points to somewhere else. A terrible strange job—so strange, in fact, that we shall probably find a criminal lunatic at the bottom of it. Everything looks pretty clear, but it don't look sane."

"You haven't found the body?"

"No; but you can often prove murder mighty well without it—as now. Come out to the bungalow and I'll tell you what there

is to tell. There's been a murder all right and we're more likely to find the murderer than his victim."

They went out together and soon stood in the building.

"Now let's have the story from where you come in," said Brendon, and Inspector Halfyard told his tale.

"Somewhere about a quarter after midnight I was knocked up. Down I came and Constable Ford, on duty at the time, told me that Mrs. Pendean was wishful to see me. I knew her and her husband very well, for they'd been the life and soul of the Moss supply depot, run at Princetown during the war.

"Her husband and her uncle, Captain Redmayne, had gone to the bungalow, as they often did after working hours, to carry on a bit; but at midnight they still hadn't come home, and she was put about for 'em. Hearing of the motor bike, I thought there might have been a breakdown, if not an accident, so I told Ford to knock up another chap and go down along the road. Which they did do—and Ford came back at half after three with the ugly news that they'd seen nobody, but they'd found a great pool of blood inside the bungalow—as if somebody had been sticking a pig there. 'Twas daylight by then and I motored out instanter. The mess is in the room that will be the kitchen and there's blood on the lintel of the back door which opens into the kitchen.

"I looked round very careful for anything in the nature of a clew, but I couldn't see so much as a button. What makes any work here wasted, so far as I can see, is the evidence of the people at the cottages in the byroad to Foggintor, where we came in. A few quarrymen and their families live there and also Tom Ringrose, the water keeper down on Walkham River. The quarrymen don't work here because this place haven't been worked for more than a hundred years; but they go to Duke's quarry down at Merivale, and most of 'em have push bikes to take 'em to and from their jo'b.

"At these cottages, on my way back to breakfast, I got some information of a very definite kind. Two men told the same tale and they hadn't met before they told it. One was Jim Bassett, under foreman at Duke's quarry, and one was Ringrose, the water bailiff who lives in the end cottage. Bassett has been at the bungalow once or twice, as the granite for it comes from the quarry at Merivale. He knew Mr. Pendean and Captain Redmayne by sight and, last night somewhere about ten o'clock by summertime, while it was still quite light, he saw the captain leave and pass the cottages. Bassett was smoking at his door at the time and Robert Redmayne came alone, pushing his motor bicycle till he reached the road. And behind the saddle he had a big sack fastened to the machine.

"Bassett wished him 'good night' and he returned the compliment; and half a mile down the byroad, Ringrose also passed him. He was now on his machine and riding slowly till he reached the main road. He reached it and then Ringrose heard him open out and get up speed. He proceeded up the hill and the water keeper supposed that he was going back to Princetown."

Inspector Halfyard stopped.

"And that is all you know?" asked Brendon.

"As to Captain Redmayne's movements—yes," answered the elder. "There will probably be information awaiting us when we return to Princetown, as inquiries are afoot along both roads—to Moreton and Exeter on the one side and by Dartmeet to Ashburton and the coast towns on the other. He must have gone off the moor by one of those ways I judge; and if he didn't, then he turned in his tracks and got either to Plymouth, or away to the north. We can't fail to pick up his line pretty quickly. He's a noticeable man."

"Did Ringrose also report the sack behind the motor bicycle?"

"He did."

"Before you mentioned it?"

"Yes, he volunteered that item, just as Bassett had done."

"Let me see what's to be seen here then," said Brendon, and they entered the kitchen of the bungalow together.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY.

Brendon followed Halfyard into the apartment destined to be the kitchen of Michael Pendean's bungalow and the inspector lifted some tarpaulins that had been thrown upon a corner of the room. In the midst stood a carpenter's bench, and the floor, the boards of which had already been laid, was littered with shavings and tools. Under the

tarpaulin a great red stain soaked to the walls, where much blood had flowed. It was still wet in places and upon it lay shavings partially ensanguined. At the edge of the great central stain were smears and, among them, half the impress of a big, nail-studded boot.

"Have the workmen been in here this morning?" asked Brendon. Inspector Halfyard answered that they had not.

"Two constables were here last night after one o'clock—the men I sent from Princetown after Mrs. Pendean gave the alarm," he said. "They looked round with an electric torch and found the blood. One came back; the other stopped on the spot all night. I was out here myself before the masons and carpenters came to work, and I forbade them to touch anything till we'd made our examination. Mr. Pendean was in the habit of doing a bit himself after hours."

"Can the men say if anything was done last night—in the way of work on the bungalow?"

"No doubt they'd know."

Brendon sent for a mason and a carpenter; while the latter alleged that nothing had been added to the last work of himself and his mate, the mason, pointing to a wall which was destined to inclose the garden, declared that a good deal of heavy stone had been lifted and mortared into place since he left on the previous evening at five o'clock.

"Pull down all the new work," directed Brendon.

Then he turned to examine the kitchen more closely. A very careful survey produced no results and he could find nothing that the carpenters were not able to account for. There was no evidence of any struggle. A sheep might as easily have been killed in the chamber as a man; but he judged the blood to be human and Halfyard had already made one discovery of possible importance. The timbers of the kitchen door were already set up and they had received a preliminary coat of white paint. This was smeared at the height of a man's shoulder with blood.

Brendon then examined the ground immediately outside the kitchen door. It was rough and trampled with many feet of the workmen but gave no special imprints or other indications of the least value. For twenty yards he scrutinized every inch of the ground and presently found indications of a motor bicycle. It had stood here—ten yards from the bungalow—and the marks of the wheels and the rest, lowered to support it, were clear enough in the peat. He traced the impressions as the machine was wheeled away and observed that at one soft place they had pressed very deeply into the earth. The pattern of the tire was familiar to him, a Dunlop. Half an hour later one of the constables approached, saluted Mark and made a statement.

"They've pulled down the wall, sir, and found nothing there; but Fulford, the mason, says that a sack is missing. It was a big sack, in the corner of the shed out there, and the cement that it contained is all poured out; but the sack has gone."

The detective visited the spot and turned over the pile of cement, which revealed nothing. Then, having himself searched the workmen's shed without discovering any clew, he strolled in the immediate neighborhood of the bungalow and examined the adjacent entrance to the quarries. Not the least spark of light rewarded the search. He came back presently out of the rain which had now begun to fall steadily—but not before he had strolled as far as the fishing pools and seen clear marks of naked, adult feet on the sandy brink.

Inspector Halfyard, who had remained in the bungalow, joined him while he examined the other five chambers with close attention. In the apartment destined for a sitting room, which faced out upon the great view to the southwest, Brendon found a cigar half smoked. It had evidently been flung down alight and had smoldered for some time scorching the wooden floor before it went out. He found also the end of a broken, brown boot lace with a brass tag. The lace had evidently frayed away and probably had broken when being tied. It was of cotton and he judged it the portion of a woman's shoe lace. But he attached not the least importance to either fragment. Nothing that he regarded as of value resulted from inspection of the remaining rooms and Brendon presently decided that he would return to Princetown. He showed Halfyard the footprints by the water and presently had them protected with a tarpaulin.

"Something tells me that this is a pretty simple business all the same," he said. "We need waste no more time here, inspector—at any rate until we have got back to the telephone and heard the latest."

"What's your idea?"

"I should say we have to do with an unfortunate man who's gone mad," replied the detective; "and a madman doesn't take long to find as a rule. I think it's murder right enough and I believe we shall find that this soldier, who's had shell shock, turned on Pendean and cut his throat, then, fondly hoping to hide the crime, got away with the body. Why I judge him to be mad is because Mrs. Pendean, who has told me the full story of the past, was able to assure me that the men had become exceedingly friendly, and that certain differences, which existed between them at the outbreak of the war, were entirely composed. And even granting that they quarreled again, the quarrel must have suddenly sprung up. That seems improbable and one can't easily imagine a sudden row so tremendous that it ends in murder.

"Redmayne was a big, powerful man and he may have struck without intention to kill; but this mess means more than a blow with a fist. I think that he was a homicidal maniac and probably plotted the job beforehand with a madman's limited cunning; and if that is so, there's pretty sure to be news waiting for us at Princetown. Before dark we ought to know where are both the dead and the living man. These footprints mean a bather, or perhaps two. We'll study them later and drag the ponds if necessary."

The correctness of Brendon's deduction was made manifest within an hour, and the operations of Robert Redmayne defined up to a point. A man was waiting at the police station—George Trout, hostler at Two Bridges Hotel, the famous inn on the Dart.

"I knew Captain Redmayne," he said, "because he'd been down once or twice of late to tea at Two Bridges. Last night, at half after ten, I was crossing the road from the garage and suddenly, without warning, a motor bike came over the bridge. I heard the rush of it and only got out of the way by a yard. There was no light showing but the man went through the beam thrown from the open door of the hotel and I saw it was the captain by his great mustache and his red waistcoat.

"He didn't see me, because it was taking him all his time to look after himself, and he'd just let her go, to rush the stiff hill that rises out of Two Bridges. He was gone like a puff of smoke and must have been running terrible fast—fifty mile an hour I dare say. We heard as there was trouble at Princetown and master sent me up over to report what I'd seen."

"Which way did he go after he had passed, Mr. Trout?" asked Brendon, who knew the Dartmoor country well. "The road forks above Two Bridges. Did he take the right hand for Dartmeet, or the left for Post Bridge and Moreton?"

But George could not say.

"'Twas like a thunder planet flashing by," he told Mark, "and I don't know from Adam which way he went after he'd got up on top."

"Was anybody with him?"

"No, sir. I'd have seen that much; but he carried a big parcel behind the saddle—that I can swear to."

There had been several telephone calls for Inspector Halfyard during his absence; and now three separate statements from different districts awaited him. These were already written out by a constable, and he took them, one by one, read them and handed them to Brendon. The first came from the post office at Post Bridge, and the postmistress reported that a man, one Samuel White, had seen a motor bicycle run at great speed without lights up the steep hill northward of that village on the previous night. He gave the time as between half past ten and eleven o'clock.

"We should have heard of him from Moreton next," said Halfyard; "but, no. He must have branched under Hameldown and gone south, for the next news is from Ashburton."

The second message told how a garage keeper was knocked up at Ashburton, just after midnight, in order that petrol might be obtained for a motor bicycle. The description of the purchaser corresponded to Redmayne and the message added that the bicycle had a large sack tied behind it. The rider was in no hurry; he smoked a cigarette, swore because he could not get a drink, lighted his lamps and then proceeded by the Totnes road which wound through the valley of the Dart southward.

The third communication came from the police station at Brixham and was somewhat lengthy. It ran:

At ten minutes after two o'clock last night P. C. Widgery, on night duty at Brixham, saw a man on a motor bicycle with a large parcel behind him run through the town square. He proceeded down the main street and was gone

for the best part of an hour; but, before three o'clock, Widgery saw him return without his parcel. He went fast up the hill out of Brixham, the way he came. Inquiries to-day show that he passed the Brixham coast-guard station about a quarter after two o'clock, and he must have lifted his machine over the barrier at the end of the coast-guard road, because he was seen by a boy, from Berry Head lighthouse, pushing it up the steep path that runs to the downs. The boy was going for a doctor, because his father, one of the lighthouse watchers, had been taken ill. The boy says the motor bicyclist was a big man and he was blowing because the machine was heavy and the road just there very steep and rough. He saw no more of him on returning from the doctor. We are searching the Head and cliffs round about.

Inspector Halfyard waited until Brendon had read the messages and put them down.

"About as easy as shelling peas—eh?" he asked.

"I expected an arrest," answered the detective. "It can't be long delayed."

As though to confirm him the telephone bell rang and Halfyard rose and entered the box to receive the latest information.

"Paignton speaking," said the message. "We have just called at address of Captain Redmayne—No. 7 Marine Terrace. He was expected last night—had wired yesterday to say he'd be home. They left supper for him, as usual when he is expected, and went to bed. Didn't hear him return, but found on going down house next morning that he had come—supper eaten, motor bike in tool house in back yard, where he keeps it. They called him at ten o'clock—no answer. They went in his room. Not there and bed not slept in and his clothes not changed. He's not been seen since."

"Hold on. Mark Brendon's here and has the case. He'll speak."

Inspector Halfyard reported the statement and Brendon picked up the mouthpiece.

"Detective Brendon speaking. Who is it?"

"Inspector Reece, Paignton."

"Let me hear at five o'clock if arrest has been made. Failing arrest I will motor down to you after that hour."

"Very good, sir. I expect to hear he's taken any minute."

"Nothing from Berry Head?"

"We've got a lot of men there and all round under the cliffs, but nothing yet."

"All right, inspector. I'll come down if I don't hear to the contrary by five."

He hung up the receiver.

"All over bar shouting, I reckon," said Halfyard.

"It looks like it. He's mad, poor devil."

"It's the dead man I'm sorry for."

Brendon considered, having first looked at his watch. Personal thoughts would thrust themselves upon him, though he felt both surprise and shame that they could do so. Certain realities were clear enough to his mind, however future details might develop. And the overmastering fact was that Jenny Pendean had lost her husband. If she were, indeed, a widow——

He shook his head impatiently and turned to Halfyard.

"Should Robert Redmayne not be taken to-day, one or two things must be done," he said. "You'd better have some of that blood collected and the fact proved that it is human. And keep the cigar and boot lace here for the minute, though I attach no importance to either. Now I'll go and get some food and see Mrs. Pendean. Then I'll come back. I'll take the police car for Paignton at half past five if we hear nothing to alter my plans."

"You will. This isn't going to spoil your holiday after all."

"What is it going to do, I wonder?" thought Brendon. But he said no more and prepared to go on his way. It was now three o'clock. Suddenly he turned and asked Halfyard a question.

"What do you think of Mrs. Pendean, inspector?"

"I think two things about her," answered the elder. "I think she's such a lovely girl that it's hard to believe she's just flesh and blood, like other women; and I think I never saw such worship for a man as she had for her husband. This will knock her right bang out, Brendon."

These opinions made the detective melancholy; but he had not yet begun to reflect on how the passing of a dearly loved husband would change the life of Mrs. Pendean. He suddenly felt himself thrust out of the situation forever, yet resented his own conviction as irrational.

"What sort of a man was he?"

"A friendly fashion of chap—Cornish—a pacifist at heart I reckon; but we never talked politics."

"What was his age?"

"Couldn't tell you—doubtful—might have been anything between twenty-five and thirty-five. A man with weak brown eyes

and a brown beard. He wore double eyeglasses for close work, but his long sight he said was good."

After a meal Brendon went again to Mrs. Pendean; but many rumors had reached her through the morning and she already knew most of what he had to tell. A change had come over her; she was very silent and very pale. Mark knew that she had grasped the truth and was aware that her husband must probably be dead.

She was, however, anxious to learn if Brendon could explain what had happened.

"Have you ever met with any such thing before?" she asked.

"No case is quite like another. They all have their differences. I think that Captain Redmayne, who has suffered from shell shock, must have been overtaken by loss of reason. Shell shock often produces dementia of varying degrees—some lasting, some fleeting. I'm afraid your uncle went out of his mind and in a moment of madness may have done a dreadful thing. Then he set out, while he was still insane, to cover up his action. So far as we can judge, he took his victim with him and meant apparently to throw him into the sea. I feel too sure that your husband has lost his life, Mrs. Pendean. You must be prepared to accept that unspeakable misfortune."

"It is hard to accept," she answered, "because they were good friends again."

"Something of which you do not know may have cropped up between them to upset Redmayne. When he comes to his senses, he will probably think the whole thing an evil dream. Have you a portrait of your husband?"

She left the room and returned in a few moments with a photograph. It presented a man of meditative countenance, wide forehead and steadfast eyes. He wore a beard, mustache and whiskers, and his hair was rather long.

"Is that like him?"

"Yes; but it does not show his expression. It is not quite natural—he was more animated than that. The glasses spoil him."

"How old was he?"

"Not thirty, Mr. Brendon, but he looked considerably older."

Brendon studied the photograph.

"You can take it with you if you wish to do so. I have another copy," said Mrs. Pendean.

"I shall remember very accurately," answered Brendon. "I am tolerably certain that poor Mr. Pendean's body was thrown into the sea and may already be recovered. That appears to have been Captain Redmayne's purpose. Can you tell me anything about the lady to whom your uncle is engaged?"

"I can give you her name and address. But I have never seen her."

"Had your husband seen her?"

"Not to my knowledge. Indeed I can say certainly that he never had. She is a Miss Flora Reed and she is stopping with her mother and father at the Singer Hotel, Paignton. Her brother, my uncle's friend in France, is also there I believe."

"Thank you very much. If I hear nothing farther, I go to Paignton this evening."

"Why?"

"To pursue my inquiry and see all those who know your uncle. It has puzzled me a little that he has not already been found, because a man suffering from his upset of mind could make no successful attempt to evade a professional search for long. Nor, so far as we know, has he apparently attempted to escape. After going to Berry Head early this morning, he returned to his lodgings, ate a meal, left his motor bicycle and then went out again—still in his tweed suit with the red waistcoat."

"You'll see Flora Reed?"

"If necessary; but I shall not go to-night if Robert Redmayne has been found."

"You think it is all very simple and straightforward then?"

"So it appears. The best that one can hope is that the unfortunate man may come back to his senses and give a clear account of everything. And may I ask what you design to do and if it is in my power to serve you personally in any way?"

Jenny Pendean showed surprise at this question. She lifted her face to Brendon's and a slight warmth touched its pallor.

"That is kind of you," she said. "I will not forget. But when we know more, I shall probably leave here. If my husband has indeed lost his life, the bungalow will not be finished by me. I shall go, of course."

"May I hope that you have friends who are coming forward?"

She shook her head.

"As a matter of fact I am much alone in the world. My husband was everything—everything. And I was everything to him also. You know my story—I told you all

there was to tell this morning. There remain for me only my father's two brothers—Uncle Bendigo in England, and Uncle Albert in Italy. I wrote to them both to-day."

Mark rose.

"You shall hear from me to-morrow," he said, "and if I do not go to Paignton, I will see you again to-night."

"Thank you—you are very kind."

"Let me ask you to consider yourself and your own health under this great strain. People can endure anything but often they find afterward that they have put too heavy a call on nature, when it comes to pay the bill. Would you care to see a medical man?"

"No, Mr. Brendon—that is not necessary. If my husband should be—as we think, then my own life has no further interest for me. I may end it."

"For God's sake don't allow yourself to speak or think in that way," said Brendon. "Be brave. There is courage in your face. Look forward. If we can no longer be happy in the world, that is not to deny us the power and privilege of being useful in it. Think what your good husband would have wished you to do and how he would have expected you to face any great tragedy or grief."

"You are a good man," said Mrs. Pendean quietly. "I appreciate what you have said. You will see me again."

She took his hand and pressed it. Then he left her, bewildered by the subtle atmosphere that seemed to surround her. He did not fear her threat. There was a vitality and self-command about Mrs. Pendean that seemed to shut out any likelihood of self-destruction. She was young and time might be trusted to do its inevitable work. But he perceived the quality of her love for the man who was too certainly destroyed. She might return to the ways of life, proceed with her own existence and bring happiness into other lives; but it did not follow that she would ever forget her husband or consent to wed another.

He returned to the police station and was astonished to find that Robert Redmayne continued at large. No news concerning him had been reported; but there came a minor item of information from the searchers at Berry Head. The cement sack had been found in the mouth of a rabbit hole to the west of the head above a precipice. The sack was bloodstained and contained some small tufts of brown hair and the dust of cement.

An hour later Mark Brendon had packed a bag and started in a police motor car for Paignton. There was no more to be learned at Paignton when he arrived there. Inspector Reece shared Brendon's surprise that Redmayne had not been arrested. He explained that fishermen and coast guards were dragging the sea, as far as it was possible to do so, beneath the cliff on which the sack had been found; but the tide ran strongly here and local men suspected the current might well have carried the body out to sea. They judged that the corpse would be found floating within a mile or two of the Head in a week's time, if no means had been taken to anchor it at the bottom.

Brendon called at Robert Redmayne's lodgings after he had eaten some supper at the Singer Hotel. There he had taken a room, that he might see and hear something of the vanished man's future wife and her family. At No. 7 Marine Terrace the landlady, a Mrs. Medway, could say little. Captain Redmayne was a genial, kind-hearted but hot-headed gentleman, she told Mark. He was irregular in his hours and they never expected him until they saw him. He often returned thus from excursions after the household was gone to bed. She did not know what hour he had returned, this time, or what hour he had gone out again; but he had not changed his clothes or apparently taken anything away with him.

Brendon examined the motor bicycle with meticulous care. There was a rest behind the saddle made of light iron bars and here he detected stains of blood. A fragment of tough string tied to the rest was also stained. It had been cut—no doubt when Redmayne cast his burden loose on reaching the cliffs. Nothing offered any difficulty in the chain of circumstantial evidence nor did another morning furnish further problems save the supreme and sustained mystery of Robert Redmayne's continued disappearance.

Brendon visited Berry Head before breakfast on the following day and examined the cliff. It fell in broad scales of limestone, whereon grew thistles and the white rock-rose, sea pinks and furze. Rabbits dwelt here and the bloodstained sack had been discovered by a dog. It was thrust into a hole but the terrier had easily reached it and dragged it into the light.

Immediately beneath the spot the cliffs

fell starkly into the sea—a drop of three hundred feet. Beneath was deep water and only an occasional cleft or cranny broke the face of the shining precipice, where green things made shift to live and the gulls built their rough nests. No sign marked the cliff edge, but beneath, on the green sea, were boats from which fishermen still dredged for the dead. This work, long continued, had yielded no results whatever.

Later in the day Brendon returned to his hotel and introduced himself to Miss Reed and her family. They were sitting together in the lounge when he joined them. All three appeared to be much shocked and painfully mystified. None could throw any light. Mr. and Mrs. Reed were quiet, elderly people who kept a draper's shop in London; their daughter revealed more character. She was a head taller than her father and cast in a generous mold. She exhibited a good deal of manner and less actual sorrow than might have been expected; but Brendon discovered that she had only known Robert Redmayne for half a year and their actual engagement was not of much more than a month's duration. Miss Reed was dark, animated and commonplace of mind. Her ambition had been to go upon the stage and she had acted on tour in the country; but she declared that theatrical life wearied her and she had promised her future husband to abandon the art.

"Did you ever hear Captain Redmayne speak of his niece and her husband?" Brendon inquired, and Flora Reed answered:

"He did; and he always said that Michael Pendean was a shirker and a coward. He also assured me that he had done with his niece and should never forgive her for marrying her husband. But that was before Bob went to Princetown, ten days ago. From there he wrote quite a different story. He had met them by chance; and he found that Mr. Pendean had not shirked but done good work in the war and got the O. B. E. After that discovery, Bob changed and he was certainly on the best terms with the Pendeans before this awful thing happened. He had already made them promise to come here for the regattas."

"You have neither seen nor heard of the captain since?"

"Indeed, no. My last letter, which you can see, came three days ago. In it he merely said he would be back yesterday and meet me to bathe as usual. I went to bathe and looked out for him, but of course he didn't come."

"Tell me a little about him, Miss Reed," said Mark. "It is good of you to give me this interview, for we are up against a curious problem and the situation, as it appears at present, may be illusive and quite unlike the real facts. Captain Redmayne, I hear, had suffered from shell shock and a breath of poison gas also. Did you ever notice any signs that these troubles had left any mark upon him?"

"Yes," she answered. "We all did. My mother was the first to point out that Bob often repeated himself. He was a man of great good temper, but the war had made him rough and cynical in some respects. He was impatient, yet, after he quarreled or had a difference with anybody he would be quickly sorry; and he was never ashamed to apologize."

"Did he quarrel often?"

"He was very opinionated and of course he had seen a good deal of actual war. It had made him a little callous and he would sometimes say things that shocked civilians. Then they would protest and make him angry."

"You cared much for him? Forgive the question."

"I admired him and I had a good influence on him. There were fine things in him—great bravery and honesty. Yes, I loved him and was proud of him. I think he would have become calmer and less excitable and impatient in time. Doctors had told him that he would outgrow all effects of this shock."

"Was he a man you can conceive of as capable of striking or killing a fellow creature?"

The lady hesitated.

"I only want to help him," she answered. "Therefore I say that, given sufficient provocation, I can imagine Bob's temper flaring out, and I can see that it would have been possible to him, in a moment of passion, to strike down a man. He had seen much death and was himself absolutely indifferent to danger. Yes, I can imagine him doing an enemy, or fancied enemy, a hurt; but what I cannot imagine him doing is what he is supposed to have done afterward—evade the consequence of a mistaken act."

"And yet we have the strongest testimony that he has tried to conceal a murder—

whether committed by himself or somebody else we cannot yet say."

"I only hope and pray, for all our sakes, that you will find him," she replied, "but if, indeed, he has been betrayed into such an awful crime, I do not think you will find him."

"Why not, Miss Reed? But I think I know. What is in your mind has already passed through my own. Indeed it has not passed through, but remains there: the thought of suicide."

She nodded and put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Yes—that. If poor Bob lost himself and then found himself and discovered that he had actually killed an innocent man in a moment of passion, he would, if I know him, do one of two things: either give himself up instantly and explain all that had happened; or else destroy himself as quickly as he could."

"Motive is not always adequate," Brendon told them. "A swift, passing storm of temper has often destroyed a life with no more evil intent than a flash of lightning. In this case, only such a storm seems to be the explanation. But how a man of the Pendean type could have provoked such a storm I have yet to learn. So far the testimony of Mrs. Pendean and the assurances of Inspector Halfyard at Princetown indicate an amiable and quiet person, slow to anger. The policeman, Halfyard, knew him quite well at the moss depot where he worked through two years of the war. He was apparently not a man to have infuriated Captain Redmayne or anybody else."

Mark then related his own brief personal experience of Redmayne on the occasion of their meeting by the quarry pools. For some reason this personal anecdote touched Flora Reed and the detective observed that she was genuinely moved by it.

Indeed she began to weep and presently rose and left them. Her parents were able to speak more freely upon her departure.

Mr. Reed indeed, from being somewhat silent and indifferent, grew voluble.

"I think it right to tell you," he said, "that my wife and I never much cared for this engagement. Redmayne meant well and had a good heart I believe. He was free-handed and exceedingly enamored of Flora. He made violent love from the first and his affection was returned. But I never could see him a steady, married man. He was a rover and the war had made him—not exactly inhuman but apparently unconscious of his own obligations to society and his own duty, as a reasonable being, to help build up the broken organization of social life. He only lived for pleasure and sport and spending money; and though I do not suggest he would have been a bad husband I did not see the makings of a stable home in his ideas for the future. He had inherited some forty thousand pounds but he was very ignorant of the value of money and he showed no particular good sense on the subject of his coming responsibilities."

Mark Brendon thanked them for their information and repeated his growing conviction that the subject of their speech had probably committed suicide.

"Every hour which fails to account for him increases my fear," he said. "Indeed it may be a good thing to happen; for the alternative can at best be Broadmoor; and it is a hateful thought that a man who has fought for his country, and fought well, should end his days in a criminal lunatic asylum."

For two days the detective remained at Paignton and devoted all his energy, invention and experience to the task of discovering the vanished men. But, neither alive nor dead, did either appear, and not an atom of information came from Princetown or elsewhere. Portraits of Robert Redmayne were printed and soon hung on the notice board of every police station in the west and south; one or two mistaken arrests alone resulted from this publicity. A tramp with a big red mustache was detained in North Devon and a recruit arrested at Devonport. This man resembled the photograph and had joined a line regiment twenty-four hours after the disappearance of Redmayne. Both, however, could give a full account of themselves.

Then Brendon prepared to return to Princetown. He wrote his intention to Mrs. Pendean and informed her that he would visit Station Cottages on the following evening. It happened, however, that his letter crossed another and his plans were altered, for Jenny Pendean had already left Princetown and joined Mr. Bendigo Redmayne at his house, Crow's Nest, beyond Dartmouth. She wrote:

> My uncle has begged me to come and I was thankful to do so. I have to tell you that Uncle Bendigo received a letter yesterday from his

brother, Robert. I begged him to let me send it to you instantly, but he declines. Uncle Bendigo is on Captain Redmayne's side I can see. He would not, I am sure, do anything to interfere with the law, but he is convinced that we do not know all there is to be told about this terrible thing. The motor boat from Crow's Nest will be at Kingswear Ferry to meet the train reaching here at two o'clock to-morrow and I hope you may still be at Paignton and able to come here for a few hours.

She added a word of thanks to him and a regret that his holiday was being spoiled by her tragedy.

Whereupon the man's thoughts turned to her entirely and he forgot for a while the significance of her letter. He had expected to see her that night at Princetown. Instead he would find her far nearer, in the house on the cliffs beyond Dartmouth.

He telegraphed presently that he would meet the launch. Then he had leisure to be annoyed that the letter from Robert Redmayne was thus delayed. He speculated on Bendigo Redmayne.

"A brother is a brother," he thought, "and no doubt this old sailor's home would offer a very efficient hiding place for any vanished man."

CHAPTER IV.

A CLEW.

A motor boat lay off Kingswear Ferry when Mark Brendon arrived. The famous harbor was new to him and though his mind found itself sufficiently occupied he still had perception disengaged and could admire the graceful river, the hills towering above the estuary and the ancient town lying within their infolding and tree-clad slopes. Dominating all stood the Royal Naval College, its great masses of white and red masonry breaking the blue sky.

A perfect little craft awaited him. It was painted white and furnished with teak. Its brasses and machinery glittered; the engines and steering wheel were set forward, while aft of the cabins and saloon an awning was rigged over the stern. The solitary sailor who controlled the launch was in the act of furling this protection against the sun as Mark descended to the water; and while the man did so Brendon's eyes brightened, for a passenger already occupied the boat: a woman sat there and he saw Jenny Pendean.

She wore black and he found, as he leaped aboard and greeted her, that her mourning attire was an echo to her heart. That had happened which had convinced the young wife that all hope must be abandoned; she knew that she was a widow, for the letter in her uncle's possession told her so. She greeted the detective kindly and was glad that he had responded to her invitation, but Mark soon found her attitude of mind had changed. She now exhibited an extreme listlessness and profound melancholy. He told her that a letter from himself had gone to her at Princetown and he asked her for information respecting the communication received from Captain Redmayne; but she was not responsive.

"My uncle will tell you what there is to tell," she said. "It appears that your original suspicion has proved correct. My husband has lost his precious life at the hands of a madman."

"Yet it seems incredible, Mrs. Pendean, that such an afflicted creature, if alive, should still be evading the general search. Can you tell me from where this letter came? We ought to have heard of it instantly."

"So I told my Uncle Bendigo."

"Is he sure that it really does come from his brother?"

"Yes; there is no doubt about that. The letter was posted in Plymouth. But please do not ask me about it, Mr. Brendon. I do not want to think of it."

"I do hope you are keeping well; and I know you are being brave."

"I am alive," she said, "but my life has none the less ended."

"You must not think or feel so. Let me say a thing that comforted me in the mouth of another when I lost my mother. It was an old clergyman who said it. 'Think what the dead would wish and try to please them.' It doesn't sound much; but if you consider, it is helpful."

The boat was speedy and she soon slipped out between the historic castles that stood on either bank of the entrance to the harbor.

Mrs. Pendean spoke.

"All this loveliness and peace seem to make my heart more sore. When people suffer, they should go where nature suffers too—to bleak, sad regions."

"You must occupy yourself. You must try to lose yourself in work—in working your fingers to the bone if need be. There is nothing like mental and physical toil at a time of suffering."

"That is only a drug. You might as well drink or take opium. I wouldn't run away

from my grief if I could. I owe it to the dead."

"You are not a coward. You must live and make the world happier for your life."

She smiled for the first time—a flicker, that lightened her wonderful beauty for a moment and quickly died.

"You are good and kind and wise," she answered. Then she changed the subject and pointed to the man in the bows. He sat upright with his back to them at the wheel forward. He had taken off his hat and was singing very gently to himself, but hardly loud enough to be heard against the drone of the engines. His song was from an early opera of Verdi—nearly a hundred years old.

"Have you noticed that man?"

Mark shook his head.

"He is an Italian. He comes from Turin but has worked in England for some time. He looks to me more Greek than Italian—not modern Greek but from classical times—the times I used to study as a schoolgirl. He has a head like a statue."

She called to the boatman.

"Stand out a mile or so, Doria," she said. "I want Mr. Brendon to see the coast line."

"Aye, aye, ma'am," he answered and altered the course for the open sea.

He had turned at Jenny Pendean's voice and shown Mark a brown, bright, clean-shorn face of great beauty. It was of classical contour, but lacked the soulless perfection of a Greek ideal. The Italian's black eyes were brilliant and showed great intelligence.

"Giuseppe Doria has a wonderful story about himself," continued Mrs. Pendean. "Uncle Ben tells me that he claims descent from a very ancient family and is the last of the Dorias of—I forget—some place near Ventimiglia. My uncle thinks the world of him; but I hope he is trustworthy and as honest in character as handsome in person."

"He certainly might be well born. There is distinction, quality and breeding about his appearance."

"He is clever too—an all-round sort of man, like most sailors."

Brendon admired the varied charms of the Dartmouth coast, the bluffs and green headlands, the rich, red sandstone cliffs, and pearly precipices of limestone that rose above the tranquil waters. The boat turned west presently, passed a panorama of cliffs and little bays with sandy beaches, and anon skirted higher and sterner precipices of ironstone, which leaped six hundred feet aloft.

Perched among them like a bird's nest stood a small house with windows that blinked out over the Channel. It rose to a tower room in the midst and before the front stretched a plateau whereon stood a flagstaff and spar from the point of which fluttered a red ensign. Behind the house there opened a narrow coomb and there descended a road to the dwelling. Cliffs beetled round about it and the summer waves broke idly below and strung the land with a necklace of pearl. West of the dwelling, just above high tide level, a strip of shingle spread, and above it a sea cave had been turned into a boathouse. Hither came Brendon and his companion.

The motor launch slowed down and presently grounded her bow on the pebbles. Then Doria stopped the engine, flung a gangway stage ashore and stood by to hand Jenny Pendean and the detective to the beach. The place appeared to have no exit; but, behind a ledge of rock, stairs carved in the stone wound upward, guarded by an iron handrail. Jenny led the way and Mark followed her until two hundred steps were climbed and they stood on the terrace above, beneath the flagstaff. It was fifty yards long and covered with sea gravel. Two little brass cannon thrust their muzzles over the parapet to seaward and the central space of grass about the flagpole was neatly surrounded with a decoration of scallop shells.

"Could anybody but an old sailor have created this place?" asked Brendon.

A middle-aged man with a telescope under his arm came along the terrace to greet them. Bendigo Redmayne was square and solid with the cut of the sea about him. His uncovered head blazed with flaming, close-clipped hair and he wore also a short, red beard and whiskers growing grizzled. But his long upper lip was shaved. He had a weather-beaten face—ruddy and deepening to purple about the cheek bones—with eyebrows, rough as bent grass, over deep-set, sulky, gray eyes. His mouth was underhung, giving him a pugnacious and bad-tempered appearance. Nor did his looks appear to libel the old sailor. To Brendon, at any rate, he showed at first no very great consideration.

"You've come I see," he said, shaking hands. "No news?"

"None, Mr. Redmayne."

"Well, well! To think Scotland Yard

can't find a poor soul that's gone off his rocker!"

"You might have helped us to do so," said Mark shortly, "if it's true that you've had a letter from your brother."

"I'm doing it, ain't I? It's here for you."

"You've lost two days."

Bendigo Redmayne grunted.

"Come in and see the letter," he said. "I never thought you'd fail. It's all very terrible indeed and I'm damned if I understand anything about it. But one thing's clear: my brother wrote this letter and he wrote it from Plymouth; and since he hasn't been reported from Plymouth I feel very little doubt the thing he wanted to happen has happened."

Then he turned to his niece.

"We'll have a cup of tea in half an hour, Jenny. Meantime I'll take Mr. Brendon up to the tower room along with me."

Mrs. Pendean disappeared into the house and Mark followed her with the sailor.

They passed through a square hall full of various foreign curiosities collected by the owner. Then they ascended into a large octagonal chamber, like the lantern of a lighthouse, which surmounted the dwelling.

"My lookout," explained Mr. Redmayne. "In foul weather I spend all my time up here and with yonder strong, three-inch telescope I can pick up what's doing at sea. A bunk in the corner you see. I often sleep up here too."

"You might almost as well be afloat," said Brendon, and the remark pleased Bendigo.

"That's how I feel; and I can tell you there's a bit of movement too, sometimes. I never wish to see bigger water than beat the cliffs during the big southeaster last March. We shook to our keel, I can tell you."

He went to a tall cupboard in a corner, unlocked it and brought out a square, wooden desk of old-fashioned pattern. This he opened and produced a letter which he handed to the detective.

Brendon sat down in a chair under the open window and read this communication slowly. The writing was large and sprawling; it sloped slightly upward from left to right across the sheet and left a triangle of white paper at the right-hand bottom corner:

DEAR BEN: It's all over. I've done in Michael Pendean and put him where only Judgment Day will find him. Something drove me to do it; but all the same I'm sorry now it's done—not for him but myself. I shall clear to-night, with luck, for France. If I can send an address later I will. Look after Jenny—she's well rid of the blighter. When things have blown over I may come back. Tell Albert and tell Flo. Yours, R. R.

Brendon examined the letter and the envelope that contained it.

"Have you another communication—something from the past I can compare with this?" he asked.

Bendigo nodded.

"I reckoned you'd want that," he answered and produced a second letter from his desk.

It related to a recent engagement of a month before and the writing appeared identical.

"And what do you think he's done, Mr. Redmayne?" he asked, pocketing the two communications.

"I think he's done what he hoped to do. At this time of year you'll see a dozen Spanish and Brittany onion boats lying down by the Barbican at Plymouth, every day of the week. And if poor Bob got there, no doubt plenty of those chaps would hide him when he offered 'em enough money to make it worth while. Once aboard one of those sloops he'd be about as safe as he would be anywhere. They'd land him at St. Malo or somewhere down there and he'd give you the slip."

"And, until it was found out that he was mad, we might hear no more about him."

"Why should it be found he was mad?" asked Bendigo. "He was mad when he killed this innocent man no doubt, because none but a lunatic would have done such an awful thing or been so cunning after—with the sort of childish cunning that gave him away from the start. But once he'd done what this twist in his brain drove him to do, then I judge that his madness very likely left him. If you caught him to-morrow, you'd possibly find him as sane as yourself—except on that one subject. He'd worked up his old contempt of Michael Pendean as a shirker in the war until it festered in his head and poisoned his mind, so as he couldn't get it under. That's how I read it. I had a pretty good contempt for the poor chap myself and was properly savage with my niece, when she wedded him against our wishes; but my feeling didn't turn my head, and I felt glad to hear that Pendean was an honest man who did the best he could at the depot."

Brendon considered.

"A very sound view," he said, "and likely to be correct. On the strength of this letter, we may conclude that when he went home, after disposing of the body under Berry Head, your brother must have disguised himself in some way and taken an early train from Paignton to Newton Abbot and from Newton Abbot to Plymouth. He would already have been there and lying low before the hunt began."

"That's how I figure it," answered the sailor.

"When did you last see him, Mr. Redmayne?"

"Somewhere about a month ago. He came over for the day with Miss Reed—the young woman he was going to marry."

"Was he all right then?"

Bendigo considered and scratched in his red beard.

"Noisy and full of chatter, but much as usual."

"Did he mention Mr. and Mrs. Pendean?"

"Not a word. He was full up with his young woman. They meant to be married in late autumn and go abroad for a run to see my brother Albert."

"He may correspond with her if he gets to France?"

"I can't say what he'll do. Suppose you catch him presently? How would the law stand? A man goes mad and commits a murder. Then you nab him and he's as sane as a judge. You can't hang him for what he did when he was off his head and you can't shut him up in a lunatic asylum if he's sane."

"A nice problem no doubt," admitted Brendon, "but be sure the law will take no risks. A homicidal maniac, no matter how sane he is between times, is not going to run loose any more after killing a man."

"Well, that's all there is to it, detective. If I hear again, I'll let the police know; and if you take him, of course you'll let me and his brother know at once. It's a very ugly thing for his family. He did good work in the war and got honors; and if he's mad, then the war made him mad."

"That would be taken very fully into account, be sure. I'm properly sorry, both for him and for you, Mr. Redmayne."

Bendigo looked sulkily from under his tangled eyebrows.

"I shouldn't feel no very great call to give him up to the living death of an asylum, if he hove in here some night."

"You'd do your duty—that I will bet," replied Brendon with a smile.

They descended to the dining room, where Jenny Pendean was waiting to pour out tea. All were very silent and Mark had leisure to observe the young widow.

"What shall you do and where may I count upon finding you if I want you, Mrs. Pendean?" he asked presently.

She looked at Redmayne, not at Brendon, as she answered.

"I am in Uncle Bendigo's hands. I know he will let me stop here for the present."

"For keeps," the old sailor declared. "This is your home now, Jenny, and I'm very glad to have you here. There's only you and your Uncle Albert and me now, I reckon, for I don't think we shall ever see poor Bob again."

An elderly woman came in.

"Doria be wishful to know when you'll want the boat again," she said.

"I should like it immediately if possible," begged Brendon. "Much time has been lost."

"Tell him to get ready then," directed Bendigo, and in five minutes Mark was taking his leave.

"I'll let you have the earliest intimation of the capture, Mr. Redmayne," he said. "If your poor brother still lives, it seems impossible that he should long be free. His present condition must be one of great torment and anxiety—to him—and for his own sake I hope he will soon surrender or be found—if not in England, then in France."

"Thank you," answered the older man quietly. "What you say is true. I regret the delay myself now. If he is heard of again by me I'll telegraph to Scotland Yard or get 'em to do so at Dartmouth. I've slung a telephone wire into the town as you see."

They stood again under the flagstaff on the plateau, and Brendon studied the rugged cliff line and the fields of corn and swede that sloped away inland above it. The district was very lonely as only the rooftree of a solitary farmhouse appeared a mile or more distant to the west.

"If he should come to you—and I have still a fancy that he may do so—take him in and let us know," said Brendon. "Such a necessity will be unspeakably painful I fear, but I am very sure you will not shrink from it, Mr. Redmayne."

The rough old man had grown more amiable during the detective's visit. It was clear that a natural aversion to Brendon's business no longer extended to the detective himself.

"Duty's duty," he said, "though God keep me from yours. If I can do anything, you can trust me. He's not likely to come here I think; but he might try and get over to Albert down south. Good-by to you."

Mr. Redmayne went back to the house, and Jenny, who stood by them, walked as far as the top of the steps with Brendon.

"Don't think I bear any ill will," she said. "I'm only heartbroken, that's all. I used to declare in my foolishness that I had escaped the war. But no—it is the war that has killed my dear, dear husband—not Uncle Robert. I see that now."

"It is all to the good that you can be so wise," answered Mark quietly. "I admire your splendid patience and courage, Mrs. Pendean, and—and—I would do for you, and will do, everything that wit of man can."

"Thank you, kind friend," she replied. Then she shook his hand and bade him good-by.

"Will you let me know if you go elsewhere than here?" he asked.

"Yes—since you wish it."

They parted and he ran down the steps, scarcely seeing them. He knew that he already loved this woman with his whole soul. The tremendous emotion swept him, while reason and common sense protested. But he could not be mistaken. He had never loved until now, yet none may doubt that tremendous experience when it comes.

Mark leaped aboard the waiting motor boat and they were soon speeding back to Dartmouth, while Doria spoke eagerly. But the passenger felt little disposed to gratify the Italian's curiosity Instead he asked him a few questions respecting himself and found that the other delighted to discuss his own affairs. Mark had opportunity to study him more carefully and was impressed with the appearance of the man. Doria was lively and revealed a southern levity and self-satisfaction that furnished Brendon with something to think about before the launch ran to the landing stage at Dartmouth. But it was Mark himself who had given the handsome boatman his opportunity to express himself.

"How comes it you are not back in your own country, now the war is over?" he asked Doria.

"It is because the war is over that I have left my own country, signor," answered Giuseppe. "I fought against Austria on the sea; but now—now Italy is an unhappy place—no home for heroes at present. I am not a common man. I have a great ancestry—the Dorias of Dolceacqua in the Alpes Maritimes. You have heard of the Dorias?"

"I'm afraid not—history isn't my strong suit."

"On the bank of the River Nervia the Dorias had their mighty castle and ruled the land of Dolceacqua. A fighting people. There was a Doria who slew the Prince of Monaco. But great families—they are like nations—their history is a sand hill in the hourglass of time. They arise and crumble by the process of their own development. *Si!* Time gives the hourglass a shake and they are gone—to the last grain. I am the last grain of the Dorias. We sank and sank till only I remain. My father was a cab driver at Bordighera. He died in the war and my mother, too, is dead. I have no brothers, but one sister. She disgraced herself and is, I hope, now dead also. I know her not. So I am left, and the fate of that once so mighty family lies with me alone."

Brendon was sitting beside the boatman in the bows of the launch, and he could not but admire the Italian's amazing good looks. Moreover there was mind and ambition in him, coupled with a frank cynicism which appeared in a moment.

"Families have hung on a thread like that sometimes," said Mark; "the thread of a solitary life. Perhaps you are born to revive the fortunes of your race, Doria?"

"There is no 'perhaps.' I am. I have a good demon who talks to me sometimes. I am born for great things. I am very handsome—that was needful; I am very clever—that too was needful. There is only one thing that stands between me and the ruined castle of my race at Dolceacqua—only one thing. And that is in the world waiting for me."

Brendon laughed.

"Then what are you doing in this motor launch?"

"Marking the time. Waiting."

"For what?"

"A woman—a wife, my friend. The one thing needful is a woman—with much money. My face will win her fortune—you

understand. That is why I came to England. Italy has no rich heiresses for the present. But I have made a false step here. I must go among the élite, where there is large money. When gold speaks, all tongues are silent."

"You don't deceive yourself?"

"No—I know what I have to market. Women are very attracted by the beauty of my face, signor."

"Are they?"

"It is the type—classical and ancient—that they adore. Why not? Only a fool pretends that he is less than he is. Such a gifted man as I, with the blood of a proud and a noble race in his veins—everything to be desired—romance—and the gift to love as only an Italian loves—such a man must find a very splendid, rich girl. It is only a question of patience; but such a treasure will not be found with this old sea wolf. He is not of long descent. I did not know. I should have seen him and his little mean hole first before coming to him. I advertise again and get into a higher atmosphere."

Brendon found his thoughts wholly occupied with Jenny Pendean. Was it within the bounds of possibility that she, as time passed to dim her sufferings and sense of loss, might look twice at this extraordinary being? He wondered, but thought it improbable. Moreover the last of the Dorias evidently aimed at greater position and greater wealth than Michael Pendean's widow had to offer. Mark found himself despising the extraordinary creature who violated so frankly and cheerfully every English standard of reserve and modesty. Yet the other's self-possession and sense of his own value in the market impressed him.

He was glad to give Doria five shillings and leave him at the landing stage. But none the less Giuseppe haunted his imagination. One might dislike his arrogance or rejoice in his physical beauty, but to escape his vitality and the electric force of him was impossible.

Brendon soon reached the police station and hastened to communicate with Plymouth, Paignton and Princetown. To the last place he sent a special direction and told Inspector Halfyard to visit Mrs. Gerry at Station Cottages and make a careful examination of the room which Robert Redmayne had there occupied.

CHAPTER V.

ROBERT REDMAYNE IS SEEN.

A sense of unreality impressed itself upon Mark Brendon after this stage in his inquiry. A time was coming when the false atmosphere in which he moved would be blown away by a stronger mind and a deeper experience than his own; but already he found himself dimly conscious that some fundamental error had launched him along the wrong road—that he was groping in a blind alley and had missed the only path leading toward reality.

From Paignton on the following morning he proceeded to Plymouth and directed a strenuous and close inquiry. But he knew well enough that he was probably too late and judged with certainty that if Robert Redmayne still lived he would no longer be in England. Next he returned to Princetown, that he might go over the ground again, appreciating the futility of so doing. But the routine had to be observed. The impressions of naked feet on the sand had been carefully protected. They were too indefinite to be distinguished but he satisfied himself, however, that they represented the footprints of two men, if not three. He remembered that Robert Redmayne had spoken of bathing in the pools and he strove to prove three separate pairs of feet, but could not.

Inspector Halfyard, who had followed the case as closely as it was possible to do so, cast all blame on Bendigo, the brother of the vanished man.

"He delayed of set purpose," vowed Halfyard, "and them two days may make just all the difference. Now the murderer's in France, if not Spain."

"Full particulars have been circulated," explained Brendon, but the inspector attached no importance to that fact.

"We know how often foreign police catch a runaway," he said.

"This is no ordinary runaway, however. I still prefer to regard him as insane."

"In that case he'd have been taken before now. And that makes what was simple before more and more of a puzzle in my opinion. I don't believe that the man was mad. I believe he was and is all there; and that being so you've got to begin over again, Brendon, and find why he did it. Once grant that this was a deliberate planned murder and a mighty sight cleverer than it looked

at first sight, then you've got to ferret back into the past and find what motives Redmayne had for doing it."

But Brendon was not convinced.

"I can't agree with you," he answered. "I've already pursued that theory but it is altogether too fantastic. We know, from impartial testimony that the men were the best of friends up to the moment they left Princetown together on Redmayne's motor bicycle the night of the trouble."

"What impartial testimony? You can't call Mrs. Pendean's evidence impartial."

"Why not? I feel very certain that it is; but I'm speaking now of what I heard at Paignton from Miss Flora Reed, who was engaged to Robert Redmayne. She said that her betrothed wrote indicating his complete change of opinion; and he also told her that he had asked his niece and her husband to Paignton for the regattas. What is more, both Miss Reed and her parents made it clear that the soldier was of an excitable and uncertain nature. In fact Mr. Reed didn't much approve of the match. He described a man who might very easily slip over the border line between reason and unreason. No, Halfyard, you'll not find any theory to hold water but the theory of a mental breakdown. The letter he wrote to his brother quite confirms it. The very writing shows a lack of restraint and self-control."

"The writing was really his?"

"I've compared it with another letter in Bendigo Redmayne's possession. It's a peculiar fist. I should say there couldn't be a shadow of doubt."

"What shall you do next?"

"Get back to Plymouth again and make close inquiries among the onion boats. They go and come and I can trace the craft that left Plymouth during the days that immediately followed the posting of Redmayne's letter. These will probably be back again with another load in a week or two. One ought to be able to check them."

"A wild-goose chase, Brendon."

"Looks to me as though the whole inquiry had been pretty much so from the first. We've missed the key somewhere. How the man that left Paignton in knickerbockers, and a big-check suit and a red waistcoat on the morning after the murder got away with it and never challenged a single eye on rail or road—well, it's such a flat contradiction to reason and experience that I can't easily believe the face value."

"No—there's a breakdown somewhere—that's what I'm telling you; but whether the fault is ours or a trick has been played to put us fairly out of the running, no doubt you'll find out soon or late. I don't see there's anything more we can do up here, whether or no."

"There isn't," admitted Mark. "It's all been routine work and a devil of lot of time wasted in my opinion. Between ourselves, I'm rather ashamed of myself, Halfyard. I've missed something—the thing that most mattered. There's a signpost to this thing sticking up somewhere."

The inspector nodded.

"It happens so sometimes—cruel vexing—and then people laugh at us and ax how we earn our money. Now and again, as you say, there's a danger signal to a case so clear as the nose on a man's face, and yet, owing to following some other clew, or sticking to a theory we feel can and must be the only right one, we miss the real, vital point till we go and bark our shins on it. And then, perhaps, it's too late and we look silly."

Brendon admitted the truth of this experience.

"There can only be two possible situations," he said; "either this was a motiveless murder—and lack of motive means insanity; or else there was a deep reason for it and Redmayne killed Pendean, after plotting far in advance to do so and get clear himself. In the first case he would have been found, unless he had committed suicide in some such cunning fashion that we couldn't discover the body. In the second case, he's a very cute bird indeed and the ride to Paignton and disposal of the corpse, that all looked so mad, was supercraft on his part. But, if alive, mad or sane, I'm of opinion he did what he said in his letter to his brother he meant to do, and got off for a French or Spanish port. So that's the next step for me—to try and hunt down the boat that took him."

He pursued this policy, left Princetown for Plymouth on the following day, took a room at a sailors' inn on the Barbican and with the help of the harbor authority followed the voyages of a dozen small vessels which had been berthing at Plymouth during the critical days.

A month of arduous work he devoted to this stage of the inquiry, and his investigation produced nothing whatever. Not a skipper of any vessel involved could furnish

the least information and no man resembling Robert Redmayne had been seen by the harbor police or any independent person at Plymouth, despite sharp watchfulness.

A time came when he was recalled to London and heartily chaffed for his failure; but his own unusual disappointment disarmed the amusement at his expense. The case had presented such few apparent difficulties that Brendon's complete unsuccess astonished his chief. He was content, however, to believe Mark's own conviction: that Robert Redmayne had never left England but destroyed himself—probably soon after the dispatch of his letter to Bendigo from Plymouth.

Much demanded attention and the detective was soon devoting himself to a diamond robbery in London. Months passed, the body of Michael Pendean had not been recovered and the little world of Scotland Yard pigeonholed the mystery, while the larger world forgot all about it.

Meanwhile, with a sense of secret relief, Mark Brendon prepared to face what had sprung out of these incidents, while permitting the events themselves to pass from his present interests. There remained Jenny Pendean and his mind was deeply preoccupied with her. Indeed, apart from the daily toil of work, she filled it to the exclusion of every other personal consideration. He longed unspeakably to see her again, for though he had corresponded during the progress of his inquiries and kept her closely informed of everything that he was doing, the excuse for these communications no longer existed now. She had acknowledged every letter but her replies were brief and she had given him no information concerning herself or her future intentions, though he had asked her to do so. One item of information only had she vouchsafed and he learned that she was finishing the bungalow to her husband's original plan and was seeking a possible customer to take over her lease. She wrote:

> I cannot see Dartmoor again, for it means my happiest as well as my most unhappy hours. I shall never be so happy again and, I hope, never suffer so unspeakably as I have during the recent past.

He turned over this sentence many times and considered the weight of every word. He concluded from it that Jenny Pendean, while aware that her greatest joys were gone forever, yet looked forward to a time when her present desolation might give place to a greater tranquillity and content.

The fact that this should be so, however, astonished Brendon. He judged her words were perhaps ill chosen and that she implied a swifter return to peace than had in reality occurred. He had guessed that a year at least, instead of merely these four months, must pass before her terrible sorrow could begin to dim. Indeed he felt sure of it and concluded that he was reading an implication into this pregnant sentence that she had never intended it to carry. He longed to see her and was just planning how to do so, when chance offered an opportunity.

Brendon was called to arrest two Russians due to arrive at Plymouth from New York upon a day in mid-December and having identified them and testified to their previous activities in England he was free for a while. Without sending any warning he proceeded to Dartmouth, put up there that night and started, at nine o'clock on the following morning, to walk to Crow's Nest.

His heart beat hard and two thoughts moved together in it, for not only did he intensely desire to see the widow but also had a wish to surprise the little community on the cliff for another reason. Still some vague suspicion held his mind, that Bendigo Redmayne might be assisting his brother. The idea was shadowy, yet he had never wholly lost it and more than once contemplated such a surprise visit as he was now about to pay. The suspicion, however, seemed to diminish as he ascended to the great heights west of the river estuary; when within the space of two hours he had reached a place from which Crow's Nest could be seen, perched between the cliff heights and a gray, wintry sea, little but the anticipated vision of the woman held his mind.

He came ignorant of the startling events awaiting him, little guessing how both the story of his secret dream and the chronicle of the quarry crime were destined to be advanced by great incidents before that day was done.

His road ran over the cliffs and about him swept brown and naked fields under the winter sky. Here and there a mewing gull flew overhead and the only sign of other life was a plowman crawling behind his horses with more sea fowl fluttering in his wake. Brendon came at last to a white gate facing on the highway and found that he

had reached his destination. Upon the gate Crow's Nest was written in letters stamped upon a bronze plate and above it rose a post with a receptacle for holding a lamp at night. The road to the house fell steeply down and, far beneath, he saw the flagstaff and the tower room rising above the dwelling. A bleakness and melancholy seemed to encompass the spot on this somber day. The wind sighed and sent a tremor of light through the dead grass; the horizon was invisible, for mist concealed it; and from the low and ash-colored vapor the sea crept out with its monotonous, myriad wavelets flecked here and there by a feather of foam.

As he descended Brendon saw a man at work in the garden setting up a two-foot barrier of woven wire. It was evidently intended to keep the rabbits from the cultivated flower beds which had been dug from the green slope of the coomb.

He heard a singing voice and perceived that it was Doria, the motor boatman. Fifty yards from him he stood still and the gardener abandoned his work and came forward. He was bareheaded and smoking a thin, black, Tuscan cigar with the colors of Italy on a band round the middle of it. Giuseppe recognized him and spoke first.

"It is Mr. Brendon, the sleuth! He has come with news for my master?"

"No, Doria—no news, worse luck; but I was this way—down at Plymouth again—and thought I'd look up Mrs. Pendean and her uncle. Why d'you call me 'sleuth?'"

"I read books of crime and the detectives are 'sleuths.' It is American. Italians says '*sbirro*,' England says 'police officer.'"

"How is everybody?"

"Everybody very well. Time passes; tears dry; Providence watches."

"And you are still looking for the rich woman to restore the last of the Dorias to his castle?"

Giuseppe laughed, then he shut his eyes and sucked his evil-smelling cigar.

"We shall see as to that. Man proposes, God disposes. There is a god called Cupid, Mr. Brendon, who overturns our plans as yonder plowshare overturns the secret homes of beetle and worm."

Mark's pulses quickened. He guessed to what Doria possibly referred and felt concern but no surprise. The other continued.

"Ambition may succumb before beauty. Ancestral castles may crumble before the tide of love, as a child's sandy building before the sea. Too true!"

Doria sighed and looked at Brendon closely. The Italian stood in a tight-fitting jersey of brown wool, a very picturesque figure against his gray background. The other had nothing to say and prepared to descend. He guessed what had happened and was concerned rather with Jenny Pendean than the romantic personality before him. But that the stranger could still be here, exiled in this gray and lonely spot, told him quite as much as the man's words. He was not chained to Crow's Nest with his ambitions in abeyance for nothing. Mark, however, pretended to miss the significance of Giuseppe's confession.

"A good master—eh? I expect the old sea wolf is an excellent friend when you know his little ways."

Doria admitted it.

"He is all that I could wish and he likes me, because I understand him and make much of him. Every dog is a lion in his own kennel—eh? Redmayne rules; but what is the good of a home to a man if he does not rule? We are friends. Yet alas, we may not be for long—when——"

He broke off abruptly, puffed a villainous cloud of smoke and went back to his wire netting. But he turned a moment and spoke again as Brendon proceeded.

"Madonna is at home," he shouted and Mark understood to whom he referred.

He had reached Crow's Nest in five minutes and it was Jenny Pendean who welcomed him.

"Uncle's in his tower," she said. "I'll call him in a minute. But tell me first if there is anything to tell. I am glad to see you—very!"

She was excited and her great, misty, blue eyes shone. She seemed more lovely than ever.

"Nothing to report, Mrs. Pendean. At least—no, nothing at all. I've exhausted every possibility. And you—you have nothing, or you would have let me hear it?"

"There is nothing," she said. "Uncle Ben would most certainly have let me know if any news had reached him. I am sure that he is dead—Robert Redmayne."

"I think so too. Tell me a little about yourself, if I may venture to ask?"

"You have been so thoughtful for me. And I appreciated it. I'm all right, Mr.

Brendon. There is still my life to live and I find ways of being useful here."

"You are contented then?"

"Yes. Contentment is a poor substitute for happiness; but I am contented."

He longed to speak intimately, yet had no excuse for doing so.

"How much I wish it was in my power to brighten your content into happiness again," he said.

She smiled at him.

"Thank you for such a friendly wish. I am sure you mean it."

"Indeed I do."

"Perhaps I shall come to London some day, and then you would befriend me a little."

"How much I hope you will—soon."

"But I am dull and stupid still. I have great relapses and sometimes cannot even endure my uncle's voice. Then I shut myself up. I chain myself up like a savage thing, for a time, till I am patient again."

"You should have distractions."

"There are plenty—even here, though you might not guess it. Giuseppe Doria sings to me and I go out in the launch now and then. I always travel to and fro that way when I have to visit Dartmouth for Uncle Ben and for the household provisions. And I am to have chickens to rear in the spring."

"The Italian——"

"He is a gentleman, Mr. Brendon—a great gentleman, you might say. I do not understand him very well. But I am happy about him and safe with him. He would do nothing base or small. He confided in me when first I came. He then had a great dream to find a rich wife who would love him and enable him to restore the castle of the Dorias in Italy and build up the family again. He is full of romance and has such energy and queer, magnetic power that I can quite believe he will achieve his hopes some day."

"Does he still possess this ambition?"

Jenny was silent for a moment. Her eyes looked out of the window over the restless sea.

"Why not?" she asked.

"He is, I should think, a man that women might fall in love with."

"Oh, yes—he is amazingly handsome and there are fine thoughts in him."

Mark felt disposed to warn her but felt that any counsel from him would be an impertinence. She seemed to read his mind, however.

"I shall never marry again," she said.

"Nobody would dare to ask you to do so—nobody who knows all that you have been called to suffer. Not for many a long day yet, I mean," he answered awkwardly.

"You undertand," she replied and took his hand impulsively. "There is a great gulf I think fixed between us Anglo-Saxons and the Latins. Their minds move far more swiftly than ours. They are more hungry to get everything possible out of life. Doria is a child in many ways; but a delightful poetical child. I think England rather chills him; yet he vows there are no rich women in Italy. He longs for Italy all the same. I expect he will go home again presently. He will leave Uncle Ben in the spring—so he confides to me; but do not whisper it, for my uncle thinks the world of him and would hate to lose him. He can do everything and anticipates our wishes and whims in the most magical way."

"Indeed! But—well, I must not keep you any longer."

"Indeed you are not doing that. I am very, very glad to see you, Mr. Brendon. You are going to stop to dinner? We always dine in the middle of the day."

"May I?"

"You must. And tea also. Come up to Uncle Bendigo now. I'll leave you with him for an hour. Then dinner will be ready. Giuseppe always joins us. You won't mind?"

"The last of the Dorias! I've probably never shared a meal with such high company!"

She laughed and led him up the flight of stairs to the old sailor's sanctum.

"Mr. Brendon to see us, Uncle Ben," she said, and Mr. Redmayne took his eye from the big telescope.

"A blow's coming," he announced. "Wind's shifted a point to southward. Dirty weather already in the Channel."

He shook hands and Jenny disappeared. Bendigo was pleased to see Brendon, but his interest in his brother had apparently waned. He avoided the subject of Robert Redmayne, though he revealed other matters in his mind which he approached with a directness that rather astonished the detective.

"I'm a rough bird," he said, "but I keep my weather peeper open, and I didn't find it difficult to see, when you were here in the

summer, that my fine girl took your fancy. She's the sort, apparently, that makes men lose their balance a bit. For my part I never had any use for a woman since I was weaned, and have always mistrusted the creatures, seeing how many of my messmates ran on the rocks over 'em. But I'm free to grant that Jenny has made my house very comfortable and appears to feel kindly to me."

"Of course she does, Mr. Redmayne."

"Hold on till I've done. At this minute I'm in sight of a very vexatious problem; because my right hand—Giuseppe Doria—has got his eyes on Jenny; and though he's priceless as a single man and she's invaluable as a single woman, if the Italian gets round her and makes her fall in love with him presently, then they'll be married next year and that's good-by to both of 'em!"

Mark found himself a good deal embarrassed by this confidence.

"In your place," he said, "I should certainly drop Doria a pretty clear hint. What is good form in Italy he knows better than we do, or ought to, seeing he's a gentleman; but you can tell him it's damned bad form to make love to a newly made widow—especially one who loved her husband as your niece did, or who has been separated from him under such tragical circumstances."

"That's all right; and if there was only one in it I might do so; though for that matter I'm afraid Doria isn't going to stop here much longer in any case. He doesn't say so, but I can see it's only Jenny who is keeping him. But you've got to consider her too. I'm not going to say she encourages the beggar or anything like that. Of course she doesn't. But, as I tell you, I'm pretty wide awake and it's no good denying that she can endure his company without hurting herself. He's a handsome creature and he's got a way with him, and she's young."

"I rather thought he was out for money—enough money to reëstablish the vanished glories of his race."

"So he was and, of course, he knows he can't do that with Jenny's twenty thousand; but love casts out a good many things besides fear. It blights ambition—for the time being anyway—and handicaps a man on every side in the race for life. All Doria wants now is Jenny Pendean, and he'll get her if I'm a judge. I wouldn't mind too much either, if they could stop along with me and go on as we're going; but of course that wouldn't happen. As it is Doria has come to be much of a friend. He does all he's paid to do and a lot more; but he's more a guest than a servant and I shall miss him like the devil when he goes."

"It's hard to see what you can do, Mr. Redmayne."

"So it is. I don't wish to come between my niece and her happiness, and I can't honestly say that Doria wouldn't be a good husband, though good husbands are rare everywhere and never rarer than in Italy I believe. He might change his mind after they'd been wed a year and hanker for his ambitions again and money to carry them out. Jenny will have plenty some day, for there's poor Bob's sooner or late, I suppose, and there'll be mine and her Uncle Albert's so far as I know. But, taking it by and large, I'd a good bit sooner it didn't happen. I'll tell you these things because you're a famous man, with plenty of credit for good sense."

"I appreciate the confidence and can return a confidence," answered Brendon after a moment's reflection. "I do admire Mrs. Pendean. She is, of course, amazingly beautiful, and she has a gracious and charming nature. With such distinction of character you may rest assured that nothing will happen yet a while. Your niece will be faithful to her late husband's memory for many a long day, if not forever."

"I believe that," answered Bendigo. "We can mark time I don't doubt, till the turn of the year, or maybe longer. But there it is: they are thrown together every day of their lives and, though Jenny would hide it very carefully from me and probably from herself also as far as she could, I guess he's going to win out."

Brendon said no more. He was cast down and did not hide the fact.

"Mind you, I'd much prefer an Englishman," admitted the sailor; "but there's nobody to make any running in these parts. Giuseppe's got it all his own way." Then he left the subject. "No news I suppose of my poor brother?"

"None, Mr. Redmayne."

"I'd pinned my faith to a sort of fancy that the whole horrid thing might be capable of explanation along some other lines. But the blood was proved to be human?"

"Yes."

"Another secret for the sea then, as far as Pendean is concerned. And as for poor

Robert, only doomsday will tell where his bones lie."

"I also feel very little doubt indeed that he is dead."

A few moments later a gong sounded from beneath and the two men descended to their meal. It was Giuseppe Doria who did the talking while they ate a substantial dinner. He proved a great egotist and delighted to relate his own picturesque ambitions, though he had already confessed that these ambitions were modified.

"We are a race that once lorded it over western Italy," he declared. "Midway, inland between Ventimiglia and Bordighera, is our old fastness beneath the mountains and beside the river. An ancient bridge like a rainbow still spans Nervia and the houses climb up the hills among the vines and olives, while frowning down upon all things is the mighty ruin of the Dorias' castle, a great ghost from the past. In the midst of all the human business and bustle, removed by a century from the concerns of men, it stands, hollow and empty, with life surging round about like the sea on the precipices below us. The folk throng everywhere—the sort of humble people that of old knelt hatless to my ancestors. The base born wander in our chambers of state, the villagers dry their linen on our marble floors, children play in the closets of great counselors, bats flutter through the casements where princesses have sat and hoped and feared!"

Brendon stared at the voluble man and could not deny that his physical beauty increased with his animation.

"My people," he continued, "have sunk through many a stage and very swiftly of late. My grandfather was only a woodman, who brought charcoal from the mountains on two mules; my uncle grew lemons at Mentone and saved a few thousand francs for his wife to squander. Now I alone remain—the last of the line—and the home of the Dorias has long stood in the open market.

"With the fortress also goes the title—that is our grotesque Italian way. A pork butcher or butter merchant might become Count Doria to-morrow if he would put his hand deep enough in his pocket. But salvation lies this way: that though the property and title are cheap, to restore the ruin and make all magnificent again would demand a millionaire."

He chattered on and after dinner lighted another of his Tuscan cigars, drank a liqueur of some special brandy Mr. Redmayne produced in honor of Brendon and then left them.

They spoke of him and Mark was specially interested to notice Jenny's attitude; but she gave no sign and praised him only for his voice, his versatility and good nature.

"He can turn his hand to anything," she said. "He was going fishing this afternoon; but it is too rough, so he will work in the garden again."

She hoped presently that Doria would find a rich wife and reach the summit of his ambitions. It was clear enough that he did not, as yet, enter into any of Mrs. Pendean's calculations for her own future. But Jenny said one thing to surprise her listener while still speaking of the Italian.

"He doesn't like my sex," she declared. "In fact he makes me cross sometimes with his scornful attitude to us. He's as bad as Uncle Ben, who is a very hard-hearted old bachelor. He says, 'Women, priests and poultry never have enough.' But I say that men are far greedier than women, and always were."

The sailor laughed and they went out upon the terrace for a time where soon the early dusk began to fall. The storm had not yet developed and there was a fierce and fiery light over the west at sunset while a tremendous wind blew the sky almost clear for a time. When the Start lighthouse winked its white, starry eye over the deepening purple of the sea and heavy waves beat below them in hollow thunder they returned to the house and Mr. Redmayne showed Brendon curiosities. They drank tea at five o'clock and an hour later the detective went on his way. A general invitation had been extended to him and the old sailor expressly declared that it would give him pleasure to receive Mark as a guest at any time. It was a suggestion that tempted Brendon not a little.

"You've done a wonderful thing," whispered Jenny, as she saw him to the upper gate. "You've made my uncle like you. Really that's a feat."

"Would it bore you if I fell in with his proposal and came down for a few days after Christmas?" he asked. She assured him that it would give her real pleasure.

Heartened a little he went his way, but the wave of cheerfulness set flowing by her presence, soon ebbed again. He perceived

the futility of any hope and he half suspected her indifference regarding Doria to be assumed. He guessed that she would be jealous to give no sign until the days of her mourning were numbered, but he felt a melancholy conviction that when another summer was passed Jenny Pendean might take a second husband.

He debated the wisdom of presently returning to Crow's Nest and felt a strong inclination to do so. Little guessing that he would be there again on the morrow he determined to remind Bendigo Redmayne of his invitation in early spring. By that time much might have happened, for he intended to correspond with Jenny or at any rate take the initiative in a correspondence.

The moon had risen as he pursued the lonely road and shone clear through a gathering scud that threatened soon to overwhelm the silver light. Clouds flew fast and above Brendon's head telegraph wires hummed the song of a gathering storm. The man's thoughts proceeded as irregularly as the fitful and shouting wind. He weighed each word that Jenny had said and strove to understand each look that she had given him.

He tried to convince himself that Bendigo Redmayne's theory must, after all, be false, and he assured himself that by no possibility could the widow of Michael Pendean lose her sad heart to this stranger from Italy. The idea was out of the question for the present, for surely a woman of such fine mold, so suddenly and tragically bereaved, could not find in this handsome chatterbox, throbbing with egotism, any solace for sorrow or promise for future contentment. In theory his view seemed sound. Yet he knew, even while he reflected, that love in its season may shatter all theories and upset even the most consistent of characters.

Still deep in thought Brendon tramped on; and then, where the road fell between a high bank to the windward side and a pine wood on the other, he experienced one of the greatest surprises that life had yet brought him.

At a gate, which hung parallel with the road and opened into the depth of the trees behind, there stood Robert Redmayne.

The five-barred gate alone separated them and the big man lolled over it with his arms crossed on the topmost bar. The moonlight beat full into his face and overhead the pines uttered a harsh and sullen roar as the wind surged over them. From far below the thunder of an unceasing sea upon the cliffs was carried upward; but the red man stood motionless, watchful. He wore the tweed clothes, cap and red waistcoat that Brendon well remembered at Foggintor; the light from above flashed on his startled eyes and showed his great mustache and teeth visible beneath it. There was dread upon his face and haggard misery, yet no madness.

It seemed that he kept a tryst there; but it had not been Mark Brendon that he expected. For a moment he stared as the detective stopped and confronted him. He appeared to recognize Mark, or at any rate regard him as an enemy, for instantly he turned, plunged heavily into the woods behind him and disappeared. In a moment he had sunk into the darkness of the undergrowth and the riot of the storm hid all sounds of his panic flight.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE LESSER EVIL

OUT in Marion, Ohio, they tell this story as illustrating the fact that the suavity of manner which now characterizes Mr. Harding the president has always been an outstanding characteristic of Mr. Harding the man.

Shortly after he had started his newspaper and while it was yet rather a small affair Mr. Harding did the work of two or three men. One day, when he was trying to write an editorial, two headlines and a society item all at one and the same time, an obscure but irate local politician rushed into the office breathing defiance, malediction and promises of punishment.

"Sir!" he thundered. "You're printing lies about me in your paper! Lies! Lies, and you know it!"

"Why object, then?" retorted Harding urbanely. "What on earth would you do if we printed the truth about you?"

In the Matter of Silas Lodewyk

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "According to Plutarch," "Who's Afraid!" Etc.

You wouldn't think Sixtieth Street just off Broadway, in New York, a likely place to dig for "old romance," would you? Like gold, it's where you find it, though

THE young man snuggled the warm collar of his overcoat up to his ears as he reached the top of the subway steps and met the February wind from the North River. It was late afternoon and Columbus Circle before him swirled with the tides of traffic poured into it by Eighth Avenue, Fifty-ninth Street, and Broadway. He shuddered by the news stand at the kiosk and frowned at the comfortable folk who looked at him so casually and placidly through the plate-glass sides of their humming cars.

A policeman raised a potent hand and the sea of traffic parted; with sidelong glances at its steep and undulating front the fugitives from the subway scurried to the opposite pavement. The young man hurried north on Broadway and turned into Sixtieth Street. He consulted a newspaper clipping from his pocket.

He paused across the street from a two-story-and-attic frame dwelling sandwiched in between five-story flats. Its aspect disappointed him and he verified the address from the clipping.

The dwelling was set back a few feet from the house line and was below the grade of the street. Outwardly it was in a sad state. The wide clapboards of its siding were weathered and warped and its sloping roof was covered with tar paper, beneath whose ragged rim showed moldering shingles. Aged and woebegone, life was still in it; the diamond panes of its windows shone brightly before stiff curtains of white scrim.

A high and shallow porch was before its entrance; on each side of the porch was a straight-backed seat. The room to the east of the porch had been made over into a shop; behind its many-paned window was exposed for sale a variety of trash. Penny dreadfuls were hung on a string, fly-blown children's toys were there, and a large lithograph of a dandy in evening dress, cane, top hat, and gray gloves. Beneath this picture was printed "Iron-Jaw Plug, the Chew of a Gentleman!"

The young man shrugged his shoulders and crossed the street. He had to live somewhere and he would give this place a look. At the worst he could make some cutting remark to the people who had the impudence to advertise rooms to let in such a kennel.

He raised the knocker of blackened bronze on the door and then perceived the handle of a bell rope below. He yanked it and a bell jangled in the house. The door opened. The satirical smile faded from his face and he whipped off his hat with a bow. He was facing a lady, middle-aged but slim and erect, with sunny blue eyes and finely curved features, a gracious and stately person. She wore a short lace apron over a house dress of some cheap, black stuff.

"You advertised," he murmured, slightly disconcerted.

"Will you come in?"

He entered a short and wide hall innocent of furniture except for a tubular heating stove and its equipage of coal box and shovel. She stood beside a doorway through which he caught a glimpse of a fire burning in an open grate; he bowed again and obeyed the silent request to enter. She crossed the hall toward the shop and he heard her turn the key in its outer door.

He was in the living room of the house, a low-ceiled chamber about fourteen feet square. The fireplace, faced with small, yellow bricks such as came to New York long ago as ship ballast, took up quite half of the farther wall. The flooring was oak boards nine inches wide. In the deep embrasures of the windows were set boxes of earth in which pink geraniums bloomed; beneath the windows were cupboards. Can-

dle sconces with bowls to catch the drip were on the plastered walls. There were many pieces of antique mahogany; people had lived elegantly and spaciously in this absurd and shabby little house, once upon a time.

He was turning away from a dark and blistered painting above the hearth as she entered.

"Goodness, what weather!" she exclaimed. "Let me have your coat, do!"

She disposed the garment on a drying frame which projected from the chimney breast. She seated him in a rush-bottomed leather chair and saw that he disposed his feet familiarly on the fender. She studied him anxiously to be sure that he was comfortable, before sinking into a low rocker.

"You recognize him?" she asked chattily, nodding at the painting. "The picture is not so clear nowadays. That is Charles Lodewyk."

"Ah, yes." He bowed.

"Mayor of New York," she prompted smilingly. "In 1694."

He started with a sudden recollection.

"What a fool I am!" His quaint tone took the crudeness from the words. "The Lodewyk farm was hereabouts—I should know that. I am employed by the Metropolitan Title Company, of this city, as an examiner of title, and it is my business to know such matters. Let's see—it ran from approximately Seventh Avenue over to—somewhere between Ninth and Tenth in this neighborhood."

"It was not exactly a farm," she corrected him. "We were never farmers, we Lodewyks. We were merchants, politicians, traders. Our country seat was here. It was at once convenient and retired; the Bloomingdale Road passed through our grounds and New York was a short half hour's ride away."

He attempted a melancholy shake of the head and cast about in his mind for a scrap of Latin with which to tag the situation. He remembered a case on all fours with this; the decayed gentlewoman in that case had been the daughter of a saloon keeper who had kept his own horse and carriage like a nabob.

"*Tempus*——" he began. "*Tempo*——"

He was checked by a light and meditative laugh. She was looking into the fire.

"This, then," he amended in a matter-of-fact tone, "is the original Lodewyk country house?"

"It is not as old as that. The original house burned down in 1785. This one is hardly more than one hundred and thirty years old. But you have not told me your name. Or did you?"

"I am very awkward." He tendered her a card. "Quackenbush is the name. Richard Quackenbush. Are there any other roomers, may I ask?"

"Three other gentlemen. They are all older men than you, but perfectly lovely otherwise. And will you require breakfast?"

"I'd rather not trouble you. I can find it at a restaurant in the neighborhood. I would like to see the room, if I may."

She rose with the litheness of a girl and preceded him up the stairs.

"This will be it," she said, throwing open a door. "It is a rear room but you have a view over our garden. The front is so dreadfully dusty and noisy since they began to build so many of these tremendous office buildings."

She entered the alcove of the dormer window to raise the shade.

"This will do capitally," he said. The furniture was comparatively new and was of very cheap pattern, but the chamber was large and clean.

"I am glad you like it," she said relievedly. "So few people answer an advertisement. They stand across the street and then go away."

"You have trees in your garden, I see."

"They are the Lodewyk pear trees. They were planted in 1740. People used to come to see the trees when I was a child, before we were closed in by the houses. I am afraid they are dead now; they did not leaf last year."

"You have so many associations here that you must love this old place."

"Indeed, I do not!" said the lady vivaciously. "It is nice of you to say that, but really I am sick to death of it. I am the last of the name, and at times I feel like a ghost."

"You would not be a very terrifying one, Miss Lodewyk," he said.

"I am Mrs. Brenon," she said. "Perhaps you remember Myles Brenon, who was in stock at Daly's? But no. You are too young. That was twenty-five years ago. We eloped——"

A girl's voice rose from below stairs.

"Mother!"

"My daughter, Sophia," said Mrs. Brenon. "She was painting in the foreroom when you came in. Yes, Sophia has talent, like her father, although she only took up art last Tuesday. She is just nineteen but wonderfully talented."

"*Mo-ther!*"

"Be good enough to wait a moment, Mr. Quackenbush. Sophia did not want me to let this room again and I must speak to her. I would rather you waited; our arrangement will be perfectly agreeable to her but she is a very strong-willed girl."

Mrs. Brenon descended to the lower floor.

Quackenbush set about examining his domicile. He looked into the clothespresses, sat on the bed to try the spring, and then pulled out the lower drawer of the bureau. The bureau let him pull the drawer half out and then suddenly snapped shut on it and hung on with tooth and nail, as is the habit of cheap bureaus. He was quite within his rights to look about him, but the idea of being found doing so flustered him and he tried to force the drawer back into place, which was unwise, as the bureaus of furnished rooms are fearfully and wonderfully made.

"Excuse me!" said the girl's voice, accompanied by a persistent tapping on his chamber door. The door was ajar.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Quackenbush, rising quickly. He was embarrassed. Sophia was a pretty girl, a natural American blonde with gray eyes and dark brows, clear skin and brownish hair. It is embarrassing to find one's self sitting on the floor and growling through one's teeth in a pretty girl's presence.

She entered, knelt before the bureau, and took hold of the drawer pulls. "I am glad that somebody knows how to talk to it," she said. "Give it a good one for me, right here. That was a dandy! Now, you see, you lift up on it, pull it out a little, press down again, then to the left so much, then straight out—and there you are!"

"Simple combination, isn't it?" commented the new roomer. "You are very kind."

"I am Miss Brenon," said Sophia.

"Richard Quackenbush is my name."

"Just plain Richard Quackenbush?"

"Very plain!"

"Good," said Sophia. "You said something to my mother about a title, didn't you? My mother has had several foreign noblemen here and I have put my foot down on them, as they do not pay their rent and generally policemen come in and take them away. If you are an American and have no estates abroad, one week in advance will do very well."

"Let me make it a month, while I have it," said Quackenbush, handing her twenty dollars. "It will be perfectly O. K. for me to move in at once, will it not?"

He followed her down the stairs and spoke to Mrs. Brenon on his way to the street. "If it will not be too much trouble I would like to have breakfast, too. It will be a great convenience these winter mornings."

He had found leisure to reconsider the matter of breakfast in all its aspects and implications while talking to Sophia—which shows, if you like, that he had not found her uninteresting.

He returned about nine o'clock with his baggage, lit his pipe, and tipped a sturdy chair against the wall under the gas jet to read his evening edition. The flame flickered annoyingly; his window and door were closed but there was a draft in the room. He put out the light, opened the window, and went to bed.

The weather cleared during the night and the moon rose. Toward one o'clock its light awoke him. He got up, pulled down the shade, and returned to the warmth of the covers. He lay awake for a few minutes. He was unable to set his mind to the prime business of sleeping because of a sound recurring in the room.

It was such a sound as the wind makes when it gossips with the shadows in midnight belfries while the moonlight reads the epitaphs on the mossy stones below—grumbling together like old cronies over scandals that are gone and were best forgotten. It started and ended with a sigh, and after he had once permitted the sound to ensnare his attention Quackenbush found himself hearkening in the silent intervals for each soft, premonitory suspiration.

He needed his rest; he emitted an honest, human growl which silenced the eerie dirge for the moment, pulled the other pillow over his head, clapped his eyes fast shut, and plunged into sleep.

It was a fair morning and seven o'clock by his Big Benjamin alarm clock when he awoke. He broke the ice in a water pitcher

for the first time since leaving the farm, washed, dressed, and went down to breakfast.

"Have you any ghosts in this house?" he asked Sophia as he peeled his egg.

"Oh, certainly," she said, surprised at the simplicity of the question.

"Are they much bother? How do they generally cut up?"

"Well, there was Lady Sophia Lodewyk, who used to walk down the great drive under the elms to meet her fiancé at the gate. He was killed there, being thrown from his horse, which shied when it saw her coming, two hundred years ago. The gate was about where the Fifty-ninth Street subway station now stands."

"I saw her yesterday evening," said Quackenbush soberly. "She met a young man and they crossed to the Circle Theater. I am glad to hear that he was her fiancé. But how about my room? Any there?"

"Silas Lodewyk, perhaps," said Sophia, with a glance toward the kitchen. "He killed himself in that room in April, 1865. He was my great-grandfather."

"Business man?"

"Yes, indeed. He was the last of the family that had any business. He was a very close-fisted sort and was reputed to be one of the city's rich men. But when they came to settle up his estate they found practically nothing. He is the mystery of the family and is supposed to have buried a great treasure somewhere about."

"Retired and gone a bit dotty," diagnosed Quackenbush. "I beg your pardon—I shouldn't have said that. But some one was hanging around my door and groaning very distressfully. It must have been your great-grandfather, unless it was the last roomer that the policeman took away."

"Oh, I do hope it was Silas Lodewyk!" exclaimed Sophia, clasping her hands. "Perhaps he has come back to tell us where he buried his treasure!"

"I am sorry, but I did not know that he had anything so important to say. I will listen more carefully to-night, though I do wish he would take the matter up with one of the parties in interest."

"S-sh," warned Sophia. "Here comes mother!"

He bade the ladies good morning and started for the title company.

The cold that came before the dawn still lay in the lower levels between the houses, though the sun warmed and lighted the upper twenty stories of the new and shining Gotham Bank Building. He passed under sidewalk bridges before other structures being built toward the heavens to supply the frenzied demand for space in the new automobile center of eastern America.

The air was raw with the smells of wet sand and mortar and plaster and reverberated under the blows of great steel girders and columns falling from motor trucks. He looked up at a line of bricklayers toiling in the sunny sky so far above him that their faces were pink dots. There was no apparent kinship between the giant houses that were building and the tiny five or six-tiered tenements about them. The structures of the Seventies and Eighties crouched with diminished heads about the footings of these monsters of newest New York.

Quackenbush turned into the subway kiosk. He laughed suddenly and winked apologetically at the news vender. He was reflecting that the dwelling which he had just quitted was old when the Halfway House stood here on the site of the whirling Circle amid woods and meadows shining silver on just such frosty mornings.

It was Saturday. He came uptown again in the early afternoon. He had bought a plane at a hardware store to deal with the recalcitrant bureau and with the doors to the clothespress in his room.

He had been given his own key, with a suggestion from Mrs. Brenon that the best place to keep it and not lose it was under the mat. He let himself in. He heard Sophia speaking in the living room.

"But he did not say that he had a title, mother. There is nothing noble about him and he does not laugh at you inside at all. He has a look in his eyes like Bonaparte, don't you think so?"

Quackenbush blushed in the dark hall and wished himself out of it, although it was very flattering to hear from a pretty lady that he had the quelling stare of the Corsican eagle. Sophia meant kindly, but not just that; Bonaparte was the name of their mourned French spaniel.

He caught a view of Mrs. Brenon's retort through the doorway. She sniffed through her delicately arched nose and opened wide her large blue eyes; these gestures were seemingly intended to intimate that her daughter was a callow and ingenuous girl,

where Mrs. Brenon was a shrewd and penetrating and suspectful lady of the world, full of cynical surmises, slow to credit, prejudiced, and watchful.

The shop bell tinkled; Quackenbush sped on tiptoe to the door through which he had entered and opened it with a clatter. He bowed to Mrs. Brenon, who was crossing the hall, looked in gratefully and quite like Bonaparte at Sophia, and mounted to his room.

He got into his shirt sleeves and seized hold of the bureau for a final reckoning. He pulled it into the center of the room before the window and coaxed out the drawers. He set to planing and fitting them; he had a farmer's knack with tools.

When they were so that they slid tamely in and out he shoved the bureau back into a dark corner. The room's only mirror was in the bureau top and the only place for a mirror, to any lady's mind, is where the light is best by day and by night, whereas Quackenbush wanted to read and to write and was masculinely contented to part his hair by dead reckoning.

He saw that the plaster of the wall was broken where the bureau had stood. It was extensively cracked in a semicircle of three-foot base measured along the floor. There was a hole in the center of the cracked section; he poked a cane through it and wiggled it about experimentally. The underlying lath was loose from the studding and had broken its bond with the plaster. It was an unsanitary condition. He knew that he could get a few square feet of wall board at one of the new buildings near by for a couple of dimes. He enlarged the aperture without violence, explored its interior with a match, and then went downstairs to speak of it to his landlady.

"I wonder if I could open up that fireplace again in my room," he said. "It would be a comfort these cold days. The expense, of course, would be mine."

"A fireplace?" repeated Mrs. Brenon, frowning thoughtfully. "I do believe there was a fireplace there! It was closed up many years ago, before I was born, but it seems that I remember hearing something about it. By all means, Mr. Quackenbush, if it will be a convenience."

He stepped into the shop to speak to Sophia, who was closing a deal for a jawbreaker with a brat from the adjoining tenement.

"I am sorry about your great-grandfather," he said. "It wasn't he that kept me awake last night. It was an old chimney in the wall!"

He got a wooden box from the kitchen to hold the rubbish, and set about his alteration. When he had broken away the plaster he discovered a facing of yellowed white marble, set flush with the wall. Beneath it, and hooped about with black iron, was the old hearth. The grate was still in it, filled with a black and carbonized mass. When he broke this apart to remove it he saw that it was the residue from burned papers. Some one had spent hours in this room feeding the flames.

It had been a long business and in the end the incendiary had grown careless, so that much of the material was not completely consumed, although outwardly charred.

The long afternoon was before him and it did not occur to Quackenbush that he was guilty of any impropriety in examining the survived writings. One's right to personal privacy passes with one's times.

The documents whose compression under the mass had saved them from the flames had to do with the affairs of one Silas Lodewyk. They were variously dated—such as were dated. The earliest was marked September 4, 1829; thence they ranged to February, 1865. They were invoices, receipts, bills of lading, promissory notes, underwriters' certificates, charter parties, ship chandlers' lists—papers accumulated in the course of a long and extensive business having to do for the most part with trading expeditions and voyages on the seas. Most of them were so far gone that Quackenbush could gather only their general purport. He studied them leisurely and with a detached and melancholy curiosity. Upon his face, could he have seen it, was the smile of a very old man who watches the earnestness of children.

Had that Silas Lodewyk who was the great-grandfather of the pretty Sophia made this holocaust? What cataclysm then had overwhelmed him? These papers showed nothing of it. Rather they reflected a portrait of a strong man of that elder day, a rich man secure in his fortunes, a man of large hands and ample grasp. Was the incendiary one with the suicide, and had he cowered here amid papers tumbled from his strong boxes and watched the flames mount

as he fed them, with a dreadful glance aside at the waiting pistol?

And now, of all the noise which this man had made in the world and of all his pomps and works there remained this heap of ashes. Quackenbush shoveled the litter into his dust box.

He picked out of it a small book, such a little memorandum book as many men carry about them for a quick and general survey of their affairs. He turned its leaves. Some of the entries were:

Febr. 4th, 1864. Saw Chauncey M. Depew, the secretary of state, reference to Union Home and School property at 58th Street. No satisfaction—self-sufficient young whippersnapper—spoke of my patriotic duty.

Febr. 12th, 1864. Saw commissioners reference to further allowance for east six acres, now included in the Central Park—Andrew H. Green and Moses H. Grinnell. Very wrong-headed men.

Febr. 13th, 1864. Saw William M. Tweed, reference to above. Lunched with him and A. Oakey Hall, the district attorney, at the United States Hotel. Downright fellows and no mistake. Matter going forward briskly; no publicity. Plan to send Tweed up the river to Albany. Pledged my support. Think people could do worse, but am not quite sure.

Pages were given up to summaries of various financial ventures. Silas Lodewyk had had his finger in a great many pies. Here is one such page:

Steam packet *Yazoo*, Captain Morehead. Forty field pieces and two hundred thousand rounds. Huggins, Perley, Bogert and "X," equal shares. $61,345.22 ea.

Clipper *Golden River*. Capt. Tuthill. Four hundred tons sheet copper. Huggins, Bogert nad "X." Net $97,625.01.

Steam packet *Intervention*, Capt. Dupignac. Taken. Libeled by Hastie & Fairchild of Halifax, consignees. Huggins, Farr, Kinney and "X." Loss—if claim disallowed—$19,300.

Concerning *Star of the South*.

Yankee Girl, off Azores. Silk and wines, Bordeaux to Boston. Sent in.

Bright Heels, off Port o' Spain. Dried fish. Sent in.

Poor Richard, sunk while running.

Furthest North, oil to Liverpool. Sent in.

Aurora, machinery. Sent in.

Fisherman's Luck, in Bantry Bay. Oil. Sent in but libeled.

Star of the South. Sunk off Maidenhead. Huggins and "X," equal shares. Loss per ca. $107,315.

So the entries ran for page after page. There was history here if one could read it aright, stories of battle and sudden death on many seas, chronicles of long, slow voyages. But Quackenbush glimpsed each of them only as by a lightning flash. He turned the pages with tightening lips and lowered brows. The story that he read between the lines was not a pretty one.

It was evident that the person designated as "X"—the mark was not exactly the alphabetical symbol but was a rough cross—was rich, even as we reckon riches to-day. Quackenbush identified this person with the keeper of the book, Silas Lodewyk. Here, then, was presented the mystery of which Sophia had spoken; the peculiar commerce of Silas Lodewyk had been highly lucrative; its profits ran into millions of dollars—and here were his heirs letting furnished rooms!

The little book gave no hint of the disposition of this vast treasure. He turned the leaves to another entry.

Sara broke a limb in the storm yesterday, Mr. Meserole advises cutting it off as she is so old it will not knit again. He is coming to-morrow to examine her. Hate to have it done but it may be necessary to save her life.

. . . . . .

Sara to Annette, N. 15 E. 304.

It was growing late. He put the book away and set about his labors on the old fireplace.

He accompanied the ladies to church the following morning and accepted their invitation to the midday meal. A fall of wet snow had set in, so that he was obliged to relinquish his intention of taking Sophia for a walk in the park in the afternoon. They were in the living room, following the meal. Mrs. Brenon had gone upstairs to ready the guest chambers.

Quackenbush went to the window to frown at the inconsiderate weather. The sill of this window was free of flower boxes; it was Sophia's atelier; tubes of oil paints of the size of tooth-paste samples were on it and a cigar box full of plaster of Paris in powder and several unmounted photographs.

"I am painting twentieth-century miniatures," said Sophia proudly. "I am painting them for an art company down in Fourteenth Street, and they are going to buy all the miniatures that I can paint, providing they are done to their satisfaction. I read their advertisement only last Sunday in the newspaper, explaining how any lady or gentleman could earn an ample income in the privacy of their own home at light and artistic employment."

"Did the art company sell *you* anything?"

"Nothing—except the materials, of course. They were twenty-seven dollars. It seems a lot of money, but then so many people want to work for them."

"How do you paint them?"

"Here. You take a photograph like this and you paste it face down on one of these oval glasses. Then you carefully scrape the paper backing away, leaving only the photographic film—the sensitized coating—on the glass. Then you apply the oil paints to this film, and when you turn the glass over you see a colored miniature, and very pretty, too, if you do it just right."

"Have you finished any, may I ask?"

"Not exactly," confessed Sophia. "It is so very easy to scratch a hole in the film while you are scraping the paper away. But here is one which will give you the idea, although it is not just right."

She handed him one of the oval glasses; they fitted photographs somewhat smaller than cabinet size. The concave surface of the glass was covered with blobs of paint. Quackenbush turned it over to admire the colored photograph.

"What is it?" asked Quackenbush puzzledly. He was looking at a picture of a blue-faced man who held at his waist what seemed to be the fair dome of a bald man's head. It had originally been a picture of Bismarck, and the grisly trophy which he held over his stomach was a Prussian helmet. Mistakes will occur when a girl is beginning to earn an ample income as an artist. "Ah, it is a picture of a head-hunter—one of those South Sea things!"

"It is a picture of General Sherman," said Sophia, taking it from him quickly. "Only I did not get the blue and the flesh color just in the right place."

"I can see that you have talent, though," said Quackenbush.

"I get that from my father," said Sophia. "He was very artistic. He was Myles Brenon, the famous tragedian. You must have heard of him?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Quackenbush. So he had, from Mrs. Brenon.

"Yes, father was very artistic, but New York was not quite ready to appreciate a great tragedian in those days. He took a theater and produced 'Hamlet.' But those silly comedians, Harrigan and Hart, were playing next door, and they put on a burlesque of 'Hamlet,' and the patrons got dreadfully confused. Some of them went into my father's theater and laughed at the saddest places, and the critics in the newspapers wrote things about my father when they had really not seen him at all."

"Ah!" sighed Quackenbush, pulling a long face.

She broke out laughing.

"You don't have to do that," she said. "It is very nice of you, but I know it was a ridiculous business. It was not so funny for us, though. Mother put a mortgage on the house to get the money to take the theater and the mortgage was foreclosed and now we're paying rent."

"It was not Mrs. Brenon who sold off the bulk of the family holdings about here?"

"Oh, no. She was left nothing but this house. The rest of our land was sold off piecemeal by my great-grandfather, Silas Lodewyk."

"The ancestor who buried the treasure!"

"Perhaps. We have always thought so. My grandfather spent most of his time looking for Silas Lodewyk's money. He had the place gone over by inches and paid ever so much to a man who had a divining rod. He never found anything. These flats around us were built in my grandfather's time; he watched them digging out the cellars, hoping they would light on the treasure. But they never found anything. Perhaps there was nothing to find."

"I cannot believe that!" exclaimed Quackenbush. "And still—— But now there is only this house left, and the garden, to be gone over. But no doubt your grandfather examined them most thoroughly."

He glanced back through the dining room and through the French windows looking into the garden. It was euphemistic to call the patch of ground a garden; it was a back yard nowadays.

"Too bad about those old trees," he said. "Mrs. Brenon thinks they are dying or dead."

"Yes. They are just ugly old things to other people, but they have their own story for us, like everything else here. Simon Lodewyk planted them ever and ever so many years ago. He was a younger son, a widower with two children. He sent them to an English school and the ship—the brigantine *Endeavour*—went down with all on board. The poor father's heart was broken; he never smiled again. He planted the two pear trees, naming them after his children, Sara and Annette Lodewyk."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Sara and Annette," repeated Sophia. "That is Sara—the one you see from here."

For reasons which were satisfactory to him Quackenbush had not spoken to the ladies about the memorandum book which he had found in the old fireplace. He did not see that any good could come of showing it to them. The light which it cast on the doings of Silas Lodewyk was not of a kind to make them proud of their ancestor. If any of its revelations should prove to their financial advantage it would be time enough to offer them that poultice for their wounded family pride.

He got the book out that evening, and went over it again with particular attention to the references to the old pear trees.

Sara to Annette, N. 15 E. 304.

Might not the characters at the end of this notation mean "North 15 degrees, east 304 feet?" It seemed the most reasonable deciphering. It would be interesting to plot a line through the pear trees and continue it from Annette at the given angle a distance of three hundred and four feet.

Before leaving the house in the morning he borrowed Mrs. Brenon's tape measure and went into the garden. He measured and wrote down the distances of the trees from the walls of the buildings adjoining. The trees would not appear on the land maps of the city.

He went to his office in the Metropolitan Title Company on lower Broadway.

Quackenbush was the special investigator for the company, which was engaged in the business of examining and insuring titles to real estate in New York City. The extent of its business can be gauged by considering that policies on single buildings may run over ten million dollars—such structures as the Equitable Life, the Woolworth, the City Investing. When questions arose which were off the record, such as whether a certain owner back in the chain of title was married or whether a child was born to a former owner after he had made his will and died or the exact situation of a certain monument in a description of property, the monument—a tree, a wall, a stone—having disappeared, such questions were turned over to Quackenbush. He solved them by looking into family Bibles or interviewing neighbors or old residents—in a hundred ways. His position called for tact and judgment and, incidentally, allowed him much leisure.

He went up to the survey department, and got out the atlas for Manhattan. This book, in several volumes, is a compilation of many thousand surveys, and shows every building on the island to an eighth of an inch. He turned to Sixtieth Street, found the Lodewyk house, and had a disengaged draftsman plot him a line running from the second pear tree at the given angle three hundred and four feet.

The line terminated at a point between the easterly wall of a tenement house and the westerly wall of a fire exit from a theater which fronted on Broadway. Between these two walls the map showed a two-foot gap; the gap was two feet wide on Sixtieth Street and ran back at the same constant width a distance of one hundred and seventy-three feet, terminating at a point twenty-seven feet south of the south side of Sixty-first Street.

"Now what do you suppose that is?" queried the draftsman, looking over Quackenbush's shoulder.

"Lord knows. It might be an alley or a right of way or an old wall—it might be anything. Let me have your surveys on these properties."

The draftsman brought him a number of blue prints.

"They all show it as it is to-day," said Quackenbush, after inspecting them. "Have you got a farm survey here? Look up a survey of the Lodewyk farm.

"Ah, there it is," said Quackenbush when he had unrolled a crinkly sheet which showed the terrain of the section as it had been on September 5, 1852. The houses had disappeared and had been replaced by orchards and formal groves and winding walks. "Here is the Lodewyk house. It dominated the neighborhood in that day, didn't it? And here is our gap; it is the east wall of the garden!"

He left the draftsmen bending over their boards and went down to the business department, and got out the "Last Owners" book. This book shows the record owner of every piece of real estate in the city. Quackenbush found the names and addresses of the record owners of the tenement house and the theater, but he found no mention of the wall. The wall, then, was one of those pieces of lost property which occur here and

there in the city, pieces of property whose owners have disappeared.

The "Last Owners" book is not mathematically exact; it is for the use of real-estate brokers, who are satisfied with approximately correct information. Quackenbush went to the company's "plant" on an upper floor.

The "plant" is the company's library of records. Here are transcripts of every instrument affecting real estate in the city—deeds, mortgages, wills, judgments, et cetera. Each instrument is indexed against the property which it affects, so that a ten-dollar-per-week girl can assemble the complete story of any piece of property in ten minutes. She turns the assembled slips over to a thirty-dollar-per-week lawyer, who checks them over, compares them with the originals in the county clerk's and register's offices and certifies the title. Working with the plant he can examine two or three titles per day; a lawyer in private practice cannot examine any title in the city in less than two weeks. It is the application of the factory system to the practice of law.

"Let me have the slips on these properties," he requested, handing to the manager of the plant a diagram showing the tenement house, the old garden wall, and the theater exit.

He waited his ten minutes, watching the hundreds of girls seated at the long tables. The scene did not differ essentially from the interior of a busy loft tenanted by one of the needle trades.

He was handed three sets of paper slips. In each set the slips differed in color, indicating the nature of the instruments. Thus a deed was white, a mortgage was blue, a will was yellow.

Title to the garden wall was shown to be in the heirs of Silas Lodewyk.

"Have you nothing later than this will of Silas Lodewyk, dated in 1858?" demanded Quackenbush surprisedly.

"That's the last; nothing has been done with the property since. There's that sale of tax lien six months ago. That affects the property."

"Ah, yes. Here is a lis pendens giving notice of the foreclosure of the tax lien! What is the present status of this foreclosure? Has it gone to sale yet?"

"A copy of the judgment would be there if the property had gone to sale."

"Very true."

Quackenbush flipped the slips over with his pencil end to learn how the title to the garden wall had remained in the Lodewyks.

He discovered that Silas Lodewyk in conveying the property between the house and the wall had bounded his description "by the west side of the garden wall." And in conveying the property lying between the wall and Broadway he had bounded the description on the west "by the east side of the wall." This very natural piece of inadvertance had resulted in leaving in himself the title to the narrow strip of land on which the garden wall stood. Like mistakes in conveyancing are frequently found in old deeds made when property on Manhattan was of comparatively little value.

Of course, there was no intrinsic value in the two-foot strip. It could be put to no practical use.

He looked at the wall that evening as he walked down Sixtieth Street on his way home. There it stood, hugged on either side by the foundations of the adjoining buildings which rose high above it. A cat was walking down it, picking her way over a clutter of rubbish.

On the following morning he had to pack his grip hastily and start for West Virginia on a company matter. It had to do with an old foreclosure suit wherein the service on a junior lienor was defective. Quackenbush was to get a quitclaim in person. He was gone two weeks.

On returning to the city he resumed his investigation of the Lodewyk affair. He had not been out of touch with the ladies; he had written Sophia every day, inquiring solicitously for her mother's health and describing the people he was among and the mountain scenery. They were long letters about nothing in particular, and Sophia waylaid the postman for them every morning.

He decided to attack the wall from the side of the theatrical exit, which was a one-story affair. The expense involved would be small, involving a day's work for a laborer and a mason; he could venture it, being paid ninety dollars per week by the title company.

He saw the treasurer of the corporation which owned the theater.

"I'd rather you'd wait a few days," said the treasurer when Quackenbush declined to disclose the object of the work. "It isn't a very pressing matter, is it? The fact is that

the theater is under contract of sale, and I'd rather not disturb anything just now. We've signed a contract to sell and I'd prefer that you get permission from the new owner—the deed is to pass on Tuesday of next week."

"Who is the new owner?"

"Sorry," said the treasurer, with an apologetic shrug. "I've been requested not to tell. To be perfectly frank with you, I don't know. The contract was signed by a dummy in the office of the new owner's lawyer. As they didn't trust me, I will say that I think it is Keefe & Low, the theatrical syndicate. For their own reasons they don't want it known that the property is under contract—possibly they are planning their own publicity; I know you will respect my confidence, Mr. Quackenbush."

"Certainly. I will take the matter up with the new owner when the deed is put on record."

He went to see the owner of the tenement.

"Sorry," said that gentleman. "I'd like to oblige you, Mr. Quackenbush, but, you see, my house is under contract of sale. Yes, I've arranged to sell it, and I don't like to monkey with it, as I've made a pretty good deal and the other side might be glad of an excuse to throw the deal down. Why don't you get the permission of the buyer?"

"Who is he?"

"William A. Brown & Sons signed the contract. You must know them—that big real-estate firm on Cedar Street."

Quackenbush went over to Cedar Street and saw George Brown, one of the partners.

"Why, yes," said Brown, looking sharply at Quackenbush. "What do you want—the business of examining the title? We are having the title examined privately by our attorneys; sometimes your company springs a leak, and we don't want it known that we have bought the property. I trust that you'll keep it quiet, Quackenbush."

"Keep what quiet?" smiled the title examiner. He was well acquainted with the realtor. "You didn't buy that property for yourself. Who are you acting for, may I ask?"

"You may ask," said Brown, "and that's all the good it will do you. We're buying for ourselves—take my word for it."

"In anything but a real-estate deal," said Quackenbush. "Listen—I want permission to knock a hole in the cellar wall, so as to get at that wall between you and the theater. I'll fix everything up in good shape after me."

"What's the idea?"

"Buried treasure," said Quackenbush. "I trust you'll keep it quiet!"

"Keep what quiet?" grinned Brown. "You're a pretty good liar yourself. Buried treasure, eh? You can do it and welcome, if you'll wait until after next Wednesday, when we take the deed. But not just now I have no legal right to give you permission to do such a thing, and I'm playing this hand strictly according to Hoyle!"

There was a secret here, and secrets in the realty market have a hard-cash value at times, just as they have in Wall Street. He inquired among the brokers, gathering hints and rumors and suggestions without disclosing the cause of his curiosity.

On entering the Lodewyk home an evening following he was called into the living room. Mrs. Brenon and Sophia were there and were looking exceedingly worried.

"Here is a paper that came to-day," said Sophia.

Quackenbush looked it over. It ran:

> In reference to the real estate at the above address, occupied by you as monthly tenant, PLEASE TAKE NOTICE, that you are required to vacate and remove from the same on or before March 31st, 192— and deliver up possession to the undersigned, and in the event of you failing to do so a Summary Proceeding will be taken against you.
>
> (Signed).....

"It's from the landlord," said Sophia.

"It's a formal notice to quit," said Quackenbush.

"What can we do about it?"

"I'm afraid you can't do anything. If he wanted more rent he would have been around to see you. I'm afraid he is going to tear the house down and build; and he has a right to put you out for that purpose. I'm afraid that's what he intends to do."

"But we have no place to go!" cried Mrs. Brenon terrifiedly.

"Leave this with me," said Quackenbush with assumed confidence. "I'll take care of it."

"There!" exclaimed Sophia to her mother with shining face. "I told you Mr. Quackenbush would know what to do!"

He went to see the owner of the Lodewyk house. That gentleman agreed that it was very unfortunate for the ladies, but ex-

plained that he had sold the house and was obliged to deliver it with possession.

"Who is the new owner?" inquired Quackenbush. "Surely, if he has any humanity at all he won't do such a thing!"

"Sorry," said the landlord. "I can't give you any information about him. The contract was signed by a trust company, and I don't know which of their clients they are acting for."

"Then you propose to go ahead and dispossess these poor women?"

"What can I do about it?" said the landlord. "I have to keep my contract with the buyer!"

Meanwhile Quackenbush had put a laborer to work on the wall, cutting down into it with chisel and sledge and crow. It was an awkward method of attack, as the wall itself and the walls of the adjoining buildings were practically one mass of rock and concrete. The laborer did not have room to work efficiently but sat at his job, tapping and picking away. The hole he was cutting sank slowly. He had been instructed to cease work if he broke into a cavity and to call Quackenbush on the telephone at once.

He called Quackenbush on the Monday forenoon which followed the fruitless visit to the Lodewyk's landlord. Quackenbush hurried up to Sixtieth Street. The laborer was sitting on the curbstone of the gutter.

"I knock a hole in the wall!" he announced.

Quackenbush clambered to the top of the wall and walked along it to that point which was three hundred and four feet from the second Lodewyk pear tree. The laborer had cut away the wall to a depth of about four feet; a black hole through which a man might thrust his arm showed in the bottom of the excavation.

"Make it bigger," directed Quackenbush. "Break it down all around with your sledge. Don't fall into it, as I don't know how far you may go before fetching up!"

The laborer pounded methodically on the rock, which broke down in chunks, falling into the pit beneath. The cavity in the wall was of small capacity; the débris could be seen a few inches beneath the bottom of the excavation.

"That will do," said Quackenbush. "Five days is right, isn't it? Here you are!"

The laborer took his pay, nodded, grunted, and plodded off to the street with his tools over his shoulder. He was not curious in the least as to the reason for his work. He jumped down to the pavement and turned his face toward his next job without so much as a glance behind him.

Quackenbush lowered himself into the excavation and proceeded to lift the fallen rock from the pit. He firmly believed that he was making a fool of himself and trusted that he would not be interrupted. This feeling, which attacks all treasure seekers at times, may serve to explain why most seekers for lost treasure practice their art on desert islands or in howling wildernesses where no unsympathetic persons are by to stand around and grin.

And then he saw something in the pit. He threw up the shattered rock like an anteater going to earth. It was—it was the top of a chest, a veritable iron-bound coffer, a strong box! At such a moment—ah, rare and infrequent moment!—what would not the erstwhile shy treasure seeker give to have his friends and confidants about him, that he might loll out his tongue and flaunt it in their suddenly sobered faces!

Quackenbush stretched down and lifted the box from the pit. The box had stood on end in the cavity; it was a foot square on the bottom and seven inches high. He raised it to his shoulder, and sidled out into Sixtieth Street. He let himself into the house, and climbed the stairs to his room.

He closed the door, and set the box on the floor. He had decided to open it before informing the ladies of his find. They were in great trouble and the disappointment would be of the cruelest if the chest contained nothing valuable. He took the hammer and screw driver with which he had operated on the fireplace and broke the lock. It was brass but it was completely oxidized by its many years in the wall.

He raised the lid. The chest was tightly packed with paper currency. He struck out its side feverishly and seized one of the bundles. He broke the band which held the sheaf together and held one of the notes before his starting eyes.

It was a hundred-dollar bill. He dropped it and plunged his hands back into the chest. He pulled the contents out upon the floor, clawing at the bundles in a fever of excitement. He broke into the several sheaves, reckoning their totals. The amount was staggering. The total was eighteen hundred thousand dollars.

He picked out a crisp hundred-dollar note, folded it neatly, and slipped it into his waistcoat pocket. He packed the money back into the broken chest and placed it in a clothespress. He locked the door of the press, saw to the lock on the window, and then left the room, carefully locking its door behind him. Then he walked downstairs and stumbled into the living room, into the presence of Mrs. Brenon and Sophia.

"Are you ill?" exclaimed Mrs. Brenon.

He pulled himself together, mumbled an excuse, and spoke to Sophia.

"A very important matter of business," he said. "Can you come downtown with me at once? The business concerns you and your mother. It is already eleven o'clock and we must start immediately!"

"Certainly, Sophy," said Mrs. Brenon. "Go with Mr. Quackenbush."

"I will get a cab," said Quackenbush, leaving the room.

He hurried to Broadway, hailed a passing taxi, and rode back to the house. Sophia emerged and entered the cab.

"What is it about?" she asked.

"I am taking you to an auction," he replied, quite himself again. "I would have prepared you for it but, unfortunately, I did not learn of it until this very morning while I was downtown."

"I love auctions!" cried Sophia. "I'm so glad! Are we going to buy anything?"

"I hope not," said Quackenbush.

"What a queer thing to say! And what are we stopping here for?"

"This is my bank," said Quackenbush, alighting. "I must get some money in the event that we have the bad luck to buy anything!"

"Vesey Street!" he cried to the driver, springing back into the cab.

The cab swung out into the current of traffic on Broadway and headed south. It was making all possible speed but to Quackenbush it seemed to creep. He fidgeted about on the seat when the traffic officers halted them at the main crosstown streets. At last it passed Chambers Street and rolled along beside City Hall Park. It turned into Vesey Street and pulled up before the auction rooms.

"How queer!" commented Sophia. "I never saw such an auction before. There is such a crowd of men here and there are not any women! And where are the things they are going to sell?"

"They can't bring them in here," chuckled Quackenbush nervously. "The stuff they sell is too big and heavy!"

He walked with her to a place before one of the stands.

"It's to be sold here," he said. "Listen, Miss Brenon. You are to do the bidding, as I don't want to appear in the matter. It would not look well for me to take part, as I am an employee of the principal title company of the city and it might be suspected that I was using information which had come to me in the course of my duties. Such is not the case, but it is just as well to avoid talk."

"What am I to bid on?"

"Keep your eyes on me, but try not to attract attention to me. I will stand on the platform over there in the window and when I nod to you it is to tell you to bid on the parcel which is then on the block. Stand here, so that you will be facing the window. Other people will bid against you; so soon as they stop and the auctioneer raises his hammer, you raise the bid one hundred dollars! Have you got that quite clearly?"

"I understand," said Sophia eagerly. "But don't I ever stop?"

"Yes," said Quackenbush. "You stop bidding when I take my hat off!"

And grasping his derby with both hands he pulled it down hard on his head. He smiled encouragingly at her and strolled away to the window looking into Vesey Street.

The huge room had filled up with men, drifted in from the groups on the pavements outside. They were mostly a pallid and hard-faced breed with alert eyes, a gambling type. Among them was a sprinkling of lawyers, brief cases in hand.

Auctioneers mounted to the rostrums of several of the stands about the walls. They glanced at their watches, leaned on their desks, and conversed familiarly with acquaintances on the floor below them.

A whistle blew somewhere. It was twelve o'clock noon.

The clerks of the auctioneers handed to their masters the printed descriptions of the properties to be sold and the terms of sale and the auctioneers began reading. They read in level monotones and all at the same time, so that a listener could catch a phrase only here and there. But the crowd on the

floor were not listening; they were talking among themselves quite as loudly as were the auctioneers.

The fat man with the derby rim resting on the back of his neck who presided over Sophia's stand finished his ritual.

"What am I bid?" he cried.

Sophia was watching Quackenbush. That young man was looking out into Vesey Street.

Two bids were made.

"Going—going!" cried the auctioneer. He dropped his hammer, and several of his audience turned and walked out of the room. It had been a cut-and-dried proceeding.

The fat man on the rostrum spat behind him, shifted his hard hat, and picked up another lengthy document. He began to read:

"Foreclosure of tax lien——"

Quackenbush turned around.

"What are you selling?" asked one of the gamblers on the floor, pricking up his ears. The auctioneer had mumbled something about three hundred-odd dollars being the amount of the lien. "Are you selling the tax lien?"

"No, sir, I am not," said the fat man, raising his eyes from the document. "The tax lien was sold six months ago, and it is now being foreclosed for nonpayment of interest. I'm selling the property!"

He resumed his mumbled reading:

"——all that certain lot, piece, or parcel of land situate, lying and being in the Borough of Manhattan, City, County and State of New York, and being more particularly bounded and described as follows. [*Ahem!*] Beginning at a point on the northerly side of Sixtieth Street, distant westerly from the corner formed by the intersection of said northerly side of Sixtieth Street, and the westerly side——"

Quackenbush held Sophia's eyes. He nodded vigorously. The auctioneer mumbled on:

"——two feet, thence southerly in a straight line one hundred and seventy-three feet to a point on the northerly side of Sixtieth Street distant two feet from the place of beginning, and thence easterly and along said northerly side of Sixtieth Street two feet to the point or place of beginning!"

He mumbled through the terms of sale and stopped.

"What am I bid?"

"Six hundred and forty-two dollars and fifteen cents," said a man with a brief case, glancing at a slip of paper. He was the attorney for the lienor and he was bidding the amount of the lien, plus interest costs and disbursements.

"Seven hundred and forty-two dollars and fifteen cents!" said Sophia in a small and throaty voice.

"Eight hundred dollars!" bid a gambler on a chance that there might be something in it.

"Eight hundred dollars," said the fat man on the rostrum. "Only eight hundred dollars for this fine piece of property in the heart of the automobile zone. Only eight hundred dollars. *Going!* Worth two thousand of anybody's money. Are you all through?"

"Nine hundred dollars!" cried Sophia. She had found her voice and felt quite at ease, now that she had made the plunge.

"Nine hundred dollars—nine hundred—for this fine two-thousand-dollar piece of property. *Going!* Are you all through?"

He raised his hammer.

Sophia was watching Quackenbush. She was gleefully awaiting the crash of the mallet on the desk, but Quackenbush had turned pale. Eagerly his eyes searched the crowd in front of the stand.

"Going! Last warning! All through?"

"One thousand dollars," said a quiet voice.

"Eleven hundred," bid Sophia.

She turned to look at the last bidder. He was a slim man of middle age, with bold and prominent eyes which looked very shrewdly but not unkindly into Sophia's.

"Fifteen hundred," he said gently.

"Sixteen hundred!"

"Two thousand," said the slim gentleman, wetting his lips.

"Two thousand and one hundred dollars!" cried Sophia. She watched Quackenbush. He seized his hat with both hands again and pulled down on it with all his strength.

"Two thousand one hundred," said the auctioneer. "Are you all done? *Going!* I'm bid two thousand one hundred dollars for this fine piece of property in the heart of the automobile district that's worth *three thousand dollars* of anybody's money!"

"Five thousand dollars," said the slim gentleman.

"And one hundred?" urged the auctioneer to Sophia.

She nodded.

"And one hundred! And one hundred!

Five thousand and one hundred dollars for this truly magnificent property. Are you all done?"

"Ten thousand dollars," said the slim man in a half whisper.

"Ten thousand and one hundred!" announced the auctioneer after he had received another nod from Sophia.

The slim man spoke to a companion and then turned about and walked to a telephone booth. The bidding slowed down. The companion raised Sophia one hundred dollars at a time, procrastinating as much as possible.

The bid was ten thousand eight hundred when the slim man returned. The light of battle was in his eye.

"Whose bid is it, Mr. Auctioneer?"

"The young lady's."

"Twenty thousand dollars," said the slim man. And he looked at his feminine antagonist with a smile.

"Twenty thousand and one hundred," said Sophia after a glance at the figure in the window.

The other sales of the day were done; the battle over the two-foot strip on Sixtieth Street held the stage. Most of the spectators were auction-room habitués, men who frequented the place as a business in the hope of "stealing" something—that is to say, hoping to snap up a bargain. Some of them had plenty of money at command and were in a position to bid a million dollars on a moment's notice. Every now and then gentlemen of this fraternity appear in the supreme court as plaintiffs in actions for specific performance when they have bid in a property for a tenth of its value and the owner refuses to convey. Every now and then, but less frequently, they are beautifully burned.

Now they stood around like wolves watching meat in a trap. They longed to spring in and snap up this morsel, but they didn't dare; they feared a trap.

"What are you selling, anyhow?" whimpered the gambler who had bid eight hundred dollars just for luck.

"You heard me," said the auctioneer.

"I heard you, but I don't believe you. What can a man do with two feet?"

"Take a walk," suggested the fat man. "*Going!* At only twenty thousand one hundred! Are you all done?"

"Thirty thousand dollars," offered the slim man.

"*And* one hundred?" begged the auctioneer of Sophia. He hung over the desk and spoke in a wheedling tone. "*And* one hundred?"

He smiled at her, nodding his head as though he were trying to catch hers and draw it down. "*And* one hundred? Have I got it? Have I got it? *Going!*"

"Yes!" cried Sophia. Her cheeks were crimson and her eyes were shining.

The fat man straightened up.

"And one hundred! Thirty thousand and one hundred dollars! One of the finest sites in the whole city of New York! Worth a hundred thousand dollars—of anybody's money! Buy this property and they won't let you out of here alive—they'll take it off you at your own price! What do you say? Get in on this, you sure-thing speculators—you'll feel sick when you read about it in the papers to-morrow morning. Mark my words! Somebody *wants* this property. Buy it and give it to him right! Thirty thousand *and* one hundred dollars. *Going!*"

He leaned down to coax the slim man.

"Are you all through? Honest? You want me to knock it down? Whatever you say." He raised his hammer and continued looking at Sophia's opponent with a most willing and obliging air.

The slim gentleman turned his back on the auction stand and conversed with his companion. They seemed to have dismissed the business from their minds. They laughed together, nodded, shrugged their shoulders; an onlooker might gather the impression that the slim gentleman would be surprised and apologetic if some one tapped him on the shoulder and reminded him that he was standing in an auction room and that the auctioneer was waiting for his final word with uplifted hammer. But for all their apparent detachment neither the bidder nor his friend spoke above the slightest of whispers.

The slim man turned around.

He looked at Sophia very soberly.

"Fifty thousand dollars!" he said, in a hard and clear voice.

"Fifty thousand dollars!" cried the auctioneer. "Can I get sixty? Can I get fifty-five? Can I get——" He smiled pleadingly at Sophia. "Don't let him have it, lady. What's a hundred dollars? Have I got it? Have I got it?"

But tears were standing in Sophia's eyes and she shook her head. She was beaten;

her great effort had gone for nothing. For in the window stood Quackenbush mopping his forehead and holding his hat in his hand.

He walked out of the room. With a short choking sob Sophia bent her head and followed after him. As she got to the door she heard the crash of the fat man's hammer on his desk.

"Sold for fifty thousand dollars!"

Quackenbush was waiting for her on the street. They walked together to Broadway. Below her she saw the clock in the tower of old Trinity on Rector Street. The time was sixteen minutes after twelve.

"Let's go over to Greene's on Fulton Street!" cried Quackenbush gayly. "It's the best place downtown, but it's not good enough for us to-day! You did it marvelously—marvelously! I think you got his last dollar!"

"Oh, no, indeed," said Sophia. "I got nothing at all. That horrid man with the big eyes bought the property after I bid all that terrible amount of money. It seemed so silly to be bidding that much money that I was afraid to walk away and had to just keep going on with it!"

"He's welcome to the property," laughed Quackenbush. "He paid for it and it wasn't worth a hundred dollars to anybody else. You understand that the property was yours, don't you—that is to say, your mother's? And you understand that the thin gentleman—his name is Bickerstaff—has agreed to pay you fifty thousand dollars for it?"

"Oh!" gasped Sophia. "And do we get that money?"

"After the expenses are paid. They'll be less than a thousand dollars, including the order on the city chamberlain for the surplus moneys."

Over the luncheon he told her about the garden wall and how it came to remain in the ownership of the Lodewyk family.

"But what does he want with it? It's perfectly lovely of him and all that, but what good is it to him?"

"That's the secret of Sixtieth Street that I succeeded finally in uncovering.

"I found when inquiring of the various owners of the different lots and parcels in your block that they were all under contract of sale. The buyers were different, but it was very queer that they should all have bought at the same time and all have enjoined the sellers to strict secrecy. Nothing of it appeared in the news, as contracts are not recorded. I decided that there was a single buyer back of all these middlemen! That much was almost sufficient, but when I discovered that the various trails led back toward the offices of the Motor Company of America I knew that your two-foot strip was worth real money. It was the one piece they had not secured and it cut their holdings fairly in two. The only question was the amount they could afford to pay for it rather than abandon their project to erect a twenty-story building on the accumulated site."

"It seems mean to make them pay so much when the little strip of land was not worth anything to us," demurred Sophia.

"It seemed rather mean when you got that notice to quit the other day, didn't it? They're the people who had that served on you. I calculated that they were paying about two million dollars for the properties they had under contract. They could afford another fifty thousand. We might have gotten more, but I was afraid to overreach."

"But however did you come to learn about these things?"

Quackenbush studied the cloth for a moment in silence.

"You recall telling me something about your great-grandfather, Silas Lodewyk? Well, I ran across the track of this thing while looking for your great-grandfather's buried treasure."

"And did you find anything?"

"I did," said Quackenbush gravely. "Tell me, Miss Brenon, would it hurt you to hear some plain truth about Silas Lodewyk?"

"If you are asking me if I would be surprised to hear unpleasant tidings of him," said Sophia, "I confess I would not. Some very unpleasant things were said of him during the last years of his life and we have always suspected that they were only too true. I wish you would tell me what you discovered."

He told her of finding the memorandum book in the old fireplace and of his finding the chest in the wall.

"And in it was currency of a face value of eighteen hundred thousand dollars," he said.

He thrust his fingers into his waistcoat pocket and took out the hundred-dollar bill which came from the chest.

She opened it out. Here is a transcript of the face of the note:

100 100

Six months after the ratification of a Treaty of Peace between the Confederate States and the United States, the

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA

No. 7645 A will pay No. 7645 A

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS

to bearer

with interest at two cents per day.

Richmond, June 18th, 1862.

R. D. Dillon, for Register. *H. Neftie,* for Treasurer.

C.

"Confederate money!" she exclaimed, flushing.

"Confederate money," he bowed. "Silas Lodewyk was engaged in blockade running during the Civil War. He also did some privateering on Northern commerce, but he evidently put the winnings from that source back into his blockade runners. He received his pay for his treason in Confederate money and he blew his brains out when Lee surrendered."

"I am ashamed," she whispered.

"Nonsense!" he said hearteningly. "We're all Americans now, and we're all proud of the fight the South put up against impossible odds. Of course, the case of Silas Lodewyk was somewhat different; but still——"

He looked at her bowed head.

"I am the only outsider who knows this family secret."

His hand stole over and covered hers. She lifted her brown head and looked at him, kindly and without shrinking from his touch.

"Wouldn't it be better to have it *altogether* in the family—Sophia?"

"The Circus of Senhor Ribeiro," by Mr. McMorrow appears in the next issue.

SILENCING THE COURT

A COLORED woman was being tried by a Southern judge for having mercilessly beaten her son, a yellow boy twelve years old.

"But, Mandy," expostulated the judge, "I don't see how you could have the heart to beat up your own child the way they say you did."

"Look hyuh, jedge!" retorted the woman with fine scorn. "Is you ebber been de parent uv a yaller boy like dat?"

"No! Never!" thundered the judge.

"Den don't talk," said the woman.

TAKING NO CHANCES

IT was in one of the cloakrooms of the United States Senate. Mr. Sheppard, a Democrat from Texas, had just predicted the glorious revivification of his party in the next elections. Mr. Curtis, a Republican from Kansas, was contending that the best thing for the country and the world would be to leave the minority party in what he described as its "present dead condition." He argued that Mr. Sheppard would do well to imitate the husband of a very peculiar woman.

This woman had died, had been placed in her coffin, her funeral sermon preached and the coffin had been put into the hearse which was conveying the remains to their last resting place. Near the cemetery the hearse horses bolted; the hearse, careening from side to side, struck one of the graveyard gateposts; the casket was thrown out and its top was knocked off, as a result of which the woman, who had been in a deep trance, was jolted back to life. There followed much rejoicing.

Two years later the woman died again. This time the bereaved husband, resolving to take no chances, mounted to the driver's box of the hearse and sat beside the driver. As the cavalcade approached the cemetery the anxious mourner instructed the driver:

"Whatever you do, don't hit that gatepost!"

Bright Roads of Adventure

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "First Down, Kentucky!" "Eyes in the Boat, Number Six!" Etc.

Obviously Seibold's was the sensible procedure on that ship in Havana harbor. "This, I presume," observes Mr. Paine, "is why Ralph Paine decided to try something else."

X.—JAILED WITH EVERY COURTESY

IT has been said, and without much exaggeration, that the American army captured Santiago with its bare hands. A democracy is always unready for war and the men in the ranks pay with their lives the bitter price of the ineptitude of bureaucrats and the ignorance of politicians. After three months for preparation the resources of a mighty nation were able to send to Cuba a force of 15,000 men, mostly regulars, who fought without proper food or clothing or arms, whose wounded died of neglect and whose regiments rotted with fever because they lacked the most obvious and elementary details of equipment and organization.

Their dead and wounded strewed the jungle trails and littered the slopes of San Juan Hill and the defenses of El Caney, but they rushed on like a torrent and compelled the surrender of a Spanish army vastly superior in numbers. And on that unforgetable Sunday morning of July 3d, Admiral Cervera's cruisers had steamed gallantly out to be smashed and sunk and driven ashore by the guns of Sampson's ships. Thus ended almost four centuries of Spanish dominion over the storied city of Santiago de Cuba in whose gray cathedral were entombed the bones of the conqueror of the island, Diego Velazquez, and from whose land-locked harbor had sailed the great galleons of Hernan Cortes and Pamfilo de Narvaez in quest of the gold of Mexico and Peru, a hundred years before the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock.

Ah, but this old and famous city of Santiago was a place of wretched misery when the first American cavalrymen rode into its cobbled streets and stared with curious eyes. Thousands of people, the women and the little children, had streamed out into the country during the bombardment by the American fleet. They had found neither food nor shelter, for the region had been swept bare by the Cuban insurgents. These pitiable refugees died like flies and when the survivors returned to the city they were so much fuel for the yellow fever and smallpox to feed upon. Dead bodies lay in the city streets and vultures tore them. Gaunt men and women stretched skinny arms from the windows and feebly begged the American soldiers for bread.

It was then that Brigadier General Leonard Wood, late colonel of the Rough Riders, first displayed his splendid talent as an administrator. He was the government of Santiago, physician, soldier, statesman. The man and the opportunity were fused in an extraordinary accomplishment. Famine vanished. The streets were cleaned of their unspeakable filth. The dead were heaped like cordwood and burned with barrels of kerosene. There was work and wages for the able-bodied. Out of a chaos noisome and sorrowful and hopeless, order began to appear within forty-eight hours. Leonard Wood was the salvation of Santiago.

I recall meeting him in the Venus Restaurant, shortly after he had undertaken this task. The luncheon menu consisted of horse meat stewed with onions, at five dollars a plate. Leonard Wood and General Henry W. Lawton sat at a table together, two tall, keen-eyed, square-jawed men of the blond Anglo-Saxon strain, born leaders who had proven themselves in the ordeal of battle. They were two of a kind. Of Lawton's division at El Caney, a Spanish staff officer had said:

"I have never seen anything to equal the courage and dash of those Americans who, stripped to the waist, offering their naked bodies to our murderous fire, literally threw themselves on our trenches—on the very muzzles of our guns. We had the advan-

tage of position and mowed them down by hundreds; but they never retreated or fell back an inch. As one man fell, shot through the heart, another would take his place with grim determination and unflinching devotion to duty in every line of his face."

There was a singular contrast between this glimpse of Wood and Lawton and a scene at the ancient stone palace of the Spanish governor on the plaza, a contrast and a scene almost incredible. It was a ceremonial occasion of striking significance, the formal occupation of Santiago by the American army and the display of the Stars and Stripes above the palace as a symbol thereof. Staff officers and foreign military attachés surrounded General Shafter. An escort of troops paraded. A regimental band played. The civilian populace looked on.

For some inscrutable reason correspondents were told to remain severely in the background, but upon the roof of the palace, beside the flagpole, there appeared the active, compact figure of the incomparable Sylvester Scovel, special commissioner of the New York *World*. His hand grasped the halyards of the flag. At this spectacular moment in the histories of Spain and the United States what was more natural and to be expected than that Scovel should be in the center of the stage?

This was journalism as his career had interpreted it. He had a flamboyant audacity that would have made him a dazzling motion-picture hero. There was only one Sylvester Scovel.

Behold him then, defying martial edict, conspicuous upon the hoary palace roof, ready to assist in hoisting the American flag, while the commanding general and his staff glared in blank amazement. Scovel was told to come down. He paid no attention. The rude hands of soldiers pulled him down. He was tremendously indignant. The affront was unpardonable. To General Shafter himself he rushed to argue the matter—this interference, this insult to the New York *World*.

The corpulent General Shafter had suffered much in Cuba and his temper was never amiable nor his language colorless. He swore at Sylvester Scovel and told him to shut up or be locked up. The words were violent and provocative. They made it a personal quarrel between the general and the offending correspondent. Quick to resent the epithets, Sylvester Scovel swung his good right arm and attempted to knock the head off the major general commanding the American army in Cuba.

It was a flurried blow, without much science behind it, and Scovel's fist glanced off the general's double chin, but it left a mark there, a red scratch visible for some days. Then, indeed, was the militant young journalist hustled away and locked up. It was an incident of war without precedent.

This was a strange climax of the luckless career of General Shafter in the field, and yet perhaps this ridiculous assault expressed a sentiment which had spread through the army. It was reflected in such an indictment as that of Richard Harding Davis, a competent observer, who said:

> A man who could not survive a ride of three miles on horseback when his men were tramping many miles on foot with packs and arms under a tropical sun; who was so occupied and concerned with a gouty foot that he could not consider a plan of battle and who sent seven thousand men down a trail he had never seen, should resist the temptation to accept responsibilities his political friends thrust upon him—responsibilities he knows he cannot bear. This is the offense I impute to Shafter, that while he was not even able to rise and look at the city he had been sent to capture he still clung to his authority. His self-complacency was so great that in spite of blunder after blunder, folly after folly and mistake upon mistake he still believed himself infallible, still bullied his inferior officers and still cursed from his cot.

Well, the self-complacency of General Shafter had been jarred for once and there was a red mark on his chin to prove it. A day after the event I met Louis Seibold, in charge of the *World* service, in the entrance hall of the governor's palace. Quiet, self-contained, never exploiting himself, it may be imagined that Seibold was not wholly in sympathy with the latest adventure of Sylvester Scovel. But it was his duty to see what could be done for the fellow member of the *World* staff who was a prisoner in the guardroom of the palace.

"I saw Scovel just now," said Seibold. "This is the first time he was ever really worried. He knows he would be shot in any country with a military system. Shafter cussed him and he couldn't stand for it, so he hit him. Scovel is in no mood to apologize. I am going in to talk to the old man. Want to come along?"

"It will do no good to have me shove into the interview with Shafter," said I. "I'll stand by and wait for you, Louis."

It was a picture to linger in mind as perceived through the open door of the stately room in which Spanish governors had held their stern and autocratic sway, the great bulk of Shafter overflowing a carven chair, his voice booming angrily, his pudgy finger straying to that red scratch on his chin and Seibold engaged in courteous expostulation and holding his temper perfectly in hand. Now and then the general's remarks could be heard.

"Of course he ought to be shot, damn it! He ought to have been shot down in his tracks. But the people at home think that war is a pink tea party. You know they do! It would kick up an infernal rumpus—the war is about over. Yes, you can cable that he won't be shot."

Seibold came out rather warm and said:

"The old man thinks Scovel is crazy. I don't know about that. Deportation will be the sentence. Put him on a ship and send him home. And that is a whole lot better than I expected. Now if some bright young correspondent had punched the jaw of the commanding general of a French or German army in time of war—deported in a wooden box, eh?"

That torrid summer in Santiago was not always so diverting as this—Santiago with its stenches and its miseries, with its smallpox and yellow fever, and among the hills outside the city an American army waiting to be taken home, an army with half its men disabled by malarial fever and dysentery. Frequently Colonel Theodore Roosevelt came riding into town, long stirrups like a cow-puncher's, polka-dot handkerchief flapping from the back of his campaign hat, eyeglasses gleaming, flannel shirt and khaki breeches and only one idea in his head—to rustle supplies for *"my regiment!"* He raided the wharves, the ships, the warehouses, and loaded the stuff upon pack mules, into army wagons or native carts and boasted of his ability as a wholesale forager.

Red tape and regulations be hanged! *My regiment* needed some other food than pork and beans. It needed medical stores. And its colonel would get them, by the eternal, without waiting for a mare's nest of requisitions and indorsements. And to the end of his life he snapped it out with that proud, intense affection, *my regiment*, and no other honor of those great distinctions bestowed upon him was so close to his heart as the leadership of the Rough Riders.

There were only a few of us correspondents—most of them went to Porto Rico to join the troops of General Miles—and we found quarters in the old Spanish house, with its patio and galleries, of the Anglo-American Club where in the drowsy days of peace foreign merchants and shipping agents and sugar planters had played whist and solaced themselves with whisky and soda.

Colonel Roosevelt came striding into the club one morning with a mien uncommonly earnest and intense. He called the correspondents aside—I think there were four of us in the group—and pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket. It was the rough draft of a letter to the secretary of war and was the genesis of the famous "Round Robin," signed by the commanders of the fighting divisions and brigades, which was tossed into Washington like a bombshell and resulted in getting the army out of Cuba before fever obliterated it.

The letter was shown to this group in the club, not as to newspaper men but as to friends and gentlemen in confidence. It was not then ready for publication. Colonel Roosevelt wished to obtain other opinions than his own, explaining:

"What do you boys think of it? Have you any changes to suggest? It is a plain statement of fact. There is no more use for the army here and it is dying on its feet but the war department refuses to listen. A little longer and the camps will be swept by yellow fever. We must budge those old fossils in the swivel chairs somehow. How will the people take it? Will it alarm them and set the mothers to worrying about their boys?"

"What about Shafter?" asked one of the group.

"He is anxious to have such a protest sent and will be glad to sign it. As a volunteer officer I am willing to be the goat. If this stirs up a rumpus among the swivel chairs, the regular officers ought not to risk censure, if it can be helped."

This was always Theodore Roosevelt's way with newspaper men. He trusted and respected them then, as he did later in the White House, was ready to discuss affairs intimate and important and I am quite sure that his confidence was never betrayed. We read the letter and strongly approved of it. He thanked us and hastened off to consult with Leonard Wood. This letter together with one much like it, which was written

by General Ames, also a volunteer officer, were then given to General Shafter who permitted the Associated Press correspondent to cable them to the United States. They did, indeed, raise a rumpus among the fossils in the swivel chairs. Publication was what grieved these somnolent gentlemen most, a flagrant breach of army regulations, but it was vitally necessary to arouse public opinion even though the secretary of war, General Russell Alger, wailed loudly that "it would be impossible to exaggerate the mischievous and wicked effects of the 'Round Robin.' It affected the country with a plague of anguish and apprehension."

However, the country learned that the army, after a victorious campaign, was perishing of stupidity and neglect, and in no uncertain voice it demanded that the troops come out of Cuba. They began to move, promptly, as fast as the transports could be loaded in Santiago harbor. Louis Seibold and Ralph Paine decided to stay a little longer, for there were still stories to be gleaned in Santiago—such matters as the more than twenty thousand Spanish soldier prisoners to be transported to Spain, the American regiments stationed in the city and the pathetic efforts of the stricken community to recover from the stupor of disaster.

We happened to find another story and it was worth waiting for in this pesthole of Santiago. I was walking across the plaza when two young men stopped me to ask where they could find the headquarters of the Red Cross. One was an American, the other a Frenchman. They wore the faded, brown linen uniforms of Cuban insurgent officers with roughly woven straw hats and clumsy, dilapidated leather leggings, also made out in the "bush." They looked like men just out of a fever hospital. Their faces were drawn and pinched and sunburn could not hide the pallor of hunger and exhaustion.

As soon as it was discovered who they were and what errand had brought them to Santiago I took them to the Anglo-American Club for breakfast. In more than two years this was their first meal at a table with knives and forks, china and napkins. It affected them profoundly and they wept a little. The youthful American derelict was named Cox and his companion was Cathard. The spirit of adventure had led Cox to enlist under the Cuban flag in '96 and all this time he had been with the roving bands of General Garcia. His hardships had been continually much worse than those endured by the American troops for two months outside of Santiago.

For more than a year he had not had a cent of money in his pocket. His food and clothing he had to find for himself. He lived on mangoes, plantains and parched corn and sometimes these were unobtainable. Often he had no shoes and through the drenching summer rains he had lacked even a rubber blanket for shelter, sleeping in a hammock under a palm-leaf thatch. He had been ill for seven months with malarial fever, hidden away in a swamp and always in danger of being killed by Spanish guerrillas. There was no medicine, not even quinine.

The Cubans did nothing for him and would not even assist him to leave the island and go home. This had been the experience of other American adventurers with the insurgents. Young Cox was homesick, worn out, utterly despondent and expected to die in the bush, the *minigua*. In May he heard that the American soldiers were coming to Santiago. He began to dream of making the long journey of three hundred and thirty miles from his camp near Puerto Príncipe in the hope of finding his countrymen. The young Frenchman, Captain Cathard, was ready to join him. They had been bunkies for some time. Cox held a major's commission with the insurgents but nobody seemed to care a rap whether he lived or died.

The pair of them had three little raw-backed Cuban ponies in wretched condition. The preparations for the march were not at all elaborate. A couple of woven-grass blankets were thrown across one of the ponies. There was no other bedding to pack. The only cooking utensil was an iron pot. For rations they must forage or beg from friendly country people. Thus equipped, with two hardy Cuban soldiers as servants or "strikers," Cox and Cathard set out to reach distant Santiago through a country made perilous by Spanish troops. A hundred miles of the route lay across the mountains of Puerto Príncipe, over rocky trails where riding was impossible. Then they descended into the plains and valleys where the ponies had to be pried out of sloughs that bogged them to the bellies.

Wet to the skin every day, shaking with fever, managing somehow to find enough to eat to hold body and soul together, the two

young men struggled on through the steaming heat which smote them like a bludgeon. They made wide detours around the towns and the Spanish garrisons and the fear of violent death was never absent. They were twenty-eight days on the march, a journey which would have sorely tried an expedition equipped with a pack train and shelter tents and abundant supplies. They told their experiences in bits, in stumbling, halting fashion. Two years of it had frightfully aged young Cox. Sometimes his narrative wandered, like a man talking in his sleep.

We told him to take it easy and be comfortable. There would be no trouble about outfitting him and Captain Cathard with clothes and money and obtaining passage for them in a transport bound to God's country. But young Cox had not finished his story. His eyes filled at mention of a ship homeward-bound and he sat in a rapt, tense silence when a steamer's whistle bellowed hoarsely from the harborside with its magical suggestion of the open sea and the long trail.

Then he resumed talking in his listless, broken manner which was as eloquent and moving as the words he said. He had no idea of going home from Santiago—we had misunderstood him—that wasn't his reason for making the hard march from Puerto Príncipe. Of course he was terribly homesick—but he had left a friend way back there in the bush, a fellow named De Vinne—he came from Kansas City—and they had been through some pretty rotten campaigns together. De Vinne had been shot through the hip six months ago by a Mauser bullet—got caught in a Spanish ambuscade.

The bone was shattered and had refused to heal—and poor old De Vinne had been spraddled out all this time—hidden in a palm shack in the woods near Puerto Príncipe. What he needed was good food and dressings and medicine to give him some strength and sort of build him up—then there might be a chance of moving him to the coast.

"So I thought the Red Cross people might give us some stuff to pack on the ponies and we'd hike back with it," said Cox. "If we don't, there's no chance for De Vinne."

Young Captain Cathard, a Frenchman with gentle manners and a wistful smile, a soldier of fortune of the type you will occasionally find in the Foreign Legion, was heard to murmur like an echo:

"What else would you, gentlemen? Forsake a wounded comrade? It is not done. You understand."

"Well, we couldn't go back on a pal," awkwardly resumed Cox. "Anyhow, I guess I'll ramble down to the wharf after a while, just to see the ships. Gee, but it's good to hear Americans talk. All I've heard in the bush was Spanish. I sort of forgot how to sling my own language."

A commonplace lad was Cox, to look at him, and in a crowd you would never have picked him for a hero. But he inspired an immense respect and admiration. He found himself shaking hands with American army officers as they strolled into the club—and they knew good men when they met them. Soon it became an ovation to the two forlorn pilgrims from the bush. Speedily it manifested itself in practical fashion.

Doctor Egan, chief surgeon of the Red Cross in Santiago, was delighted to supply all the medicines, surgical dressings, malted milk, chocolate, and so on that could be carried. New shoes, khaki clothes, flannel shirts, blankets, ponchos were furnished from the army quartermaster's stores. The three wretched ponies, nothing but skin and bone, were unfit to be used again. General Joseph Wheeler, commanding the cavalry division of the Fifth Corps—little "Fighting Joe" Wheeler, the gamecock of the Confederacy who now wore the blue as proudly as he had worn the gray—contributed a sleek, stout army mule, big enough to carry a rich cargo of supplies.

In the shops of Santiago food was held at exorbitant prices but there was plenty of coffee, sugar, canned goods, bacon and hard bread at the army commissary store. And we saw to it that oatmeal, canned soups and jellies were on the list for poor De Vinne, crippled and wasted in his shack and waiting for the pals who had refused to go back on him. Then the hat was passed and the gold pieces clinked into it merrily.

The two young men could not be persuaded to tarry long enough in Santiago to recruit their strength, so eager were they to undertake that arduous march back to Puerto Príncipe. They bought fresh Cuban ponies and one morning the cavalcade clattered down a narrow street, the big mule in the lead with a veritable mountain of stuff packed upon its broad back. All that could be seen of the ponies were their heads and their tails. The grass-woven baskets slung

across them were large enough to hold as much as half a dozen saddlebags. Cox and Cathard trudged cheerfully in sturdy army shoes and behind them came the two Cuban strikers, also well clad and in the most exuberant spirits.

Yet, even at the best, it was a pathetic departure when the young men turned their backs on the shipping in the harbor, with the troops cheering madly and the regimental bands playing "Home Again, Home Again, From a Foreign Shore." It seemed like a forlorn hope, this toilsome journey of three hundred and thirty miles, with the fever and the jungle and the blazing heat—and their comrade De Vinne perhaps dead ere they reached him. And how young Cox did yearn to go home! The dumb hunger of it was written on his face. But in his soul was something more compelling—that divine spark called duty which lights the humblest shrines.

General Adna R. Chaffee, as fine a soldier as could be found in that splendid little regular army, one of the conspicuously gallant brigade commanders in the battle of Santiago, had displayed a lively interest in these two heroic young men. They gave him food for thought and after they had gone he sat meditating at a table in the club. Then he looked up to say, with a quizzical smile on his bronzed, resolute features:

"If I had been in their place, after getting this far, and I heard a transport blow her whistle—well, boys, I don't know but what I might have weakened. There is more than one kind of courage. That was twenty-four carat, the real thing."

After a while Seibold and I began to discuss attempting to reach Havana. It might be a sealed port to Americans, we surmised, but the chance seemed worth taking. Technically a state of war still existed. An armistice was in force as defined by the terms of the protocol or preliminary articles of surrender and negotiation and the Spanish flag still floated over Havana and a Spanish governor ruled undisturbed. That American visitors would be welcomed with open arms appeared unlikely, what with the graves of those thousands of Spanish soldiers so freshly dug on the battlefield of Santiago and Cervera's shattered cruisers rusting on the beach.

But there would be something to write about in Havana, this large and stately city, the capital of the island, which had been closely blockaded for three months, during which time no American correspondent had been able to enter it. How had the population fared during this long period of deprivation, shut in by sea and denied access to food supplies inland by the ravaging bands of Cuban insurgents? Havana had the elements of attractive mystery.

How could we get there? For lack of a railway the overland journey was impossible. By sea no steamers plied up and down the coast. Havana was isolated and remote from Santiago. However, there wandered one day into the harbor a rusty, wall-sided, disreputable little Norwegian tramp in quest of coal for her bunkers. She was a sort of salt-water orphan with no place to go. Formerly in the live-cattle trade between Cuba and Florida, she was poking about to take a look at the situation now that active hostilities had ceased. The skipper was of a mind to jog along to Havana on the chance of picking up a few stray dollars.

He was a leathery, brine-pickled curmudgeon of a Norwegian mariner with a heart hard as flint. A regular old sundowner! Passengers? He never bothered with 'em. They were a nuisance. He had no accommodations. A lengthy parley and he consented to take the two correspondents aboard—as so much freight, mind you. He would give them nothing to eat, not even drinking water, and they could sleep on the soft side of a plank. He treated the live cattle better than this, but why be captious? The dirty little hooker was bound to Havana. This was the point. Incidentally this thrifty Scandinavian demanded passage money on the scale of a first-class liner with an orchestra and your own bath. He needed funds.

It was necessary to ration ourselves for the voyage. Canned meat was obtained from the army commissary, roast beef and corned beef. Unfortunately this was the kind of meat which later became a national scandal as "embalmed beef" upon which the American army in Cuba had been compelled to subsist. An official investigation whitewashed the packing-house interests responsible for this sordid business. These patriots should have been thrust into cells and compelled to live on the wretched stuff.

Other canned provender was hastily gathered in the shops of Santiago, a variety curious and indigestible, plum pudding and *pâté de foie gras*, for instance, which nobody else

would buy. Our good friend, Julien Cendoya, agent of the Ward Line, contributed a demijohn of native rum. It was excess baggage, for only a man with a copper plumbing system could use it without risk of fatal corrosion. For Ralph Paine there was an errand to the Red Cross headquarters to beg clothing as a worthy person in great need.

This was the month of August and he had been afield and afloat since January with a wardrobe which had become extremely sketchy. It seemed, at last, to go all at once, like the famous one-horse shay. The Red Cross mercifully handed him a pair of cast-off golf breeches, fished out of a barrel. The pattern was a plaid check so blatant that you could hear it shriek. Between the baggy folds of the breeches and the tops of the battered riding boots there was a considerable gap. The effect was really odd. The decorous Louis Seibold swore when he beheld his shipmate.

The little tramp steamer moved out of Santiago harbor with her engines groaning and hammering. They were evidently unwell. It was inferred that sudden exertion might make her drop dead, like a person with a weak heart. At six knots she crawled along the coast, smelling like a cattle boat, while the two passengers looked for shady spots. There was no pity in the soul of that squarehead of a skipper. We did find a tiny spare stateroom filled with paint pots, cordage and other junk and cleared one bunk in spite of the mariner's sputtering protests. Thrice daily we chewed on the tasteless strings and shreds of embalmed beef, washed it down with tepid water and fought a round with a can of plum pudding, et cetera.

There was one sublime comfort and consolation. In the cool of the velvet nights, all spattered with stars, Seibold and Paine stretched themselves on deck and indulged in such beguiling fancies as these:

"And when we reach Havana, if we ever do, it's me for the Pasaje Café as fast as the *cochero* can whirl me from the Machina wharf. Then listen to me address the waiter —consommé, a bit of broiled pompano, a roast chicken, a mixed salad, iced sherbet, a melon, a bottle of Burgundy, real coffee, one of Señor Bock's well-known cigars. And after that a bed, with springs and sheets and two fat pillows!"

"Order the same for me, Louis, while I stop at the first gents' outfitters. I don't want to be thrown out of the Pasaje Café. These golf breeches have split already and the idea of making myself so conspicuous in Havana just now—it isn't tactful."

Early one morning the Norwegian tramp feebly kicked her way into Havana harbor and found a mooring buoy where she rode alone. The once busy port was almost bare of shipping, only a few Spanish steamers tied up in idleness and some small sailing craft. Above the muddy surface of the water rose the ghastly, twisted débris of the battleship *Maine,* now red with rust and infinitely tragic. Those dead bluejackets had been avenged.

The city of Havana, beautiful, foreign, picturesque, revealed itself as sloping from this water front. It conveyed visions of hotels, of the opera, of the band playing on the Prado, of the comforts and the luxuries which had been long denied the two unhappy correspondents who now gazed rapturously from the deck of that rotten little cattle boat. They had their luggage ready. One of them had yelled to harbor boatmen.

Then there came alongside a launch and out of it clambered a Spanish military officer in an ornate uniform. He was the chief of the harbor police, a man of frowning mien and peremptory speech. With a gesture he pinned the Norwegian skipper to the side of the deck house and demanded to know, in the name of the Twelve Apostles, what these *Americanos,* these detestable *correspondals,* were doing on board. The situation explained, the brass-bound dignitary declared himself in this wise:

"His excellency, the captain general, has given no permission for Americans to land. There has come no official decree from Madrid that the war is finished. Least of all does his excellency desire to admit correspondents to Havana. They were most troublesome and accursed nuisances before the war began. Therefore the captain general will not allow these two wretched Americanos to set foot in Havana. They will remain in this ship."

This was an edict so calamitous that you could have knocked us down with the smallest feather that ever sprouted on an incubator chicken. For much less strong men have burst into an agony of weeping. The chief of the harbor police twiddled his needle-pointed mustachios, turned on his heel and beckoned two swarthy *soldados* in uniforms of bedticking. They were sternly commanded to stand guard until further notice.

These were two sturdy Spanish privates of the harbor police and their swords had a nasty look. To assault and tie them up with lengths of a heaving line was dismissed as impracticable. A passing boatman was hailed and sent ashore to buy food but the thought of having it cooked in the ship's galley was very depressing. It was the cook's habit to serve at least one cockroach in every dish. He couldn't help it. They were too many for him. In this stagnant and breathless harbor, rank with sewage, the day dragged interminably for the prisoners aboard the cattle boat. They watched the cabs pass along the seaward boulevard. A flag above the distant roofs marked a large and comfortable hotel.

The two Spanish soldiers took their duties calmly. They slung their hammocks under the awning upon the bridge and took turns strolling about to scowl at the marooned and drooping correspondents. Louis Seibold perspired, brooding, in the bunk among the paint pots. He was never a loquacious man and just now his emotions were beyond words. In this emergency he could be trusted to employ an intelligence that was canny and diplomatic. If he had been able to speak Spanish well enough he would have whispered in the ear of the chief of the harbor police who, no doubt, had his price.

You could pretty well prognosticate what Seibold's strategy would be like—a dignified protest in writing to the Spanish government in Havana—the request for a personal interview—a cable to the state department in Washington—adroit manipulation all along the line—and ultimate success. This was, of course, the sensible procedure. This, I presume, is why Ralph Paine decided to attempt something else.

The opportunity was offered him during the afternoon. To the two Spanish soldiers had been freely given what was left of the embalmed beef and the untouched demijohn of Santiago rum. Possibly this was done with malice aforethought. If the beef didn't get them, the rum might. They had tough constitutions, those two peasant conscripts, and it was an enjoyable fête under the awning upon the bridge. After a time, however, they became afflicted with drowsiness. One rolled into his hammock, the other sat nodding, his back to a stanchion, his sword across his knees.

Louis Seibold still brooded in the bunk. The skipper and his crew were snoring—those of them that had not gone ashore to get drunk. The ship was wrapped in a profound peace. Ralph Paine wandered aft with no particular purpose in mind. Unfathomable ennui pressed down upon his soul. Presently a small rowboat moved out from the Regla shore of the harbor and skittered over the glassy surface like a lazy water bug. It was perceived that this craft would pass close to the stern of the Norwegian tramp. A black Cuban was at the oars. A tattered shirt hung in patches from his brawny shoulders.

I glanced forward. Not a soul of the ship's company was visible. The chart room and the wheelhouse intercepted the view of the two Spanish soldiers. Heaven had sent this chance to slide into Havana and explore the situation in person. It was forbidden, but perhaps one might learn something to his advantage.

There was no time to consult Seibold. I would return anon and tell him all about it. Warily crawling over the turtle back of the steamer I made eloquent signals to the black oarsman in the bathtub of a skiff. He changed his course, but hesitatingly, until his vision caught the glint of a Spanish gold piece. Then he almost broke his back in pulling close under the vessel's stern.

It was easy enough to descend by a handy rope. I plopped into the boat, almost upsetting it, and told the Cuban to row back for the Regla shore as he had come. This kept us astern of the steamer and hidden from the observation of the two Spanish soldiers at the forward end. There was no alarm. The ship still lay in a trance, like a man prostrated by heat. Soon it was possible to make a wide detour and pull for the Havana side of the harbor and a convenient wharf. Thus far the escape had been conducted with success. For an amateur fugitive from armed sentries you might say it was done with aplomb.

To the superficial eye the Havana streets appeared much as usual but after walking well into the city it was perceived that the shops did little business and the whole tone of things was pitched in a quiet, subdued key which conveyed an impression of melancholy. There was concrete manifestation of suffering in the masses of shabby people, black and white, in the poorer quarter of the city, who crowded to the public soup kitchens to be fed.

A clothing store supplied the errant correspondent with a white linen suit, underwear, socks, shirts, a Panama hat. Joyfully he flung away those fearful golf breeches which were like a public disturbance. Next he found a barber shop with a bathroom as an annex. He felt much more like looking Havana in the eye. He was ready to take it to pieces to see what made it tick.

Wandering into a café to order a frosty lemonade he encountered a group of Spanish army officers seated around a table. To the greeting, "*buenas dias, señores,*" they rose, bowed, and returned the salutation with grave politeness. Whatever hostility they felt toward this American visitor was masked by an inherent courtesy of demeanor, although he was of the race of the enemy, the first they had seen in Havana since that day when Fitzhugh Lee, the consul general, had pulled down the Stars and Stripes and made his exit as the final ceremony before the declaration of war.

Perhaps the people in the streets mistook the correspondent for an Englishman or a German. At any rate, there was no overt sign of resentment and he strolled into the fashionable avenue of the Prado with his feelings unruffled. It was odd to enter the Hotel Ingleterra and find it untenanted by Americans. Spanish officers loafed at the long windows or sipped their cognac in the large barroom or drove away in dilapidated little victorias. A glee club of students from the Havana University halted to sing "La Paloma" and collect money for the Spanish Red Cross.

American affairs were nominally in the hands of the British consulate and it seemed worth while to ask her majesty's representative to lay the case before the Spanish officials. There was no sensible reason why these two correspondents should be treated like criminals. It was a bootless errand to the consulate where a dapper secretary or something declared that it would serve me jolly well right to be thrown in prison, by Jove, for daring to show myself in Havana after being ordered to stay aboard the ship. And if I did get in trouble for it there would be no use in appealing to the British consulate and all that silly rot. There was not a tuppence worth of sympathy or humanity in this starched young diplomat, so I thanked him and gently faded out.

Until early evening I roamed about the city, finding many things to interest a journalist; and then came the supreme event, ordering such a dinner as had been dreamed of aboard the Norwegian tramp. In the best restaurants there was no specter of starvation. And yet it was not the happy event which had been anticipated. It didn't seem quite fair to my shipmate, Louis Seibold, still a captive among the smells and the cockroaches. And yet he would not have slid down that rope and eluded the Spanish soldiers had the chance been offered him. His dignity would have prevented, likewise his habit of looking before he leaped.

I lingered in the restaurant, inwardly debating the plight of Seibold, while a band played in the plaza near by. It was an alluring environment and the circumstances were romantic, leading one to forget the fact that he was a fugitive. Leisurely enjoying another cigar, I noticed by chance that two Spanish officers stood on the pavement just outside the open window with its iron grillwork. They gave me no concern, however, until they glanced in several times and conferred with their heads together. After some time they stalked into the restaurant and approached my table.

It was done with the utmost consideration. They had waited until the señor had finished his dinner. Urbane gentlemen, theirs was the unpleasant duty of placing the señor under arrest. He would be good enough to accompany them to the palace of the captain general in the Plaza de Armas. The senior officer displayed the slightest irritation only when he explained that he had pursued the American Señor Paine rapidly, from place to place, in Havana and, *Madre de Dios,* he had set them a pace of the swiftest.

The American señor expressed his deep regrets that he should have so disturbed the movements of the esteemed colonel of the military police.

Just between ourselves, although the American señor tried to carry it off with a grand manner, he was really shaking in his shoes.

In a party at another table in the restaurant was a most attractive girl, black-eyed, vivacious, a rose in her dusky hair. The American señor had found her exceedingly easy to look at. She was kind enough to feel for him in his plight. She talked excitedly in Spanish to her companions. There was sympathy in her frightened gaze. Alas, the tall young Americano was to be placed

in a dungeon of the Cabaña and shot at sunrise against the bullet-pitted wall in the dry moat. Thus it had befallen so many prisoners of the military police during the insurrection.

Her companions addressed her as Lolita. The American señor let a sad, grateful smile wander in her direction. *Adios, para siempre, la bella Lolita!* Farewell forever, beautiful Lolita! You made the situation a little easier to bear. Yes, it was a romantic episode.

The stately colonel and his aid conducted the señor to the pavement and invited him to enter a waiting *coche,* one of those innumerable rickety little victorias, drawn by two rats of ponies, which plied for hire. The American señor wrapped himself in a gloomy silence. He felt far from chatty. Louis Seibold had displayed sagacity, as usual, and Ralph Paine's procedure had been asinine, also as usual.

The sound of those words, "the palace of the captain general," was forbidding. They were too suggestive of the reign of Weyler the Butcher, with his lantern jaw and his mutton-chop whiskers. However, such contemplations were interrupted when the carriage drew up at the curb of the Hotel Ingleterra. The colonel asked the señor to alight. Needless to say, the señor offered no comment. The trio—one prisoner, two officers—walked into the hotel café and joined a group of five other Spanish military officers at a round table. The welcome was most cordial.

I maintain that this incident was extraordinary. The American fugitive who had led the colonel such a devil of a chase was introduced to these other officers as a friend, *mi amigo,* and not a hint was let fall that he was an enemy of Spain in a disgraceful fix. They begged him to be seated. It transpired that the chief of the military police was enjoying the opera and therefore there would be an interval of waiting for his action with respect to the señor.

Tiny glasses of cognac were ordered, first by one Spanish officer, then by another. The American señor was not permitted to beckon the waiter. There had been a war with his country, *si,* but at the table he was the guest. Such was the custom among officers and gentlemen of Spain. When, after a social hour the parting came, they wished the señor the best of fortune. They had been honored by his acquaintance.

The journey in the victoria was resumed. It ended at the great, white-walled palace which was the seat of Spanish government in Cuba. The colonel was thoughtful enough to inform his prisoner that the matter would be referred not to the captain general's staff but to the jurisdiction of the civil governor of Havana. This was reassuring. One might faintly hope for further civility and not a revival of the Spanish Inquisition.

The destination was an anteroom of the office of the chief of the military police. A sleepy interpreter was dragged out of bed. Conversation moved more briskly thereafter. The American culprit was raked fore and aft with such annoyed interrogations as these:

"Why do you wish to be in Havana?"

"Why did you not stay on your ship?"

"Do you know how much trouble you have made?"

"It is a very serious offense, do you know that, to defy and hurl contempt at the commands of this royal government?"

These were awkward questions but the señor managed to stand up under them fairly well until the interpreter went on to say, with increased vehemence:

"The chief of the military police himself will be compelled to give you his attention, after the opera. It is his wish to go at once to a magnificent supper to be given at his own house. He had invited many friends. *This is the feast day of his brother-in-law.*"

Now, indeed, was the señor greatly moved with shame and contrition. To cloud the feast day of the brother-in-law of the chief of the military police! It was to apologize with heartfelt emotion. The colonel found a box of very good cigars. We smoked pensively, awaiting the conclusion of the opera. The interpreter took a nap in his chair and awoke to harrow the señor's feelings once again.

"Ah, the two poor soldiers, the guards which were left on the ship to keep you from running away! They did not know you had escaped from them. No, they did not know at all until you were seen in Havana and the news was taken to the chief of the harbor police. He it was who went out to the ship and told those poor soldiers you had vamosed. They were much surprised, very much. They weep. They beg for mercy. *Caramba,* they are put in jail by the chief of the harbor police. They will suffer the court-martial. Their poor sweet-

hearts and wives in Spain! They will be widows, quién sabe? You have been an affliction to those soldiers, Señor Paine."

This was lamentable and unforeseen. Something would have to be done about it. It made one feel enormously guilty and base. The hasty act of a thoughtless young man had played hob generally. In his wake was one tragedy after another. He pondered until the chief of the military police arrived from the opera, a man tall, bearded, immaculate and of a chilling demeanor. He could not be blamed for this. The feast day of his brother-in-law was demanding his presence.

With the zeal of a bureaucrat, however, he announced that there must be an investigation. He would go with us to the office of the chief of the harbor police who was responsible for the escape of this diabolically troublesome American correspondent. A cab was found and we rode down to the harbor side where the official in question was hauled out of bed. He yawned and sputtered and was in a bad temper. His reputation had suffered. He was in the shadow of displeasure. It was his desire, said he, to put the Americano in the Cabaña fortress and leave him there until Spain and the United States should sign the treaty of peace.

There followed a long discussion. The hour was past midnight, yet the whole affair had to be thrashed over from the beginning. The courteous colonel who made the arrest was opposed to inflicting harsh punishment, for reasons of policy. Another impatient glance at his watch and the chief of the military police told the colonel to hold the señor as a prisoner until morning. It was a case quite complicated. Then the chief of the harbor police was possessed of a brilliant idea.

"It will be a bigger punishment," he announced, "to put him on his ship and keep him there. I myself have seen the ship."

The colonel rushed after the chief of the military police to tell him this. He caught the icy gentleman just before he rattled away in a cab to celebrate the feast day of his brother-in-law. It was received as a happy suggestion. The Americano would be carried out to the Norwegian cattle boat in the morning and there kept *incomunicado*.

The night was not uncomfortable, spent in a small room with barred windows—I suppose you would have called it a cell although the word is distasteful because it brands one as a jailbird—and there was a cot and a mattress and a pillow and a box of cigars left by the colonel.

The chief of the harbor police was confidentially interviewed in the morning. The first estimate of him had been correct. There was cupidity in his eye and he had an itching palm. Those two poor Spanish soldiers —could he not be persuaded to deal less severely with them? Their wives and sweethearts in Spain, consider that! His fingers closed and he put something in his pocket. Yes, his anger had cooled, said he. It was not the two poor soldiers' fault, after all. The verdict would be lenient.

But there was no soothing Louis Seibold as easily as this. When I was carried off to the ship, honored by a guard of *four* soldiers, he met me at the gangway and spoke in terms of bitter denunciation:

"You big loafer! I was framing things up to get ashore in a day or so and you went and spilled the beans. I hope they threw a scare into you."

"Suspend judgment, Louis," said I. "I stirred things up while you were framing them. They know all about us in Havana. Something may come of it. I think I made a hit."

Later in this same day the officials of the government of Havana relented. Word was sent off to the ship that the two correspondents would be permitted to land on parole. This was explained to mean that they were to give their word of honor, in writing, that they would attempt to send no news to the United States either by mail or cable. In other words they would be received as visitors but not as correspondents. This was a solution very much in the Spanish manner.

The parole was promptly signed. For two weary newspaper men, much in need of a vacation, it was no hardship to loaf a little while in civilized Havana, bound in honor to do no work and well aware that their salaries and expense accounts would not be interrupted. And this was how they saw the finish of the war with Spain in the summer of 1898.

This series of reminiscences began in the issue of November 20, 1921. To the next issue the author contributes his memories of "Fire and Sword in Peking."

Dead Reckoning

By J. H. Greene

Author of "Off Sudden Island," "High Tension," Etc.

If this South Seas island derelict's fondness for cigarettes lost the *Jennie H.* her navigating tables, at least he was able to supply new ones in mid-Pacific.

WHEN the *Jennie H.* dropped her anchor in the coral bottom of the island harbor and Captain Jerry Hackbutt was pulled ashore past outriggered canoes deep with fruit and hailing natives, he spied one lone white man on the beach. The fellow was in a soiled shirt and trousers split to the knee, his arms and chest were as brown as a Maori's. He was smoking a cigarette rolled in a dry leaf and if he was not drunk now it was a break in his habits, for the patches on his cheeks and high Roman nose advertised trade gin.

Captain Hackbutt was an appraiser of strange rigs and though the beach comber's beard was disheveled and disreputable and the whole man looked as if he grew out of a scrub, the shabby silkiness, the curve of his long, blond mustache, the droop of his tall, lean figure advertised one nationality.

"Britisher," concluded Captain Hackbutt as his boat lifted to the surf. "And gentleman," added the captain to himself, when the beach comber helped him ashore and welcomed him in purest Piccadilly.

The natives crowded round captain and boat crew to pick their friends and adopt them during their stay, but the Englishman said something that made them drop their hands.

"What lingo is that?" asked the captain, who was familiar with island dialects.

"A line of Homer's. It's my *tapu*. If we had a breadfruit famine I could save myself from being eaten by a yarn from the Odyssey; they believe I'm Ulysses."

He led the captain to a thatched hut where the frostbitten, weather-worn whaler was served a meal of chicken dug steaming from its earthen oven by a pretty brown woman whose eyes followed the beach comber like a steersman on his compass.

"My Circe, captain," said the beach comber, and the lithe-limbed little beauty put a chaplet of flowers on the gray head of the abashed skipper.

It was restful for the sailor, under the trees, with the blue of the bay far below and the mellowed voices coming from the *Jennie*. Their time would not be lost for the big fish came in along the bays and the island was not big enough to tempt men to desert.

But as the meal progressed and the "square face" went down in the bottle the beach comber sickened him. He became arrogant, superior and offensive. He talked continually of himself as an impotent and thrice-accursed Ulysses. Once the captain was sure he flung some insult at the island queen when she had hesitated at producing more square face.

But he certainly was the wreck of a gentleman and a scholar, for he had been in the purlieus of the world and could describe what he had seen in continuous Addisonian English, though the matter of his discourse was mud and muck. He had blackbirded with Captain "Bully" Hayes, shanghaing Kanakas for the Queensland sugar plantations, defying regulations and dodging gunboats for the money and the spree in Wooloomooloo; he had risked Russian salt mines for gold—remarking that the only place to steal is in a government cabinet; and he quoted with relish the remark of a Market Street policeman, "Yes, it's a fine day and not an honest man or virtuous woman in sight." But the captain grew weary with his recital of adventures in every sailors' dive on the Pacific from the Barbary Coast to Little Bourke Street, Melbourne.

Captain Jerry Hackbutt, hard but clean, with his wife's cottage at Cape Cod at the end of every course he ruled on his chart, and her berth on the *Jennie* kept shipshape for whenever she was able to sail with him, had tried to differ from the beach comber,

but that gentleman informed him he was wrong in dignifying his crude mental processes as thought.

"Your damned democracies cannot think, captain. You are merely instinctive human amœba. Thinking is an aristocratic function."

Captain Hackbutt was able to think that perhaps this besotted derelict had not talked to a white man for a long time and he passed this insult in charity.

"I don't suppose you carry any books in that oil tub of yours?" asked the beach comber when they were stretched on the grass, the skipper at his pipe and his host rolling his eternal leaf cigarettes.

"Got the log," answered the whaler, wondering at himself for standing him.

The man had been hospitable but was insufferable and insulting. The captain was divided between a desire to kick him and to help him, wondering what was the use of all this education if it left a man a traitor to his color and a scandal to his breed.

But the beach comber interrupted the whaler's meditation by sitting up and laughing.

"Do you know that your log book made up after you leave here is the one book I would like to read. I would give a load of copra for your account of the man who entertained you with bilge-water 'Boccaccio.' Will you send me a copy of that entry?"

"I only enter ship matters. You see I'm only interested in the big fish."

"The whale is not a fish—and you're not interested in him or you'd know his place in zoölogy. All you are interested in is dollars. If I were to tell you that a certain family in England would pay you for the knowledge that I am drinking myself to death you would be interested enough to put my name in your log, and that name is in Battle Abbey, captain, if that conveys anything to you."

Captain Jerry, lolling back with relaxed belt, saved himself from anger by calling on his humor.

"Sure," he drawled, "my wife reads them things to me back home."

The beach comber jerked his shoulders as if bitten by an island centipede.

"That was certainly clever of you, captain! A masterly riposte! You twisted your creese in my vitals. My wife cannot read to me."

He staggered to his feet, Captain Jerry noting he was the drinker whose feet get clogged and whose brain kindles. Curses in many languages came from behind the matting, a woman's cry, the sound of a blow and a heavy fall.

Captain Jerry arose and drew aside the matting, and saw the beach comber on the floor sprawling all ways and the woman trying to pillow his head for his comfort. She smiled at the captain and the smile was bleeding.

Captain Jerry, disgusted at the man and at himself for enduring him, dropped the matting and went back to the beach where he mustered his boat crew out of the huts to return to the *Jennie*.

As the whaleboat drew close to the square-bowed, big-brimmed brig, a wisp of white curtain blew out from one of the stern-cabin windows, the cabin that was his wife's when she sailed with him. He involuntarily touched his cap to it and when he climbed aboard he drew a big breath of oil, tar and the clean scent of new Manila and dropped his grimness.

"Mr. Manson," he said to the mate, "lively with that wood and water. I want to get away. Drat this rock nosing and keep the ensign flying while we're in these islands. Never mind about painting your truck or reeving new halyards. Keep it flying all the time."

Next morning a canoe came alongside deep with breadfruit and wild goat, and the beach comber hailed the deck. He was sober, and a little more trim, in approximately white ducks and a navy blouse.

"I want to apologize for my rudeness of yesterday, captain," he said when aboard. "Unpardonable to a guest. But a white man at my table was the rattling of keys to a prisoner for life. I need say no more I'm sure. *Qui s'excuse s'accuse.*"

Captain Jerry had told the mate of his experience. Both men received the beach comber with dour distrust; but he had come aboard as if to a flagship, lifting his cabbage tree deferentially to the flag and the men on deck, so there was nothing to be done but accept him and his gifts. He was asked below to partake of Medford rum, American tobacco and the good fare of a galley in touch with shore.

The beach comber had said his name was Carson but added it was not the name in Battle Abbey.

"I should have a number. Call me Mr. X. Or better still, Mr. Minus X. For I really subtract from everything," he rattled on after the steward had cleared.

From the silence of the captain and the mate he had sense enough to see that his egotism was repellent and he began asking questions about the *Jennie* and their voyage, the amount of oil they had and where they were heading for. The captain talked whaling and the *Jennie;* the mate added his observations; and Carson contributed facts and legends about the islands without using them as pegs for his personality.

"You haven't a piece of spare paper?" he asked, and the mate handed him a sheet off the shelf where there were a few nautical books, a novel or two and stationery for the ship's reckoning. Carson rolled his tobacco in it.

"The first real paper cigarette I've smoked in Lord knows what of an eternity," said Carson, luxuriously inhaling.

He then rose to examine the books but he passed the novels and began turning over the pages of the stained, canvas-covered Bowditch and Blunt's "American Pilot" as carefully as a scholar would handle an antique manuscript.

"Afraid we haven't much reading matter aboard, Mr. Carson," said the captain, remembering his request of the previous day.

"I should be obliged if you had a spare nautical almanac," said Carson.

"You don't want to read that," growled Manson, noticing Carson fingering the tables of departures, sines, cosines and logarithms at the end of the Bowditch.

"Why not?" answered Carson. "There's more magic in those figures than in all the witch doctors of the islands, all the pundits and poets of civilization. The magic of mind, magic that works, that can be proved. Here's the only certainty we have attained; and dead men's brains are embalmed in every decimal."

"They work all right," said Captain Jerry. "We find our way round the world with them."

"Been a sailor?" asked the mate of Carson.

"I have been everything, everywhere, and done nothing," answered the beach comber and the mate asked no more.

Carson's past did not concern him. The fellow might be a charlatan, he might also be a court-martialed navy officer for he certainly handled that Bowditch like a familiar. Back on deck Carson ran his eyes aloft like a mate's on his first berth. He pointed out some overworn seizing, discussed the new American way of marking compass points, showed he knew what a burton was and could tie a Matthew Walker.

"Don't tell me you haven't climbed in a hawse hole. I wager you could ship as third mate now," said Captain Jerry as a feeler, for the man fascinated him.

"Will you ship me as a fo'c's'le hand?" was Carson's reply. "You have shaken the keys of my hell, captain. Won't you open the door and let me out?"

They were looking over the side at the green water saturated with sunshine. They were encircled with low hills asleep in an azure haze running down to gleaming, golden beach fringed with lazy surf. It was not the hell Captain Jerry had been brought up to imagine; but in the self-contempt he sounded behind Carson's arrogance he saw what was worse—the lonely insulation of a starved brain.

"Can you hand reef and steer?" he asked Carson.

"I know how these things should be done but I never could see why they should be done. Boredom has paralyzed my efficiency but I can drown as well as any of you."

The *Jennie* was short-handed through losing a man off the Horn but the captain hesitated.

"I don't care a whoop about your drowning, Mr. Carson," he said shortly; "but you might help to drown better men. You get no liquor in cold watches on this ship and Mr. Manson and me are tough doughnuts in blue water."

"I see the point, captain. You're afraid I won't stand the discipline; but your hypothesis of my behavior may be disproved by experiment. Mr. Manson! If you please."

Mr. Manson came across the deck surlily, for Carson's request, courteous enough, sounded too much like an order.

"Mr. Manson," said Carson, "I have asked Captain Hackbutt to ship me as an ordinary seaman. Will you test me for his benefit and my own? Do your damnedest in Billingsgate, hit me where you like, kick me overboard—so long as you take me back —and I shall remember my Epictetus and

say it is your nature. Only do nothing fatal, if you please. I reserve the freedom of my exit from this corpse that is a man.'"

The mate flushed uneasily, thinking his captain was allowing him to be made game of.

"Time enough when I have to," he growled, walking to port.

"There, you see, captain," said Carson. "I am still pursued by my familiar demon. I radiate infidelity, I am damned with doubts."

He looked ashore where a brown woman came out of the trees and stood on a sand spit regarding the whaler. Carson saw her and his eyes drew to two slits.

"I was wrong," he said. "There is one of the earth's millions that will take my word and her father fed on human flesh. If you ship me you must allow me to join you only after you are under way. My Circe may outwit us. She put opium in my food when the last ship was here."

Two days later it was not until the *Jennie* had dropped on the tideway past the headlands at the entrance of the bay that Carson appeared out of the fo'c's'le. The mate had called for royals to catch the southeaster when he missed Carson. He saw him lolling aft over the taffrail as if he were a passenger, and the mate, from the fo'c's'le where he had been watching the anchor fished, passed a hot word aft for Carson. Captain Hackbutt at the wheel was aware of the idling of his new hand and was about to add his voice when in the ship's wake he saw a brown face and the uplifted arms of a swimmer.

"Hard up," he called to the helmsman; and the ship lost way as the sails backed against the yards.

The swimmer crawled through the creamy wake up under the quarter while the mate called for a line.

"If she comes aboard you'll be short-handed again," said Carson. "Let me speak to her, captain."

"We'll haul her in first," answered the captain sternly. "It's too far a swim back even for a native. We can drop her inshore when we tack in."

But the woman did not appear as if she wanted to come aboard. She let the line drift by her while she trod the water and called out musically. She was smiling as she spoke and her teeth were whiter than the foam and her limbs tore the heaving lace that streaked the waves till they showed brown in the green below. Her voice had little cooings in it and was almost a song as Carson climbed to the bulwarks and answered her in her own soft Polynesian. To the weather-beaten seamen clustered to the side it sounded like a love duet till the woman after one low call lifted her strong and splendid arms, her head went under, there was a momentary kick of white soles as she turned and they could see those arms urging her downward into the depths.

"She's drowning herself," cried the captain.

"I ordered her to," said Carson. "She was under my command. Now I'm under yours. Do your damnedest."

He then walked forward to lay on a sheet as the *Jennie*, put to her course, drew out to sea.

Fo'c's'le and quarter-deck united in horror at Carson's action, but after a spell of rough weather and a few fish had been harpooned and tried out the friendliness of common toil and danger made the fo'c's'le forget the pretty, little brown woman cursed to her death. They recalled tales of their own discarded women, Japanese tea girls that stowed away easily because they were small, Brazilian girls with glass-bladed knives, even Eskimo women that held men to the arctic ice, till Carson began to appear as a strong man who had broken his chains.

When Ben Sparks gave a lurid account of his breakaway from a New Orleans girl in which absinth, New Year's fireworks and ladies of every clime and color united in one glorious Jack-ashore charivari, he crystallized fo'c's'le sentiment with, "If you have to cut, I says, cut deep." Finally old Toby, crouching under the lamp over his Testament, gave them chapter and verse of Samson and Delilah and swung the crew solid to Carson, who returned their suffrages by his yarns magnificent and fluent of every land and sea and the deviltries therein.

A disturbance occurred one dog watch when Toby found several pages torn out of his Testament and accused Carson of stealing the paper for his cigarettes. Some of the men who were readers had found cherished dog-eared volumes similarly mutilated. It promised a series of fights for Carson.

"What did I tear, Toby?" asked Carson,

taking his volume from him. "Ecclesiastes. I think I can remember those verses:

"A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth."

Carson sitting on the side of his bunk repeated the sonorous pessimism of David, King of Jerusalem, while the shellbacks were silenced at the wonder of a man who had the Bible in his head.

"But how about this?" said Ben, displaying a torn Miss Braddon.

"You are an ungrateful swine, Ben," calmly answered Carson. "Don't I tell you better yarns than that? You let me smoke up this yellowback and I'll improvise a better 'Lady Audley.'"

Then Carson began a wonderful romance about a lost duke with such familiarity with aristocratic high latitudes that even the sleepers turned away from the ship's sides to listen. Ben Sparks sat head in hands to wallow in the gorgeous shore dream; Toby dropped his Testament to listen to the book words that flowed steadily from the cloud of paper and tobacco smoke enveloping the battered but still distinguished features of Carson, till the knocks came on the scuttle and the mate's voice called for all hands to take in sail.

There was bad weather ahead; the sun was setting in a halo, the seas had an ugly lift precursive of some far-off power and the glass was falling.

Captain Hackbutt knew the signs. There was a hurricane coming and he prepared to ride it out once he was sure of its bearings and whether he would meet it on its dangerous or navigable semicircle. The *Jennie* was put on a port tack, stripped to her foresail and close-reefed topsails with all hands ready to take these in when necessary. To the last Captain Jerry would try and bear away, setting such a course that the whirling wind would take him in instead of out of the storm. Rain fell heavily in the night and lightning flooded the decks and glistened on the crouching oilskins.

The sun rose through low cloud banks with the sky pale green to the zenith with little streaks of cirri pointing like feathers in one direction. The wind was freshening and hauling to the beam, the barometer was still lower, but Captain Hackbutt went cheerfully to breakfast after ordering the remaining canvas to be stowed. Those red feathers in the zenith located the bearing of the approaching hurricane; and the rate of the dropping of his glass and the force of the waves and his own sea sense told him there was time for breakfast; the hurricane was not going to hit him from some uncertain direction in the dark.

As the day drew on the wind freshened, the cloud bank deepened, becoming a somber focus with radiating streamers dimming the sky and graying the seas; the wind in the shrouds took on a higher note, the waves crisped into white curls changing their direction and their rhythm till the *Jennie's* bows bobbed uncertain at the unexpected rise and fall and many seas came aboard.

Captain Jerry stood on the quarter-deck, waiting to catch the sun to take a meridian altitude. The mate stood by with his watch set by the chronometer as a rough guide for his time intervals.

Captain Jerry told Mr. Manson to bring his own sextant on deck and double his observations, for they were going into a hurricane and might be unable to take any more for days.

Mr. Manson called to Carson who was near in the waist to go below and get it. Carson obeyed and took the sextant from the rack in the mate's cabin. Coming along the gangway the ship lurched and he supported himself against the door of the captain's cabin, his hand turned the knob and the door opened.

He saw the inside of the cabin, the bulkheads way out of perpendicular, and a little door on a locker fell back and brown liquor in a bottle held by a fiddle rocked level against the slant sides of the glass.

Carson entered the cabin, lifted the bottle to his lips and half emptied it, his capacity being measured only by his need of breath; then seeing a book on the table he ripped out several handfuls of the leaves, stuffed them in his pocket, went on deck and handed the mate his sextant. Then, the captain's special brandy burning in him, he went forward to the lee of the galley to roll and light his paper cigarettes while the officers aft profited by a few seconds' flood of sunshine to take their altitudes.

Carson smoked, sitting down, doing nothing, trebly insubordinate, while the brandy stirred the ashes of his brain. His name was shouted along the wet and windy deck.

"The mate is calling for you," said the cook to him.

"I'm obliged to him," answered Carson,

coming from his hiding, his long and badly burning cigarette flaring with his defiant smoking in the gale.

The mate clinging to the weather shrouds almost lost his sea legs at this mutinous apparition.

"I have decided to ship as a passenger, Mr. Manson," drawled Carson easily. "My family will honor my draft on a London bank."

The captain appeared up the companion, flaming of face, blasphemous and bellowing.

"Put that man in irons, Mr. Manson!" he cried over the wind. "I can't work the reckoning! He has torn out my tables!"

The mate had hardly need to give the order. Carson's enormity was enough to turn all hands against him.

The sun had gone, the wind was increasing, they were hove to, confessing that sail was useless and the utmost they could hope for was to keep afloat.

"You're in irons for the rest of the voyage," roared the captain, "and the bank of England can't bail you out. I can't work my reckoning till I meet another ship and borrow another tables. We're ducking into a hurricane and I don't know where I am and the Lord knows where I'll be blown to. You might as well have put iron in my binnacle, torn up my charts or smashed my chronometer. Throw him into the forepeak!"

Carson had submitted to the irons, but now he spoke.

"If you will please inform me what is missing from your tables I will calculate it, though of course I cannot do it in irons. And as a study the forepeak will be impossible."

But a storm of sleet and scud lifted from the wave tips blew to port, a gray sea lifted over the bows, sky, water and wind met in one weltering confusion. The ship shuddered, heeled and plunged and Captain Jerry had to bend all his mind to her while Carson was hurried hastily forward through the fo'c's'le and thrown into the triangular hole of the forepeak.

With the liquor dying out of him, his head against the ship's stem, over the reek of the bilge and stale oil, Carson rode out the hurricane. The seas crashed into the planks just under his ears and when her nose dived spare chains and cables fell on top of him. He kicked at the door leading to the fo'c's'le but no one answered. He experienced the extreme of the ship's motions and his breath came short when the bows lifted and his heart stopped when they dropped.

After a while he got used to this and he thought he was surrounded by innumerable rats, for there were squeakings everywhere. He tried to reach his matches, both to see and to smoke. He managed to reach his tobacco with his manacled fingers and the forgotten knack of rolling with one hand came to his need and he remembered the Filipino girl who had taught it to him. He lit the crude cigarette and his limbs were invaded by innumerable crawling things. There were no rats in that forepeak; the squeakings he had heard were the voices of the strained timbers and bulkheads; but there were cockroaches, armies of them. He brushed them off him as well as he could, shook them from him, while the glow of the cigarette illumined his pitching prison enough to see little and imagine everything.

He tried to keep the cables and an unlashed barrel from falling on him. The Filipino girl's face glowed and faded, bringing up other faces, and the rushing of the waters and the musical bursting of the bubbles under the bows were as voices belonging to those faces. There were English voices in country lanes, in drawing-rooms and in park drives, voices in water-front hells, sodden with sin and cracked with despair, voices that laughed in sailors' dance halls; but all the voices were saying, "I love you, I love you, I love you," till at one terrific plunge when the deck went vertical they all blended into one soft, siren call choked by the sea and Carson crawled to the door and beat on its planks with his manacled hands.

Still no one heard him, no one answered. All hands were on deck fighting the storm, fearful at any moment lest she should founder. And Carson, striking desperately to escape those voices, was hitting out in all directions, at the planks below, at the ship's sides, as if he would be glad to escape into the sea.

The *Jennie* weathered the storm with the loss of one boat and part of the railing and the fore-royal blown out of the gaskets. The mate saw it go as the sea slapped him in the face and he remembered it was Carson who had furled that sail.

When the storm drew away and it was safe to set sail Captain Jerry and Mr. Manson in the cabin contemplated their gutted

tables. Half the book had been torn out; the traverse tables were gone—the ones they most depended on.

As Bank sailors they had been raised to find their way round familiar headlands as one stumbles through a room in the dark. They had passed the inspectors by rule of thumb and they had forgotten the reason for the rule. They had learned to look up so many figures, put them together in such and such a way and so get the ship's position. There were many expert navigators among the whaling fleet; but there were many skippers who knew less than Captain Jerry, who had sailed the Cape, the Horn and the Arctic on less, who had rectified their reckonings across the seas and quarreled over them when visiting one another's cabins.

But no ship was in sight to help Captain Jerry. They had been blown over a sea dotted with uncharted atolls and unknown reefs and the captain held his ruler impotently over his chart not knowing where he was or how to set his course. Then he remembered Carson's last words and sent for him.

Carson, rust stained, soaked with oil and bilge water, desperate for brandy, was brought into the cabin.

"Are you scholar enough to calculate those tables or are you a liar?" asked Captain Jerry.

"Both, captain," said Carson, still the bitter and defiant devil. "But before we continue will you please remove these irons?"

The mate unlocked the irons and Carson shook the stiffness out of his wrists.

"I am ranked as a 'second wrangler,'" he continued. "All you need is a little trigonometry—enough for a pass man—but I shall want brandy. If you want my brains you must feed them."

The captain was about to reach for the bottle when the mate interposed.

"How do we know he ain't bluffing for the brandy?" said the mate. "Takes brains to make those tables! Sailormen can't do it—don't believe an admiral could—and you say *you* can."

Carson had thrown himself into a cabin chair.

"You want a test of my ability?" he said. "Very well. Pick out any number out of those logarithms—I think I left the logarithms."

"You don't mean to tell me you know them logarithms by heart?" said the astounded mate. "Like you do the Bible?"

"No, Mister Mate," said Carson, "but I know the formula for obtaining them. Give me a number, captain."

The captain called a number and Carson, snatching a sheet of paper, wrote out the logarithmic series with the usual transformations.

The symbols ran from his grimy fingers with a neatness of alignment that opened the officers' eyes. When he announced his result and the mate checked it as correct from the tables, Captain Hackbutt, awed by the beach comber's knowledge and with a touch of pity as though he were throwing a rope to a wreck, patted Carson on the shoulder.

"You've done it, Carson, you've done it! You work out those lost tables and you travel passenger. Our chances of making port depend on you. You will share our meals, you can have all the liquor you need——"

"I want all this and more," cried Carson savagely. "You kept me in that rat trap, I've not had a bite nor sup——"

"The galley fires were out."

"It's not the food, man," cried Carson. "It's being under swine like you. I, drowning in the bilge—I, ironed under hatches, crawled over by vermin, made to tumble about in the dark where I had nothing to do but think! What Puritan devil put it into your minds to make me think? Do you know what it means to me to remember, to see, to hear, to feel what I have been? I want more than food or liquor, though I get them too! I'm captain of this ship now! Its supreme intelligence—and I work those tables only on one condition—that you, Captain Hackbutt, call all your hands aft and submit to my telling you to go to blazes, sir!"

Carson was such an inflammatory mass of nerves as he voiced his indignation that the mate prepared to lay hands on him.

"Hands off, Mr. Manson," called the captain. "He's a passenger. I accept your conditions, Mr. Carson. Deliver those tables and you can call us what you like."

Carson was given the after cabin—Mrs. Hackbutt's. The steward was instructed to give him what he wanted and Carson, fed, refreshed and somewhat cleaner, sat down to drive his resurrected brains to calculate the figures needed by Captain Jerry for his daily reckoning.

He set to work gayly, telling the steward to let no one in on him. He said he would "sport his oak"—adding that it reminded him of the Senate House examinations at Cambridge.

There was nothing abstruse or mysterious in the process, as Carson said. It was former men's work, but the memory had to function and the elementary arithmetical operations had to be accurate.

Carson's memory was haunted with the gibing ghosts that had found him in the forepeak. The waters that had bubbled with the sighs of the drowned now gurgled under the counter; and though he was not in the dark the cabin windows were often flooded green and the cabin was full of warm reflections and quivering shadows till the beach comber's nerves began to persuade him he was on the ocean floor. It was hard to think consecutively, impossible to be accurate. He found himself making errors, trivial errors, and a horrible panic invaded him, a panic that attacked the citadel of his pride, his brain. It was another ghost, the remembrance of that terrible fear that he would fail in his examinations, those grilling examinations of the mathematical tripod in the Senate House at Cambridge.

Living in two worlds, the cabin of the whaler and his days in college, torn asunder by the welter of wasted years between, he drove at his figures as the *Jennie* had driven through the cyclone; but the captain of Carson's brain was a besotted voluptuary blown about by the winds of his senses.

He drove and drank all through the morning watch into the afternoon, while captain and mate were waiting after having taken noon observations—waiting for him to provide the figures that would turn those observations into places on the map.

Driven by fear lest he should go mad and by pride to prove his point of superiority over those Gadarene swine that flung him in the forepeak, he pushed his pencil through his formula and the little rows of decimals grew longer.

The captain knocked and entered, with his observations in his hand, but Carson met him in a frenzy.

"I'm sporting my oak, sir! I'll tell you where you are when I'm finished, when I meet you on your quarter-deck. Get out—or I tear up everything I've done!"

The captain went out and Carson looked at the little row of degrees, minutes and seconds in the captain's crabbed writing—those angles caught through the smoked glasses of the sextant that would fix the ship in her position.

His burst of anger had made him dizzy. For the first time he noticed the cabin and with a drunkard's magnification of details the scalloped curtains, the silvered mirror, the potted plant. The intolerable sense of the harmony of it all invaded him with a woman's presence, with the presence of all the women he had known, betrayed, forgotten and trodden into the bilge water of his life. He pulled at a locker as a murderer is compelled to dig up a grave and inside was hanging a woman's dress, a white woman's, and, as the ship heeled, the brown arms of the sleeves flew up against Carson's neck as if there was life in them. He slammed the locker shut, assured that a spirit had risen from the deep to draw him into it with a pair of uplifted brown arms. He rushed to the brandy; it seemed to be losing its potency, for the voices of the sea were closing in on him in a clamorous chorus with one superior note in Polynesian. He tried to keep his eyes on his paper, his fingers on the pencil, his mind on his formula, but a big bell began booming at the back of his brain; the white paper became a surplice and somebody in the college chapel was preaching on a text from Ecclesiastes.

His pencil ran wild through a medley of symbols, differentials that turned into curses, flowing integrals that took human outline, big Greek sigmas, German capitals, all the refuse of a brain he had packed so painfully.

He staggered to his feet, driven by a time sense, by a heart that was counting its seconds, that was telling him his time of examination was over, that he had to hand in his papers and be placed. He hoped for the ranking of "senior wrangler," his college, his tutors believed in him, a long and honorable career in the sciences or the service of his country would be his!

He felt his way out on deck and up the companionway. The mate and the captain were there and the captain saw Carson had that precious handful of papers. With the wind blowing through his beard and his eyes glazed, Carson handed the captain the papers.

"Your last reckoning—and the tables, captain." He swayed as he fumbled for a stay.

"Better go below, Mr. Carson," said the captain.

"Your promise, captain," said Carson, with his last atom of resolution.

The captain ordered Mr. Manson to call all hands aft. The curious crew trooped aft where the officers stood stiff to see the captain receive his humiliation.

"Men, Mr. Carson, has a word to say to you," said the captain. Carson looked at the old skipper ready to take his whipping, dignified by his sense of duty, the man who had steered by what was best in him. And then Carson regarded the row of curious upturned faces that depended upon him. Then, in his high-pitched lecture-room voice, the beach comber, bedraggled and drunken but with the dignity of a don and the polish of a peer, complimented them on their ship and their officers and their worth as seamen and apologized for the trouble and anxiety he had caused them.

Then his voice rose with fervor and he broke into that text from Ecclesiastes:

"A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth."

The mate had been looking at the tables. They seemed all right. But on top were a number of loose sheets covered with scrawls. He saw they were drawings, the drawings of a man who had done everything, who knew everything, and vivid with the intemperate imagination of the insane.

"It's a woman—the Kanaka!" he cried.

Carson caught at the word and saw the drawings in the mate's hands.

"Sorry I intruded my personal affairs," he said. "I am plucked, I have failed. I must go down for another year."

Before any one could stop him, with a leap he was over the side, crying something in Polynesian that the plunge cut short.

There was no further sign of him. Two gray fins like fore-and-aft topsails explained why. But the sight of square topsails coming up to windward promised the captain a chance to check his tables and Carson's dead reckoning.

In the next issue appears "The Ghost Ship," by Mr. Greene.

GLUTTONS FOR ORATORY

IT is a strange crowd that frequents the men's public gallery of the House of Representatives in Washington. Most of them look as if they had seen better days. There is one bent, white-whiskered old fellow who is never absent when the House is in session in good weather. Another comes armed with Roberts' "Rules of Order." The "regulars" are all well into middle age. Apparently with nothing to do they stroll leisurely through the capitol grounds and along the corridors and drop with an air of weariness into the hard-bottomed seats. There they sit with folded hands, when things are dull "on the floor," alternately nodding and starting back to wakefulness. During a spirited debate they straighten up and lean forward with eager interest.

They never seem to get enough of the congressional oratory and they never applaud. There is in their pale faces and stooped shoulders something that heralds an inability to work up much enthusiasm. When the House adjourns late in the afternoon they leave their places slowly and lounge out, obviously in no hurry to go anywhere. Some of them —who knows?—dreamed once of being great statesmen. Now they are a part of the city's obscure and unimportant, just driftwood from many different States, finding warmth and whiling away empty hours in the free seats of the country's capitol.

Old Peter Takes an Afternoon Off

By O. F. Lewis

Author of "A Black Sheep," "I—Myself—And—Me," Etc.

The Latin professor renews his youth and becomes a king of press-agents all in one afternoon at the Polo Grounds.

WE had in the class of '06 in Huntington College the best varsity pitcher in the history of the institution and in that year every last one of us fellows was proud to address him as "Old Peter." To-day, fifteen years after, the students about the campus know him by the one nickname of the "Old Simp."

But they are putting a curious tone into the name, these days. His hair is partly gray, he's the dryest thing that ever got a toe hold on the faculty of the college and his classes are the limit for arid atmosphere. Until the middle of last September no one would have believed at the college that the Old Simp would ever make a dent, even in a mold of lemon jelly. But that was before Peter took an afternoon off, down in New York.

Old Peter's name is Peter Simpkins. He came to college from up in Holton Crossroads, Vermont, and "Hoddy" Irving, our aged Latin professor, friend of all the freshmen, took him of course under his wing and pulled him through the first year of homesickness. These latter years the college has long since given up trying to figure out what hit Old Peter after his final triumphant season in baseball when at the close of his great senior year the world seemed to lie before him because of his extraordinary career as our leading varsity pitcher. I know of two good bids he had to go into business and one of the scouts of the Giants made him a corking offer to join that team the season after college was over.

But in the fall of '06 Old Peter turned up again at Huntington as tutor in Hoddy Irving's Latin department, all the pep gone out of him. And it stayed out. In time, after they had turned old Hoddy out to pasture on a slim pension, Peter slipped noiselessly into the older man's chair in Latin. And then gradually the young coeds, watching the half-shabby, prematurely gray, loose-jointed man going up the hill to his classes in Holbrook Hall as the autumn leaves fell romantically over him from the elms, pondered the fixed tradition that some college widow, back there, had thrown Old Peter down so hard that it broke his back and he never got up again. My idea was different. I believed that Peter loved Hoddy Irving as a son loves his father and that he just came back to *him* after graduation.

Anyhow, there he was! Peter's social status continued to be "unmarried," with no show of a change. He was notoriously wedded to his self-appointed life work, which was nothing less than some thirteen hundred pages of double-spaced manuscript, entitled: "The Early Customs of the Mound Builders of Huntington County." For fifteen years, ever since Peter had gone suddenly dotty on this piece of research for which he was going to get some time a Ph. D. from some college or other when the thing was all done and published, he had been meeting his Latin classes with undeviating regularity; but between classes he was forever, with ceaseless devotion and single-track mind, occupying this virgin field of exploration. His sparse conversation with others teemed with references to Huntington County's mound builders and he was rarely invited to dinners or other peppy events like the college dances.

Toozling parties, wandering through the woods about the college, sometimes met Old Peter abruptly and would draw apart hastily with flushed countenances. But the Old Simp didn't seem to notice anything out of the ordinary. He was on the trail of a mound builder. His classes bored the students stiff but they were compulsory like chapel. However, from time to time, some reference in the classroom to the times back in 1902 to 1906 would bring out an unexpected, human, quizzical smile about the

lips of Old Peter and some tender, loyal story of the old times and the old boys. Then the beastly recitation would go on.

He occupied year after year a small room in Mrs. Tom Black's boarding house and never went to athletic games but plugged on the mound builders. The boys said they'd see his light going sometimes almost all night. Seniors said his life badly needed the touch of a woman's hand; his clothes were shockingly old and unpressed and his hair was a sight. They said about the college that he was supporting an aged mother somewhere or had an insane sister and they didn't see how he managed to do it at all on his salary.

We come to the hour of two-fifteen on a certain afternoon of last September. Old Peter sat in the office of the editor in chief of the publishing house of Winthrop Forbes on lower Fifth Avenue. Peter was slowly folding up his "Mound Builders" in heavy Manila wrapping paper. Jim Sexton, of the class of 1906 of Huntington College, now editor in chief of Winthrop Forbes, held his forefinger on the twine.

Jim put his hand on Old Peter's thin knee.

"Peter, old scout, that's the honest truth! There's not sufficient market for a work like yours, wonderful as it is. We can't print that sort of thing at a loss, particularly in these days. Perhaps some foundation might take it or a college press or some scientific body or——"

Peter's big sunken eyes lifted, to rest on Jim's features. He had tried eleven other publishing houses before finally coming to the college friend of the old days. Jim's grip tightened on the bony knee. He couldn't go on. Old Peter had been self-revealing to Jim Sexton—had revealed the growing, ghastly conviction in the professor's soul that what he had toiled all these years to give to the world the world couldn't use and therefore didn't want.

"You see, Peter," said Jim Sexton haltingly, "if you'd only brought me a baseball yarn or some sport story—something, for instance, that our juvenile department could use—you were such a whale of a good pitcher back there—— Ever tried a novel —for boys?"

Peter shook his head.

Presently Sexton accompanied him down the curving marble stairs to the first floor then past the long rows of tables stacked with Winthrop Forbes' latest books—where Peter had dreamed that his "Mound Builders" might rest next year. Out upon the Avenue he went. In his pocket was Jim Sexton's card.

"Come and see me, Peter, before you go back to Huntington! Be sure to ring me up beforehand!" had urged Sexton.

Revelation surged over Peter. All through these same fifteen years, Jim Sexton, the laughed-at fat boy of the class of 1906, had been hewing his way through to the head position in the house of Winthrop Forbes. Peter stumbled up the Avenue. Under his arm bulged the Manila-wrapped manuscript. Cold truth beat down on him like a trip-hammer. He saw these unending crowds as if for the first time. These throngs of young girls, twenty years, fifteen years younger than he, dangling light furs even on this warm day, descending from limousines, passing with unseeing eyes, swinging down the street two and three abreast, rich, self-confident, ignoring his existence! The prosperous, self-sufficient people in the busses! Success, wealth, everywhere!

A ponderous, highly colored woman emerged from a dog shop with a barking animal under her arm. "My dear, I got him preposterously cheap! Only four twenty-five! I made them come down from six hundred."

"You certainly did, my dear! I paid seven hundred for Toto and now he's gone and caught distemper!"

Old Peter's eyes fell upon the crowded dining room of the Waldorf and noted a young girl seated by the window, picking daintily and hesitatingly at some choice morsel—the waiter hovering with concerned look behind her chair. Peter sensed that he was hungry. In a white-tiled lunchroom he found a chair far back from the front door. A sentence of Jim Sexton's rang in his ears:

"Take an afternoon off, Peter! If I didn't have the weekly conference of our editors this afternoon you and I'd get in eighteen holes at Windemere. You don't play golf? Well, take an afternoon off, anyway, Peter!"

Old Peter ate his baked beans and apple pie. An overwhelming loneliness swept over him. He shivered slightly, intermittently. A dread of facing the people on the Avenue came upon him. He grew conscious that two young fellows, seated in adjacent chairs, were heatedly discussing some matter. Dully

he began to listen, staring unseeingly at the elaborate bill of fare on the highly polished wall.

"Betcher the Bambino knocks another homer this afternoon!"

"Betcher he don't knock no homer this afternoon!"

"Betcher five!"

"You're on!"

"Betcher Shawkey pitches!"

"Betcher Hoyt pitches!"

The two men went out, leaving behind them an early afternoon paper. Old Peter reached slowly for it. Weary and sick at heart, his eyes fell upon the smiling face of "Babe" Ruth and under it the caption: "The Highest-Priced Ball Player in the World!"

Old Peter paid his twenty-cent check to the fat-faced cashier with the billowing blond hair and the lurid lips.

"Could you inform me, please, where the Polo Grounds are?" he asked. "Is that the place where they play baseball this afternoon?"

The stately person withdrew the toothpick from her lips. She looked at Peter meditatively. Her expression grew kindly. She tilted forward in her chair, glanced at the clock.

"Some big town this, isn't it? You just got time. Go one block west, and take the 'L' going north. Follow the crowd on the train. Better sit over behind third base, about five rows from the bottom, if you can get a seat; there's more seats empty there this late."

Old Peter's eyes opened wide. "Do *you* ever go?"

"Not to-day, thanks! Do I ever go? Does Babe Ruth bat left-handed? You bet I go! And you'd better get a move on now!"

The next man in line pushed Peter forward impatiently.

"Take an afternoon off!" said the blond cashier a bit sharply.

She watched Old Peter's slow disappearance through the door, then looked wisely at the thin, sallow-faced man who was paying his check, shook her head and elevated her eyebrows. A third man, coming up shortly to pay his bill, passed a Manila-wrapped package over to the woman.

"The guy what went out left it in his chair!"

The cashier shoved the package under the counter and punched the cash register. When business grew quieter, she reached under the counter and examined the writing on the package. Then she stared out upon Fifth Avenue, her forehead puckered.

"What the hell is mound builders?" she murmured.

While Old Peter was wedged tightly among the billowing throng of ticket seekers that moved spasmodically toward some invisible gates in front of them he discovered that his manuscript was gone! Henceforth, for some minutes, the mass of rocking, surging, grunting men bore Peter's body along with them on legs that moved automatically. His mind was chasing frantically backward, through the train, through the streets, finally seeking a white-tiled lunchroom! His soul was falling into an abyss of despair. The duplicate copy at Huntington didn't have the last seven chapters on the newly discovered mounds at Chatham, nor the annotations in red ink!

Peter tried to draw out of the crowd, like a fish that feels the hook for the first time. Squeezed against the street fence, half crushed, he was shot ultimately through a gate into the backwaters of comparative calm inside the grounds. Long-forgotten shouts met his ears:

"*Score* cards! Get your *score* cards! Only correct batting order of the game! Get your hot peanuts, five a bag! Here y'are, *red* hot, *red* hot!"

Sudden, vivid memories crowded into his mental vision. Those great afternoons, back in 1906, at Soldiers' Field, Yale Field, Franklin Field! The afternoons he had pitched the little freshwater-college team to victory—old Huntington, that had come down out of the woods and licked the biggest college teams in the whole country! The only year old Huntington had ever pulled it off!

"*Hot* peanuts! *Red*-hots, *red*-hots! Ice-cold lemon*ade!*"

That's what Old Peter had heard them selling in the stands fifteen years before! The marvelous sequence of his victories passed before him. He put his hand to his eyes. He straightened up. His lips parted. The crowds before him were hurrying to secure their belated seats in the stadium of the Polo Grounds. He saw in memory other crowds, back there, surging to their feet upon the bleachers, waving the light blue of Huntington, dancing and prancing, singing

the college hymn, shouting shrilly while the college band blared out "Fair Huntington" and the gang cheered itself hoarse behind the rocking, twisting cheer leaders! He remembered with a strange thrill the snake dance they did across John Harvard's field! The score itself flashed across his eyes: Huntington 5, Harvard 4! Eleven innings!

Old Peter moved on toward the towering structure of the stadium. He could see nothing of the field as yet but he heard the crack of a bat in the stillness—the immediate howl of the mob. A thrill went up and down his spine. *The crack of the bat!* He pulled a long, long breath into his lungs. He felt his toe digging once more down into the dirt of the front of the mound. He felt himself winding up; out of the corner of his eye he threw a glance at the man playing off first base; he shot again that famous in-drop that broke just before it reached the plate! He saw again the crowd, *his* crowd of rooters, rush down out of the bleachers, dash upon the field, raise him precipitously to their shoulders, bear him triumphant off the field. The crowd he *belonged* to!

Peter, alone in New York, belonging to nobody, walked almost gropingly toward the lower grand-stand seats. The full view of the arena burst upon him and he paused, with shortened breath. No such sight as this came out of his memory! Endless rows of people—and endless faces! Upstairs, just the same. People out on the bleachers, also!

Over all hung an almost absolute stillness. It was a crowd, stiffened into stone. Only the white-coated venders of soft drinks plied like small butterflies in and out of the mass, in the distance.

"What—is it?" asked Peter, half under his breath, of a man in the crowd in front of him. The man spoke, finally, without turning.

"Babe Ruth's up! Two on bases, one out, and——"

Crack!

There broke on the world a roar of sound. Countless backs of people surged upward in front of Peter; arms gesticulated madly with wild contortions. Down came a hand on a straw hat. The roar continued, died down, billowed, came to a climax. He visioned a heavy man with an amiable smile circling the bases. Slowly the mob before him resumed their seats.

The crack of the bat! Half breathlessly, Old Peter sought to discover a seat in this immense throng. Behind the last row of seats in the very back of the stadium he paused to glimpse between the shoulders and the heads of the crowd in front of him the delivery of the gray-uniformed pitcher in the box. He saw the squatting catcher, the bent-over umpire, the field, all curiously foreshortened in perspective. He lost himself in the marvelous control of the man in the pitcher's box.

He began to forecast his every motion.

"It'll be an inshoot! An out-drop! He'll groove this one!"

Peter's heart thumped, his cheeks burned, the perspiration stood on his forehead. He burst into a shrill yell when a third strike-out was scored. People about him turned sharply. He was cheering the opposing pitcher. Peter pulled an enormous breath. He remembered that there were eight innings more and that the cashier had said he ought to sit behind third base.

Ten minutes later, tucked away in a seat in the sun, about nine rows from the aisle just behind the boxes lining the field, infinitesimal part of the thirty thousand human beings at the Polo Grounds, Peter sat in the great broad outer air of the amphitheater, saw the players, commanded the wide sweep of the living throngs of people and felt as though he were also on the field. Again came to him that long-forgotten sensation of being out there in the pitcher's box himself—the feeling that these crowds were watching *him, his* game, *his* team. He felt strange shivers run up and down his spine. Into his right arm seemed to come the craving to pitch, to cut the edge of the plate—to fool the batsman——

Then there rolled over him again, like a crushing machine, the inexorable fact of his disaster. Fate had done this day her absolute worst—but he was still alive! His work of fifteen years had been turned down, irrevocably. No. Ph. D. for him! No alignment of him, Peter Simpkins, Ph. D., among the scholars of America. His very life task he had himself ignominiously lost somewhere—and he didn't know where to find it. Financially he was also a dismal failure. He didn't have a hundred dollars in the bank. Jim Sexton had pitied him—all the editors had pitied him. At the college, he knew, they called him the "Old Simp." He had borne it so long as he knew that ultimately

he would confute all his critics with the publication of his epoch-making work on the mound builders. But to-day—and forever from now on—he *was* an old simp. The cashier in the cheap restaurant had pitied him. A bald-headed man in the crowd outside the grounds had made fun of him while they stood there. Others in the crowd had laughed at him.

Peter's fists clenched. It was all over! He'd done his best for fifteen years. He raised his eyes about at a level with the top of the grand stand. His teeth pressed upon his lower lip. He shouted mentally to himself:

"I'm through! Damned if I don't take an afternoon off—from myself and—and everything else!"

Then, with an enormously long breath and with arms outstretched for an instant, Peter threw off violently the whole horrible past. He stood up as the inning closed and the other team took the field. He straightened up, surveyed the endless rows of people. The peanut man was tossing bags of peanuts to people sitting in the rows, in return for the coin tossed to him. Peter was mildly fascinated by the process. He found ten cents in his pocket, tossed it dexterously to the vender. Back came a bag, describing a wide arc. Peter caught it gracefully —the old automatic way of the natural ball player. A second bag came at him, unexpectedly, almost caught him napping. He caught it with the same hand, heard some one shout: "Two *out!*" and sat down smiling.

"You must 'a' played ball some time!" said a pleasant voice beside him. Peter looked up at a short, stocky, round-faced man of perhaps fifty, eying him genially. A warm, mellow feeling seemed to flow through Peter. He wanted to talk to somebody, to be *with* somebody.

"I played ball in college—Huntington College, back in nineteen-five and nineteen-six. Pitched. Won't you have some peanuts?"

The stocky, round-faced man seemed to bore Peter with his eyes. His fat hand dug automatically into the paper bag extended by Peter. He said nothing, munched peanuts, watched meditatively the preliminary tossing of the ball across the diamond. Peter wondered what he had done to offend him.

Then the man turned abruptly to Peter. "Your name's Simpkins!"

Peter's breath stopped; his lips opened wide; he looked thoroughly frightened. The fat man chuckled and grinned. "You pitched against Harvard, didn't you—beat 'em. And Yale? Sure you did! Say, you were *some* pitcher, boy! And Johnny McGraw was after you! Course I remember! Well, well!"

Never in Peter's existence had such a marvelous thing happened to him! Half fearfully he shot a glance at the people around him. Several men in the row behind were listening intently—gazing at him, Peter, with keen eyes. "How'd—how'd you know?" stammered Peter.

The stocky little man tapped his forehead solemnly. "Memory, son! Newspaper man all my life. Covered baseball nearly thirty years; big college games earlier; the big league now. Got an afternoon off—and see what I do! Come right up here! Remember you because you pitched so much like Matty—headwork, you know! Never forget. Well, well! What you doing now?"

"I'm teaching—at Huntington. And I'm —publishing a work on the mound builders of Huntington County—that is, I'm—I lost the manuscript to-day——"

The third inning had begun.

"Know these players?" softly asked the newspaper man from behind a chunky cigar. Peter shook his head timidly but with tingling nerves. No such praise had been his in years! Then began a wonderful adventure for the Old Simp. Familiarly and almost uninterruptedly this man of complete knowledge of baseball unfolded to the lonely, friendless Peter not only the names and histories of the men before him but also, as the game went on, much of the inside stuff in baseball that had developed since Peter's time.

For emphasis the newspaper man now and then rested his hand upon Peter's knee. He called these men by their first names, he associated with them, he knew their salaries, their foibles, their strength, their humanness. Peter was in a dream. This man was treating him not only like a human being but with something more than that in his tone.

"Son," he said, between an inning. "Tell you something funny! Always wanted to be able to play ball—pitch, like you—that's

why I remembered you all these years! My dream never came true. Simpkins, you might be out there right now—managing one of those teams—man with your brains—after you'd lost your wing. Might perhaps be still pitching. Still, you did best, probably. Tell me about this mound-builder stuff!"

Peter told him, with a certain mixture of emotion and bravado. He mustn't show the man the whole truth of his abysmal failure. While Peter went on, the newspaper man said nothing; just looked Peter in the eye, understandingly; nodded occasionally. When Peter came to the story of the loss of his manuscript his voice wavered. "So perhaps I ought to—have gone into baseball, you see!" ended Peter with a rueful smile.

The newspaper man hit Peter on the back, none too gently. "You're all right, son! Buck up! Something'll come to you. You watch!"

Something did come, at that very moment. High into the air shot a foul, off the bat of a left-handed batter. Instinctively the people in the seats about Peter rose, measuring with quick eye the probable arc of the falling ball. Peter found himself standing, shading his eyes with one hand from the sun, gluing his vision upon that descending sphere.

"Look out there! Catch it! Look out, lady!"

Down came the ball but not so soon as Peter had at first thought. Would it come to him? Waving, clutching hands on all sides reached for it. Some one shoved him roughly aside but he regained his equilibrium. He thrilled with the old feel of the diamond!

"Take it, son!" he heard a voice shout.

'It's *mine!*" yelled Peter.

Smack! The ball was Peter's. Not for anything would he have muffed it. The sting of pain was for a moment intense but he clung to the ball. Wildly clutching hands sought to wrest it from him but he held it fast. The crowd receded from him. Erect, he stood recovering his poise. Then he threw the ball with quick and powerful sweep of his arm far out upon the diamond, so that it was caught by the catcher near the home plate.

Murmurs rose from the stand. Such a return of a ball was unusual. People generally kept the balls they secured and fooled the policeman when he sought the culprit. But such a throw, low, straight as an arrow, from way behind third base! It would easily have caught a man running in from third! Who was this guy in the grand stand? Sporadic applause burst from the seats. A Polo Grounds crowd is always looking for a new sensation.

"Put him in! Let him pitch!" shouted some one behind Peter.

People laughed. Peter went fiery red. The newspaper man pulled at his coat tail. Peter's arm ached. He hadn't thrown a ball like that since he left college. But as the men around him jollied him now, asking what big league he belonged to and kidded him for not keeping the ball and all that, Peter glowed with the joy that had not been his since college days, of being the center of an achievement! For it had been an extraordinary catch, followed by a surprising throw.

So he found himself talking easily, familiarly even with the newspaper man and with others roundabout. The newspaper man told the people near him who this chap really was that had caught the ball—an old college man who had had the chance to sign up with the Giants and had turned it down! Peter was being vouched for by an authority! Peter bought thereupon a half dozen ice-cream cones and gave them joyously to his neighbors.

"Have a cigar, sir?" said a young man to him most respectfully.

Every little while the newspaper man emitted a series of quiet chuckles.

"Take you round to see McGraw some time!" he said. "How'd you like to be a scout for the Giants—looking up new timber—college teams—bush leaguers? Pay you twice as much as you're getting now! Might find some new mound builders, too!"

In the midst of his growing bewilderment at this unprecedented afternoon in which he had suddenly blossomed forth as a personage he became gradually aware that people near him were staring in his direction, pointing toward him and that some men in the distance were standing, craning their necks. At first he thought himself the continued object of attention. But no! He glanced to his right. For the first time he discovered that there was sitting next to him a young woman—and that this young woman was smoking a cigarette! As he looked with wide-opened eyes at her she drew the ciga-

rette slowly from her very red lips, and smiled at him.

"You made a bully catch, buddy!" she said. "You're sure some little life-saver! Thought I was gone!"

Peter had no answer. This young woman was not like any of the coeds at Huntington College! And smoking in public! In a grand stand! He looked beyond her for her escort. There was none. Two boys only—clearly not belonging to her. Peter stammered words. She eyed him keenly, tossed her head slightly, blew puffs of smoke into the air. Shouts came from near by.

"Sit down! Down front there!"

More people were rising to their feet. What was a common sight in restaurant or home seemed astonishing and noteworthy here. Surge after surge of human waves billowed up. It was between innings. People wanted to see the fight, if there was one. Those who couldn't see anything were the most excited. Perhaps they were firing gamblers from the Polo Grounds! Good-humoredly the crowd struggled to discover what was going on. In the center of this crowd, seated, were the highly painted woman with the defiant cigarette—and Peter.

From somewhere came the words to his ears: "Gee, he's got some classy jane with him, that ball player!" There was more laughter. Remarks were bandied about, regarding the woman who was smoking. Peter saw her color change, even under the rouge and paint. The remarks about her became more pronounced, the laughter more boisterous. Peter felt strangely about her. She was not old; this demonstration of brutal male callousness and curiosity, this lack of chivalry toward womankind, stirred some deep sense of anger and injustice in Peter. A man behind the young woman had just extended a silver cigarette case to her, over her left shoulder.

"Have an imported one, girlie!"

Peter jumped to his feet.

"You—you people quit that!" he shouted. "You let this—lady alone. I don't believe—in women smoking—but this lady's alone and I——"

Peter knew he was being drawn rapidly into unknown fields of action. Never before had he dared to depart so from the orderly conduct of life. He found himself shaking with excitement, with something he couldn't control. What was he going to do next? He caught the eye of the young woman looking up at him. She expected him to get her out of this thing; that was clear.

"Sit down!" he shouted. "You let this lady alone!"

Some one pulled at his coat, dragging him to his seat. It was the newspaper man. But from the row of seats in front of him a hoarse laugh broke. Peter caught sight of a husky, black-haired, thickset man standing and pointing derisively at the woman. He looked straight at Peter.

"Lady?" He paused. "You know this—lady?"

The intonation in his voice was clear, even to Peter.

"And as for you," the man continued, "you hick, you keep your big feet out o' my back from now on, see? Diggin' your toes into me all the time! Think I'm a doormat?"

"I didn't put your feet in my back—I mean my feet in your back!" stammered Peter excitedly.

The crowd gave a joyful laugh. Things were coming along great!

The heavy-jawed man scowled, almost burying his eyes in the thick folds of flesh. He brushed the back of his coat ostentatiously. "What's that? Laughing at me? Why, you—you rube, I'd knock your block off for a quarter!"

"You would, would you?" retorted Peter shrilly. He couldn't think of anything stronger to say. With each moment he wanted to do something more and more violent. Words were becoming so shallow. "And," said Peter springing to his feet, "you take back what you—you meant about this—lady!"

Peter heard the hoarse laugh again and immediately felt a shock against his cheek and head such as he had only once before in life experienced—when he had fallen off the back-yard fence in childhood and had hit upon his head.

The next instant Peter was transformed into a wild man. Madly, blindly, doggedly he laced into the man in the next row in front. He was no longer the Old Simp from Huntington College, a professor, a law-abiding citizen. He was crazy to pound, to tear, to strike, to destroy. All the pent-up woe of persistent failure, all the nerve-racking days of the past weeks, all the half-conscious sense of inferiority to other

people, all the depths of humiliation of the last hours, the irrevocable loss of his manuscript, the success of other men, the realization of what he might perhaps have been in baseball—all centered now in an elemental explosion of the physical and nerve forces within Old Peter.

The very blows that landed on him, the cruel punishment that he received from his antagonist seemed not to hurt him so much as to exhaust and in some way to assuage him. Now he was borne down between the seats, now he caught an arm and twisted it until a shriek of agony resulted, now he was almost suffocated by the grip of a hand on his throat—and at last, face and body aching violently, blood warm and wet running down over his eyes, he found himself dragged violently to his feet and out of the aisle, up steps and steps and steps, while round about him swirled human forms and round about him rose confused shouts and noises. Then he seemed to be dragged again, half on his feet, half sagging, a long, long way. His brain refused to work; he would go just where they carried him. He caught sight of blue sleeves and brass buttons.

Through the interminable night in the cell Peter sat with head buried much of the time in his hands. A filthy hobo; a lad of seventeen, wild for a shot of dope in his arm; an unpleasant individual who had been caught bootlegging and cursed the government—these were Peter's cell mates.

Only one thing solaced Peter at all. He had not allowed to be dragged from him, in the night court, a few hours before, any clew as to who he was. He would never disgrace Huntington College! John Jones was the name he had given. They had remanded him for further examination in the morning. Assault and battery the charge was.

No one from the Polo Grounds had appeared against him, save two policemen. Peter was aghast at what they had said about him! But all that was as nothing compared to his future! Prison? What was his future, if not prison? Nothing! He couldn't ever go back to Huntington now! Yet he was good for nothing else except teaching. Somewhere in Arizona, perhaps, or Alaska? His clothes were torn, his face horribly swollen and tender, his shirt and collar streaked with dried blood and his whole soul was sore.

Peter shuddered as the flickering light outside the cell revealed fitfully the sordid and unbelievable environment into which sudden fate had plunged him. The lad of seventeen seemed never to cease walking up and down the narrow cell, moaning for the heroin he craved or clamoring that Peter assure him he wouldn't be sent away to prison. The hobo rolled uneasily upon the bed and snored and in his sleep he persistently scratched his body. The bootlegger addressed remarks to nobody, in constant repetition.

Toward morning, Peter fell into a brief, troubled sleep.

Peter's turn in the courtroom had come. The blue-coated attendant beckoned to him, led him to a railing in front of the bench where the judge sat, in his black gown. Since Peter had come into the courtroom he had kept his eyes firmly on the floor. He must go through with this horrible disgrace as best he could. But above all—not give in, not betray Huntington! John Jones—that's the name—don't forget!

Peter stood, his eyes on a small panel at the bottom of the wooden bench of justice before him. Somewhere above him the judge sat. He heard confused murmurs all about him. He had seen out of the corner of his eye a great courtroom filled with people.

The judge spoke—a gentle voice above him:

"You are Professor Peter Simpkins of Huntington College?"

Peter's shoulders rose heavily, fell, and his body sagged.

"Look up, professor, and follow the evidence!" Peter looked up, and saw a fugitive smile pass over the face of the clean-shaven, youthful man upon the bench. This was not the same judge as the one with the gray hair and the big mustache in the night court!

Peter listened dully to the two policemen, going over the story again. But gradually he noticed that they were not saying the same thing they said last night. They didn't accuse him this morning of all that was bad and lawless! They just told how they arrived and found a fight going on and had arrested one of the fighters and how they couldn't find the other man.

Without comment, the judge dismissed them.

"Mr. Arthur Emerson!" he called.

Down the aisle of the courtroom came the sound of brisk steps and Peter saw a man seat himself in the witness chair. It was the newspaper man of yesterday.

The judge took from his desk a newspaper clipping, perhaps a foot long. He showed the clipping to the witness.

"Mr. Emerson, did you write this newspaper account of Professor Simpkins and of the fight of yesterday which appeared in the *Morning Sphere* to-day?"

"Yes, sir."

"And this is an accurate account of—Professor Simpkins and of the circumstances leading up to the encounter for which the professor was arrested?"

"It is, your honor. I'd like to say, sir, that the *Sphere* likes once in a while to run a character story like that—human interest, you see—close to the hearts of the people. The way the old New York *Orb* used to do. And this Professor Simpkins yesterday—he made a wonderful story. I used to do that kind of thing for the *Orb*. And, your honor, may I say one thing more? I meant to look up the professor last evening and help him but I got word at the office that my wife had met with a slight accident. I rushed home—it just drove the professor right out of my mind—until this morning."

The judge bent over toward Peter and extended to him the clipping.

"Professor, have you seen this morning's *Sphere?*"

Peter, desperate with apprehension, shook his head. The whole thing in the newspapers! The college disgraced!

"Professor, read this article!" the judge continued. "And I want to say to you, sir, that I am personally proud of a man in these days who will run the danger of enduring even what you have endured for the sake of defending the fair name of a woman, even when, as in this case, she is a total stranger to him. Won't you please read the article through?"

Dumbly Peter took the clipping and began to read. There it all was, briefly but unmistakably tenderly told. The echoes of the old days, when he had pitched his great games; the catch he had made yesterday of the high foul—even the kidding on the grand stand! There was the story of his long throw to the catcher at the home plate and a remark made by one of the ball players about it after the game. There was the story of the altercation; and then the fight—and how this gentle professor from Huntington, specialist on mound builders, had fought like a cave man when attacked brutally by the man who insulted womankind in the person of the stranger next the gray-haired professor.

Oh, it was a story, all right!

Then something more happened. The judge rose and leaned over the bench. "Professor Simpkins," he said, "you are discharged—and honorably. You were not the aggressor but defended yourself as best you could against a bully. I regret that you should have suffered incarceration even for one night. And now, sir, permit me, as a graduate of Huntington College myself, of the class of 'nine, to thank you for what you did! My name is Billings. Don't you remember me?"

The lips of Peter quivered and the tears started. He groped for a handkerchief but found none. The judge passed him his own. The reporters, covering the court in anticipation of a story, scribbled industriously. Oh, boy! Stuff for the early afternoon editions!

Bang! The gavel sounded.

"Court adjourned for fifteen minutes!"

In the judge's private chamber stood four men. Peter, disheveled to a positively disgraceful extent; Judge Billings, obviously proud of the fighting professor of Huntington College; Arthur Emerson, dyed-in-the-wool baseball reporter, who had landed a story; Jim Sexton, who had just come tearing up in his limousine, having read belatedly the *Morning Sphere.*

As they stood there, there was a discreet knock at the door.

"Come in," said the judge.

A court attendant showed the way to a large, fair-haired young woman, with a Manila-wrapped bundle under her arm. Her eye fell upon the black robe of the judge. She addressed herself to him.

"Here's that 'Mound Builder' thing they wrote about in the *Morning*—— My God!"

She had caught sight of Professor Simpkins, not at all garbed at the moment to meet the fair sex.

"Peter," said Jim Sexton as the two rode in the closed car toward Jim's home where the professor was to be fitted out in human togs again, "Peter, old boy, I've got a pleas-

ant little surprise for you. Two surprises, in fact. I telephoned up to Huntington this morning, as soon as I read that story in the *Sphere*, and told them I'd look out for you, of course. Lots of the boys had already read it, and I tell you, old man, they think you're all right! Know what they're going to do at twelve o'clock to-day? Ring the college bell for five minutes, for scrappy Old Peter! How's that, old scout?"

Peter dug his teeth into his lower lip.

"And, Peter, the second thing is that we're going to publish your 'Mound Builders,' after all. You see, it's a lot different to-day. Think of the advertising you've gotten since yesterday! We can have thousands of copies of that story in the *Sphere* zinc etched. And you couldn't buy that kind of advertising for thousands of dollars——"

Peter blinked at Jim Sexton, lips wide open.

"It's all right, Peter, and now I want to ask you what you might write for us next. Something up to the minute, to follow up this book, you know?"

Peter was silent. Finally he spoke.

"I—I don't know, Jim!"

"Come, old man, think! Think! It's the psychological moment for you, right now!"

Over Peter's battered countenance spread a broad and happy smile.

"I have it, Jim! Just the thing! There are a lot of mound builders that no one has done yet, over in Franklin County!"

THE IRISHMAN'S CHOICE

DURING the first few weeks after the opening of the Arms Conference a lot of Washington conversation turned on comparisons of nations and national characteristics. The town was so full of a mixture of tongues and races that opportunities for the study were always at hand. The thing got to be a habit.

One evening a trio—a Frenchman, an Englishman and an Irishman—had tried out their talents in such a discussion and were bringing their talk to a friendly conclusion.

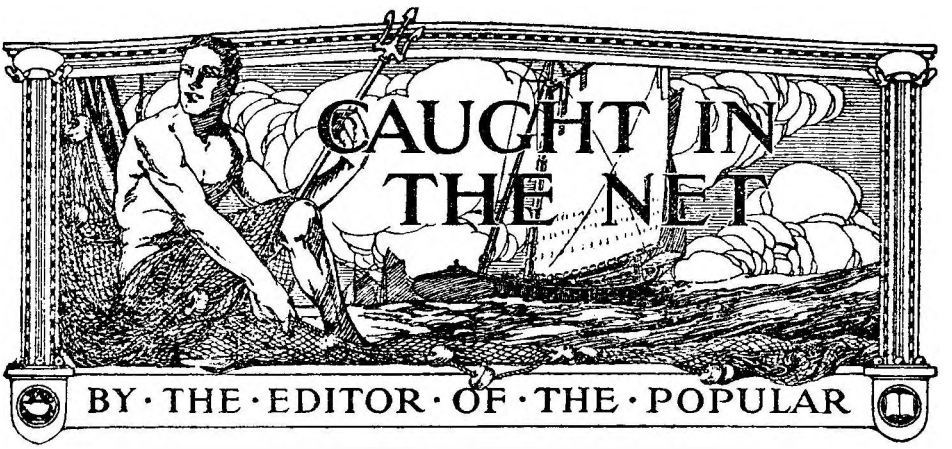
"If I were not a Frenchman," said the man from Paris, "and had my choice, I'd be an Englishman."

"Oh, of course," drawled the Britisher, "if I were not an Englishman, I'd be a Frenchman."

"Biggodd!" said the third member, giving the table a thump. "If I wasn't an Irishman, I'd be ashamed of myself!"

A HEAVEN ON EARTH

NATIVES of those counties of the State of Maryland that lie to the east of Chesapeake Bay are enthusiastic boosters of their part of the world. According to them, the "Eastern Sho' " is a paradise on earth, and the traveler who has visited this beautiful district of broad waters and pleasant countrysides is not disposed to quarrel with their enthusiasm. To illustrate this love of home land, the late Franklin K. Lane, used to tell of a legend related to him by an elderly clergyman who proudly claimed the Eastern Shore as his birthplace. Said the old gentleman: "Adam and Eve, while still residents of the Garden of Eden, fell sick. The good Lord was worried about them—so worried that He called together a council of His angels, told them that He thought our ancestors' health would benefit by a change of scene, and asked for suggestions as to where they should be sent to obtain this change. The Angel Gabriel spoke up. 'The Eastern Sho' of Maryland,' he suggested. But the Lord shook His head. 'Oh, no,' He said. 'That wouldn't be sufficient change.' "



RETAIL PRICES RETREAT SLOWLY

WHILE throughout the United States there has been a continuing drop in the wholesale prices of a number of commodities for a year or more, the retail prices have not dropped in proportion. Meanwhile the drop in wholesale prices has led to a movement toward lower wages throughout the country. Statistics, however, show that in spite of reductions in wages the relative cost of living to workers, though still higher than normal, is nevertheless a little reduced—the reduction in wages being not as great proportionately as the reduction even in retail prices of household commodities.

At a recent conference in New York City on "Christian Principles in Industry," the subject of wholesale and retail prices was taken up and statistics were given as to the relative wholesale and retail cost of commodities. The conference was called by the "Commission on the Church and Social Service of the Federated Churches of Christ in America." Professor William F. Ogburn, of Columbia University, who had been making investigations as to wholesale and retail prices, stated in the course of an address at the conference that although wholesale prices had dropped 45 per cent since 1920, the retail cost of living has dropped only 18 per cent.

"In prices," he said, "there has been a marked fall since 1920. This fall has been most noticeable in wholesale prices, where index numbers declined from the high point of 272 to 152, a decline of about 45 per cent. This does not mean that the prices to you and to me as consumers have fallen nearly 50 per cent, because they have not. The fall in the retail prices is the index to the cost of living to the average householder."

Continuing, he said that the average weekly earnings of workers in factories in New York State had declined about 12 per cent from the high point of $26.93. This was not as much as the average retail prices had fallen.

Meantime those housewives who read the papers and have noticed from time to time the reports of the reduced wholesale prices of some commodities, are puzzled at the comparatively small reductions in the retail rates, with the exception of sugar and one or two other commodities in which competition brought prices down. In some of the more progressive retail stores retail prices are lower than in others. Competition, many housewives believe, will bring the retail prices of other commodities to a common level soon, except in a small proportion of stores where prices have always been high.

GET YOUR OWN GOAT

IT was somewhat news to us the other day to be informed that the wise man's cow was a goat. We had heard often enough of the latter animal leaping around the Rocky Mountains and helping to make Harlem famous and had even some slumbering knowledge that the better halves of the species were made useful in Switzerland and other foreign lands in a dairy sense. That the milk of the goat was rapidly coming into its own in this country, however, was a surprise to us. To be sure, the milk-goat industry

here is as yet not widely developed, the number of registered and thoroughbred animals being only a few thousands, and most of the activity up to date seems to be in the Pacific-coast regions. Nevertheless there becomes audible the goatkeeper's slogan of "Take the milk bottle off the porch and put a goat in the back yard."

For that is one of the beauties of "Nanny"—her back-yardability. While she feels a bit more at home in hilly country—the rockier the better so long as there is sufficiency of browse, weeds and grasses—she will none the less thrive in the city's vacant lots if only she is given a little time in which to acclimatize herself by not being subjected to a too sudden change of climate and altitude. At a pinch and with proper care she can even be kept in a stall all the year round, if there is no other way out of it. Incidentally, with due genuflections to H. C. L., Nanny will live where a cow would starve. No small argument in the lady's favor—considering that she is the greatest of milk-producing animals in proportion to size and weight. Two or three quarts a day is nothing unusual for goats. Some give much more.

A far greater point claimed in favor of Nanny is a hygienic one. There is no doubt that a certain amount of tuberculosis is traceable to cows' milk. Nanny, says *The Journal of the American Medical Association,* "is immune from tuberculosis." And adds, "Goats' milk is superior in every way to that of the cow, being twice as rich in butter fat." Also the *Journal* rates it as "the ideal food—especially for those with weakened digestive powers."

With it all, the milk is sweet and rich and makes delicious cheese. And speaking of sweetness, in fairness to Nanny who seems to have a chance to make a name for herself hereabouts now, do not confuse her in your thoughts with her mate "Billy" who in any sense at all—and particularly in one—is far from dwelling in the odor of sanctity. It is Billy alone whose character is strong in the olfactory sense. Nanny is a lady completely—as free from odor as any animal well can be, in properly cleanly environment.

If you are further interested in her, detailed information can doubtless be had from the American Milk Goat Record Association, Vincennes, Indiana, from *The Goat World,* Los Angeles, or *The Goat Journal,* Portland, Oregon.

Give a thought to Nanny!

STAR GAZING

EVERY now and then come new rumors of supposed "signals" from the planet Mars. And, much as reason sets itself to explain away such occasional phenomena as might be taken as possible evidence of Martian attempts at communication with us, an inner voice in man continues to murmur "I wonder?" Any irrefutable evidence of "signaling" would mean so much! To the query of the right ducal father of her who was beloved of one of the immortal "Two Gentlemen of Verona:"

"Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?"

curious mankind's reply would be considerably in the affirmative.

Whatever the facts of the case, it will not be long before we will have the best chance we have ever had to study this "planet of canals." In 1924 Mars will attain to a comparative neighborliness to us which it achieves only once in about every fifteen years —being then due to be but 35,000,000 miles away! At times, in its predestined swing around the sun about which we too so dizzily whirl—some three miles a second faster than our celestial neighbor, in fact—Mars manages an aloofness of over 280,000,000 miles. Considering the improvement in telescopic science since the martial sphere was last in such startling approximation to collision with us as it presently will be, who knows what we may yet see? Is it to be our lot to find at last that Mars is inhabited, after all?

In this connection it very possibly behooves us to assume a somewhat more modest attitude in our curiosity about possible Martian cousins than may have characterized most of us. If they exist, the chances would seem to be good that they are a considerably more advanced "race" than ourselves. This is assuming that the incalculable space from the sun to the outermost stars was at first all one vast, whirling fire mist which, cooling and contracting, ejected rings of fiery matter which also cooled and in their own whirling shaped themselves into the planets we know. Being on the "outside of the bed," com-

pared to where our own globe is, Mars probably antedated the earth in its creation—maybe by millions of years. Also, Mars comparing in size to us as a pin head to a pea, it cooled quicker, which would mean the possibility of life on it sooner than in our own case. To put it in a phrase, a Martian gentleman might very well be found to measure up to what our descendants will be about A. D. 10,000,000. And, anyway, any one living in an atmospheric density less than one quarter of ours and under conditions making the force of gravity only about one third of ours must have developed along very dissimilar lines from us. Also, reasonable certainty is felt that except in the equatorial regions of Mars its temperature corresponds to that prevailing on our highest mountaintops—and what this would mean during Mars' winter of between eight and twelve of our length months can easily be imagined. However, we shall see what we shall see.

There is, however, a limit to what any telescope can accomplish. Even if one were invented to bring Mars within a mile or so of us, it would be found to be revolving on its own axis at a rate which would send the surface viewed streaming past the lens at about ten miles a minute—scarcely giving time for leisurely scientific observation. To the extent of its saving us from this embarrassment our present limitation in telescopic magnifying may, for the time being, be regarded as a blessing in disguise. As to what the year 1924 will actually disclose concerning Mars—well, we shall know better in 1924.

RARE FIRE RISKS

AMONG the occasional causes of fires are several which are not, as a rule, provided against; yet at times disastrous fires have been due to these causes. Among these are explosions of coal dust. It has of late been frequently demonstrated by the Federal bureau of mines in its own coal mine at Experiment, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, that coal dust has tremendous explosive powers and the experts of the bureau have for some time been studying the problem of a preventive of them.

The bureau has found that pulverized coal blown to the furnace through compressed air lines is an ideal fuel in certain industries, but it is pointed out that the clouds of dust released from such pipes are as dangerous as a body of unconfined natural gas, when liberated near red-hot metal or open flames.

The latest report on the subject is that the bureau has found that certain rock dusts can be used as a screen against the exploding coal dust. It is now encouraging the use in coal mines of barriers of piles of this rock dust which, when jarred by the explosion, it is stated, scatters and acts as a screen for stoppage of the exploding coal dust.

It has recently been reported that several serious explosions of aluminum dust have taken place in manufacturing establishments. In a recent report from the department of agriculture it was stated that the dust of various grains has been found to be responsible for a number of severe explosions in flour mills and grain elevators and that hard rubber dust has also been found to be explosive. Experts are now at work on the problem of devising ways and means of preventing these explosions.

The risk of fire appears to many people to have its mysteries at times. Rare instances are recorded of spontaneous combustion developing in the center of large piles of coal. In cities fires have started at times in houses from the most trivial causes where every precaution against fire appeared to have been taken, while at other times well-studied plans of setting fire to buildings, set on foot by incendiaries, have failed—the attempts to fire the buildings being discovered only after evidences of their failure had been found. Futile instances are known of attempts to set fire to a house by depositing in it a bomb and lighting a fuse attached to the latter, the tiny flame in the fuse through some fortuitous happening having burned itself out before it reached the bomb.

THE BORDER WANTS NEW-STYLE RANGERS

MEXICAN bandits no longer gallop up to lonely ranch houses on our side of the border nor do fighting factions take insufficient heed of the international line in calculating their artillery-firing data, with resulting damage to American citizens and their property. Yet there is trouble a plenty along the thousand miles of boundary between Brownsville and San Diego and many citizens of the border States

think that the situation can be handled efficiently only by the organization of a Federal border guard something like Canada's world-famous Northwest Mounted Police. At present there are some two hundred agents of various government departments and bureaus doing their best to enforce the laws; but what seems to be needed is a Federal force especially trained for the work and under the control of one responsible head.

The people who want this constabulary force organized say that bootleggers and drug runners are reaping a harvest, that smugglers are cheating the government out of its revenue, that diseased cattle are being driven into the United States in defiance of the rules of the department of agriculture, that undesirable immigrants are being sneaked into the country—in short, that the entire criminal population of northern Mexico is finding ways to make a profitable mock of our laws. They also claim that four hundred men, properly trained and organized, could stop this lawlessness at a cost of two million dollars a year. Just now that looks like a lot of money to Uncle Sam—the old gentleman is backing a pretty heavy financial load and wondering where the deuce that extra two or three billions for the soldier bonus is coming from—but the expense would be pretty well offset by the savings of departments now trying to do the work and by payment of duty on goods now smuggled across the line. And there would be the great moral gain of having the law respected.

Those who know something of the work of the Pennsylvania State Constabulary and other State police forces of like character will have no doubt of the ability of a similar force under Federal control to do its work successfully. Trained as soldiers, yet having the duties and responsibilities of public servants, such constabulary forces are especially fitted for law-enforcement work in country such as that along the border.

POPULAR TOPICS

IN both the United States and Canada 1921 gained the high honor of being the healthiest year in history. At least, that is the inference that experts draw from the records of thirty-seven leading American insurance companies. For last year the death rate was 8.24 per thousand policyholders, as compared with 9.80 in 1920. Influenza caused less than two thousand deaths as against almost fifteen thousand in 1920, and the 1921 pneumonia death rate was only half the rate for the previous year. The rates for nearly all other diseases showed an encouraging decrease, but homicides and suicides were four times more than normal. Fatal automobile accidents increased 15 per cent over 1920.

EAT more cabbage" is the advice of food specialists connected with Cornell's college of agriculture. They say that it is an especially wholesome food, rich in iron and other mineral salts. The approved method of preparation is to plunge the cabbage into boiling salted water and cook uncovered for not more than twenty minutes.

AT the end of last year there was at least one man in the world who didn't know that the war was over. He was B. D. Seaman, who went to Nome, Alaska, from the Coronation Gulf country on Canada's Arctic coast, to enlist in the American army. He left the gulf in October, 1918, but a shipwreck and other mishaps caused him to take three years to complete the journey to Nome, during which time he was without news of the outer world. Now, disappointed, he is thinking of returning to his frigid home, where little things like a world war cause hardly a ripple of disturbance.

THAT we Americans are mighty trenchermen is proved by statistics of the bureau of labor which show that the average American gets away with almost three times as much food in the course of a year as does the average Japanese. The average American is a big fruit eater, consuming three times as much as does a Japanese.

SECRETARY OF WAR WEEKS has a simple scheme which he thinks would eliminate both slackers and profiteers should we ever be forced to engage in another war. His idea is that every one in the country between the ages of 18 and 60 should be conscripted and put to work at the tasks in which they could give the best service to the nation.

POSTAL savings depositors now are protected by a finger-print identification system. When you open an account you must make a finger-print impression and these finger prints are checked up with impressions that must be made whenever you draw principal or interest.

THERE are so many motor cars in use in New York's theater, hotel and shopping district that finding parking space for them is a problem for the men responsible for keeping traffic moving in the big town. A suggestion that is receiving consideration is that tunnels to accommodate 34,000 cars be constructed under two of the city's parks.

THE government runs a mighty big printing business in Washington. Last year the national plant used thirty-five square miles of paper and had all the sheets printed been bound into octavo volumes and piled one on the other the top volume would have been five hundred miles in the air.

IT is estimated that building construction totaling more than two and a half billion dollars was completed in the United States last year, and that an equal amount of building will be done this year. House hunters can take comfort from the fact that almost half of the buildings now under construction are residences.

NAVY officials object to the use of the expression "as drunk as a sailor." They think that it reflects on the uniform and gives a false impression of the men who wear it, and suggest the substitution of "drunk as a lord." But wouldn't Great Britain's House of Lords consider this substitution to be an unfriendly act?

JAPAN is preparing to reduce her standing army from 300,000 to 250,000 men in the next four years. Funds saved by this reduction of personnel will be used for the modernization of weapons and equipment and for intensified training.

SWINDLERS were busy selling fake stocks in the Middle West during the prosperous days of 1919-1920. Bankers estimate that they reaped a harvest of two billion dollars.

IN Detroit every third family has an automobile, giving that city the honor of having the highest ratio of riders to walkers of any city in the country. Detroit has 175,000 motor cars, and the State of Michigan 412,000. In many prosperous Michigan districts every farmer owns a motor car.

A WOOL that is claimed to be moth proof has been offered in European markets by German manufacturers. A dye known as Martins yellow is said to give the material its peculiar quality.

The Deaf Mute

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "Vanderdecken," "The Story of Gombi," Etc.

It was odd how small a thorn it took to puncture that South African diamond-mine dream of Shapira's.

HAVE you ever had any doings Beira way? Well, if you'd had you'd have wished you hadn't. I don't know what the Portuguese are like at home. I've heard it said they are good enough. But if that is so they don't bear exporting. Beira has picked up a bit, I hear, but when I knew it it was all galvanized iron and sand, jiggers and drink, to say nothing of evil citizens. There were so many laws you couldn't help breaking them and when you broke them you got fined or blackmailed which was pretty much the same thing.

That's how the folk lived, taking in each other's sins and charging for washing them. It was all the washing they did.

I struck Beira after a two years' slant of ill luck. I'd made a tidy bit in Sydney over a wool speculation and then I started in on the copra business at Portuguese Timor and dropped nearly everything I'd made. Then I collided with a chap by name of Mason and we clapped all we had into a pearling venture and lost our boat off Sandalwood Island, ripped the bottom out of her on a reef and got from there to Flores in a fishing canoe we borrowed from an unfriendly native, giving him a rap on the head by way of I O U—he'd tried to club Mason. We circumnavigated Flores and got into the Flores Sea, went from island to island fishing and fruiting and brought that canoe right to Macassar.

We'd had enough adventures to make a story book and we'd have started on the lecture jag only we couldn't talk Dutch, so we sold that canoe for ten dollars and got drunk. I'm telling you. After that I shipped on a Dutchman before the mast and the end of all that gay adventure was Beira harbor where I skipped with twelve dollars in my pocket.

I didn't part with that twelve dollars. They are always dredging at Beira and I got work on a dredger and a bunk at a shanty the railway men used. There was a fellow on the same job with me, "Shan" McCoy, a Yankee—at least he'd started life as a Yankee but was pretty much of a cosmopolitan by the time I met him; a six-footer, thin as a rake and without a tongue to him. The silentest, broodingest guy. Couldn't make head or tail of him; seemed to have something on his mind that he couldn't prize off till I used to think sometimes he'd maybe done a murder and had the corpse on his chest. It wasn't that. He had something on his mind but that wasn't what made him close with his tongue. He was just one of the shut-head sort.

There are sharks at Beira, thick enough to be dredged up almost, and one day Shan slipped his foot and went overside and a big gray nurse would have had him, sure, only I harpooned her with a crowbar and gave him time to clutch a rope.

He shook my fist and that night up at the shanty he got me aside and began to speak. He'd come out to Beira on a hunting job with a man by name of Lewers. Taking the railway to Salisbury they got into British territory and struck north in the direction of the Zambezi. They had good hunting but he wasn't bothering about that. Shan's game was diamonds. On the way back to Salisbury they camped one night. Lewers had a touch of fever and they stuck at the camping place all next day and Shan having nothing to do went prospecting round with a shotgun after birds.

He struck a patch of blue clay. He knew all about diamonds and he scratched round and presently he lit on one. It wasn't bigger than half the size of a hazel nut and it wasn't high grade—being yellow, about the color of sugar candy—but it was good enough for Shan. He spent the day hunt-

ing and got half a fistful and knew his fortune was made. He concluded to say nothing. Shan was no fool and he knew the ropes and what he'd have to deal with in a diamond proposition. You don't dig diamonds like potatoes. To work that mine would mean carting machinery all the way from Salisbury and labor and what not. Twenty thousand pounds wouldn't but just begin the business and Shan hadn't twenty dollars.

His game was to go to De Beers, show his specimens and sell right out. De Beers having bought the land and established their mining rights would close the thing down and leave it for maybe fifty years with a chap with a gun sitting on it. De Beers don't want diamonds, they want the price diamonds will fetch and they don't want their market watered. It's not only themselves—all the diamond diggers are in a ring and if a mine was struck in Piccadilly Circus they are rich enough to buy up London so's to close on it.

Shan reckoned to ask forty thousand pounds for his mine and to get it. Spot cash.

He was paid off by Lewers at Beira and he was so full of his luck he went on a jag that was the king of all jags and when he'd done beating Portuguese policemen he started chasing black men round the harbor—and he had an idea that he was pelting them with diamonds. Anyhow, when he woke up next morning in jug his pockets were as empty as his stomach. They gave him a month shoveling dirt from the lagoon at the back of the town and when he was free he got the job on the dredger.

Well, seeing I'd saved him from the shark he guessed I was his lucky man and he offered to take me as partner on a cruise back to the mine to collect some more specimens; said it was no use tapping De Beers without specimens to show, as every ballyhooly from Tanganyika to the Breakwater was always calling in on them with mines to sell; said we'd want three thousand dollars for the expedition and to get us to Kimberley after. He'd figured it all out but he hadn't figured how to get the dollars.

Between us, with saved pay and what not, we couldn't scrape more than two hundred. We reckoned we'd be ten years saving what we wanted so I took the lot and went to Shapira's gambling joint and broke the bank. Took close on three thousand two hundred dollars and then we went to the bar and had two bottles of tonic water and two *wheelongs*.

Shap didn't mind. Liked it. For the news of our winnings went round and the whole of Beira was busting itself for a month after, trying to break that bank again. But Shan played Shap a nasty trick, I must say, for he nailed his deaf mute.

This chap was an American negro six foot and deaf and dumb. He was Shapira's handy man, chucker out and stand-by, for he was no use as evidence in stabbing cases which were frequent.

Shap would say he didn't see who did the knifing and the black couldn't talk, so every one was happy and it would be brought in "done by some party unknown" or maybe "suicide." Mosenthall's gambling shop had two hangings attached to it, or garrotings—for they used to garrote at Beira—but Shap's show was clear of all that and parties felt safe and sure that if they were a bit free with their knives there'd be not much bother in the morning.

We wanted a man to take along to help carry the provisions and truck and we wanted a man who wouldn't talk and here was the guy ready made, so to speak. Shan did the seducing with two hundred dollars and sign language and the chap gave Shapira the shove and joined in with us; and I will say for Shapira he took it like a gentleman. For if he'd been otherwise disposed he might have had us done in by a couple of his clients.

It never struck either of us that Shap might wonder why we were so keen on having a man who couldn't talk. There's things you don't think of, at the moment, that you think of afterward. It was just as well anyhow, else we might have been lying awake at nights listening for Shap on our heels and there's no use in meeting troubles halfway.

But we were fools enough to try and cover our traces by saying we were on the hunting job. Shan was known to have been a hunter, so we thought that lie would stick; maybe it did, but it's all the same truth that talking seldom does good and we'd handed that lie round and it maybe got to Shapira before we nailed his black. There's cogs within wheels.

Pongo was the name the black went by, without any offense, seeing he couldn't hear.

II.

We took the train to Salisbury one morning bright and early and as we jogged along we had lots of time to think of the work before us. It was no picnic. Properly speaking going into that country we ought to have had a dozen chaps with us for porters to carry grub and guns. It was no place for wheel traffic or we might have taken an ox wagon or a Cape cart or something; but as it stood we had to make out with our own shoulders and Pongo.

We'd left the provisioning and all that till we reached Salisbury; and all the way there, having nothing better to do, we kept figuring out the weights and measurements of the stuff we had to take. Bully beef weighs heavy but biscuit means bulk. That was the fact that underlay everything. Then there was the question of armaments; we weren't going big-game hunting but there was always the chance of being hunted by big game; besides, we reckoned to live mostly by the gun. On top of everything we'd got to take a spade.

We found a Hebrew in Salisbury, a chap that ran a sort of general store and was known to Shan, and giving him the whole order we were outfitted and ready for the push inside of two days. We took with us, besides the grub, two Colt automatics, a double .500 express rifle shooting six drams of powder and an old twelve-bore Grant double-barreled shotgun.

Shan and me, what between blanket, gun, water bottle and ammunition, had a load of twenty-five pounds apiece; on top of that we had twenty-five pounds of grub to carry. Fifty pounds in all. Pongo had eighty pounds of grub to tote and the spade on top of that and he wasn't overloaded, though the ordinary native porter kicks at anything over seventy pounds.

Then one morning before the stars were out Shan gave us the order to hike and we hiked.

I reckon before that day's march was through I was cursing diamonds. The black didn't turn a hair and Shan was all right, but I was new to the business. However, I kept my head shut and pretended to like it. I had to keep on pretending that night when we camped, for we had no tent. Shan made a lean-to of bush and grass and mimosa sticks to keep the dew off, but it was mortal cold when the stars came out. However, I tried to keep thinking of all the fine times we would have when we'd hived that mine, if I wasn't crippled with rheumatism first; and between that and listening to Pongo's teeth chattering I fell asleep.

Next morning we began to know where we were, for we hadn't been marching an hour when I near tumbled over a rhino asleep in the grass and he stumbled on to his feet and Shan downed him with the express before he could do more than squeal. Shan cut lumps out of him that he said was good to eat and we had them for dinner and supper that night and breakfast next morning and dinner next day, till I began to understand what it means when chaps talk about living on their guns. You can't, without getting indigestion—that's to say if you are pressed for time and have to keep moving, for hunting takes time and it's not every day you come across game right in your path. We hadn't time for hunting so we had to take along as much of the rhino meat as we could carry and live on it as long as we could.

Two days after, Shan got a water buck. We'd camped by a big pool that ran west for miles with the blaze of sunset on it and we were lying down in the long grass, dead beat and resting before cutting stuff for a lean-to, when a herd of buck came down to drink right opposite, more than two hundred yards away.

The wind was blowing from them so they hadn't our scent and Shan dropped one. The meat, as much as we could carry of it, lasted us only another two days, for a chap can eat eight pounds a day if he lives on meat alone. And so it went on, luck always sending us something easy to get just as we were going to bite into our bully beef.

Ten days out we struck into the country where Shan had located the mine, the bleakest bit of land, more like the veldt down round the Vaal than anywhere else, with nothing moving on it but a hawk's shadow now and then chasing the wind.

Shan pointed out to away on the sky line where a whole line of little hills like kopjes stood out, each cut like a carving on the sky. "That's the place," said he; "we're in sight of it—right there it lies only half a day's march away."

It was more words than he had spoken for the last two days. He and the deaf-and-dumb black were a match pair in conversation and I tell you I was more than fed up with marching with them mutes. But the

sight of those kopjes and the smell of diamonds that seemed to come from them made me forget everything but the want to whoop. It was ten o'clock in the morning when we sighted them and getting along for three when we struck them and they were a funny lot of little hills close to, looked as if they'd been made for fun and forgotten by the Almighty—hundreds of them covering the scenery so's you couldn't get a clear view north, south, east or west when you were among them.

Shan was ahead, leading the way. He had a compass but he never bothered much with it for he had the sense of direction in his head same as an animal. He was ahead as I was saying when all of a sudden he stopped as dead as a telegraph pole and shot out one hand behind him. We stopped right there. Then we saw him down on his hands and knees going like a land crab and missed sight of him as he turned one of the kopjes.

A few minutes after he was back again.

"What's up?" I says.

"We're done," said Shan. "There's two blighters there on the job. We're dished."

"Hell!" said I.

We sat down with our backs to a kopje; the black took off a bit and sat down likewise. Then we listened to the wind. The wind in that place makes a noise like what a woman makes when she's rocking a baby and singing to it; it's the little hills maybe and the number of them, but I'd sooner listen to that hush-a-bye, hum-hum noise with the sun shining and nothing moving in the sky and a thousand square miles of silence all round.

"Well?" says I.

"Well?" says Shan.

"What's your move?" says I.

"I'm thinking," says he.

We listened to the wind some more. Then Shan suddenly got his hind legs under him.

"Come on," he says, "we've got to meet them and do a palaver—chase them off if we can, make terms if we can't."

"Right," says I.

He led off, I followed and the black came behind.

When we opened the ground there were the chaps. There was not much sign of digging. They'd knocked off work and were lying in the sun and all their camp was the ashes of a fire, a couple of bundles and a lump of deer meat to judge by the pelt it was wrapped in; a gun lay by the meat.

One of the chaps was a mighty big, red-bearded man; the other was a dark rat of a chap. They were in their shirts and near each of the two lay a belt with a big navy revolver; at least I judged that was their armaments by the size of the holsters, and I was right. Down and out scalawags they looked and when they sighted us they made a grab for their guns and before we could draw our automatics they had covered us.

"Hands up," cries the big man. We upped. All but Pongo who sat clean down on the ground at the sight of the firing party that was making ready to shoot. Then they came up close, guns leveled all the time, and without a word out of them they took our automatics.

"Where's your camp and gear?" asked the big man and they were the first words he spoke.

"Back there," says Shan pointing with his thumb over his shoulder.

"Any more men with you?" asks the other.

"Nope," says Shan.

"Bill," says the big blighter, "kick that black on his feet." Bill does. "Now right about march," says Red Beard, "and lead on to your camp." We tramped, with them behind us, and when we got to the kopje where our goods were lying we halted. They took stock of the stuff and then the big chap begins questioning us, Shan answering up and trying to lie, saying we belonged to a hunting party and we'd got lost. Making such a rotten show of a story I could have kicked him as he stood there.

"Well," says the big man when he'd finished, and looking at the spade Shan had forgot, "you got lost did you—hunting big game? Was you digging for them?"

Shan says nothing.

Then says the other, "You kin go and tell that yarn to the chaps in Salisbury when you get back. An' I've only to say this; if I find you there when I get back I'll tell my yarn, which is that you and your two mates came crawlin' on us with automatics an' if we hadn't covered you and stripped you of your weapons you'd have had us. Now then, shoulder your grub and hike."

"And our guns?" said Shan.

"Lord, we don't trust you with no guns," says the other. "Do we, Heffernan?"

"No, be gob," says the other, "we don't."

"But see here," says Shan, "we'll be lost without that rifle. Our grub won't hold

out and s'pose we meet up with hyenas? Lord, this is murder!"

"Come on, Heff," says the big chap, "and good day to you," says he to us. Then they turned on their heels and walked off back among the kopjes, leaving us there. Scuppered. You see how it was. They had us every way. It was a hundred to one we never got back to Salisbury without guns, ammunition or food enough. If we did we had nothing to show in the way of diamonds to make any man believe our story. And s'posing we did get some lunatic to back us these two scalawags would swear we tried to jump their claim and murder them. We had no reputation to back us, no money to pay a lawyer, no friends, no nothing.

"Well," I says, "now you've done it." Shan had sat him down on the ground with his knees up and his chin on them.

"That comes of my talking," says he. "You were always grumbling at me for a shut-head chap. It's your fault," he says, "for you've given me the habit of chattering. All me life," says he, "I've been successful when I've avoided drink and talking. And now look at us."

He sits and broods.

"Well," I says to him at last, "if you can talk enough to answer a question, may I ask you what are we going to do?"

"I'm thinking," he says.

The sun was setting now and there he sat, me watching him and the black standing by. Then of a sudden he gives the ground a bang with his fist.

"Thought of a plan?" I asks him.

"Yep," says he.

Not another word could I get from him and I concluded to leave it at that and set to to get supper, opening a can of bully beef. We had water enough in our bottles and there we sat while the stars came out, champing our food and as dumb as horses.

I didn't ask questions. I didn't much care about anything. I was so sick about being done in by those hooligans I wouldn't have minded much if they'd come out with their guns and potted us as we sat. You see I'd been figuring on a fortune, enough money to let a chap lead the life he wants to, and now everything had gone snap and it looked like working in a mud dredger till kingdom come. No, sir, I wouldn't have squealed if those barny coots had come out from among those kopjes and wiped us from the face of the veldt.

I lay down when I'd finished and dropped asleep not caring and was woke by a kick from Shan. The black was asleep on his side and the stars were standing in the sky solid as a roof. I judged it was about midnight. There was no moon. It was just before the new. But the stars gave all the light one wanted.

"I'm off," whispered Shan.

"What for?" I asked.

"Steal back our guns," said he.

"Lord," I said, "if they catch you they'll do for the lot of us."

"Sure," said he.

"All right," I said. "It's better than tramping to Salisbury on empty bellies and maybe an army corps of hyenas for escort. Off with you, but for God's sake go soft!"

He faded off among the kopjes and I turned from my side to my back and lay with my hands under my head looking up at the stars and listening. Then I kicked the black awake in case of accident. Then I lay down again listening. The wind had died dead and everything was silenter than a tomb but the stars seemed to shout. My mind kept hopping from the S'uthern Cross to a great, leaping brute of a star to eastward of it; it kept popping in and out of that big black hole that looks like as if some one had cut a piece out of the Milky Way with a dough punch.

I was wondering what it would feel like after I was shot and whether I'd find myself on the other side of the stars with wings on my back. Then I tried to think of all my sins but couldn't think of nothing but the old mud dredger in Beira harbor. Then I felt something running down the side of my cheek from my mouth and wiped it off and looked at my hand; it was blood. I'd near bitten my lip through without feeling it.

Time went. I fell to thinking of Shan and his chances. If that chap could only work in silence I reckoned now was his chance of doing business. I began to think he'd funked the job or fallen as dead as the night when, *crash*, ripping the heart out of the night came a volley of musketry.

III.

I'd forgot that a single shot fired in that place would make a thousand echoes; seemed to me that the great Boer War had woke up and broke loose again among those kopjes. Then it died out and on top of the

silence I heard Shan's voice shouting to me. It seemed like a dozen Shans giving tongue and I reckoned he was top dog and not calling for help and I hustled ahead, signing to the black to follow after me.

When I got to the open space where Heffernan and his pal had made their camp there was Shan standing with an automatic in each hand and there was Heffernan lying on his face under the stars and the big chap lying on his back.

Shan from what I could see had stolen up to them when they were asleep and nicked the automatics. Whether he'd potted them first or whether they'd woke up and begun the business I wasn't going to inquire. If I'd been a magistrate I'd have asked Shan why he hadn't nicked the rifles he was after instead of the automatics; but I wasn't a magistrate.

Shan without a word out of him pointed to the body of Heffernan and then away among the kopjes. Then him and me between us got it by the arms and dragged it off and dumped it a few hundred yards away out of sight. We did the same with the body of the big man, the black helping. After that we came back and sat down on top of our diamond mine and I reckon if I'd been a rooster I'd have started to crow.

"Shan," said I, "how did you do it? Spit it out, Pongo can't hear."

"Potted them," said Shan.

"Sure," said I. "You can use your left hand as good as your right and you had two automatics. You were as good as a machine-gun battery. Were they asleep when you crept in on them?"

"You bet they were," says Shan.

That was all I could get out of him and I left it at that. He'd gone back to the shut-head business and I don't blame him, seeing it was his nature and that he worked better with a muzzle on.

Next morning we turned over the dunnage of those two chaps and came on half a dozen small diamonds done up in a bit of paper. They'd spotted the mine right enough but hadn't done more than scratched round with their knives. Then we turned to with the spade and dug like dogs for the most of that day, here and there making two or three lucky hits, but a bit disappointed on the whole. I wasn't but Shan was. He reckoned the pipe of blue clay wasn't as rich nor as big as he'd counted on. Still it was a good big fortune for the likes of us if we could bring it to market.

I didn't say that the vultures had found out Heffernan and his pal. They had, and it wasn't pleasant to hear them quarreling there, back among the kopjes all the time we were grubbing on the hunt for diamonds. Seems sort of heartless our not burying the remains seeing we had a spade, but we couldn't bring ourselves to it. Besides, what's the good? I'd a lot sooner be left lying in the open when I get like that than smothered under half a ton of clay. So we let them lie and didn't care who discovered them, for there was no one to tell, the black being deaf and dumb and Shan and myself the only parties in the know.

Next day we spent smoothing over the ground where we'd been digging so that if other parties were to come along they wouldn't see our work. Then having buried the navy revolvers and the gun belonging to those hooligans we hiked for Salisbury, our specimens in our pockets and our tails up.

IV.

We got along fine for the first day. I didn't bother about Shan's shut head. It was like walking with two deaf mutes but my head was so full of what I'd do with my money that I didn't want to talk. I'd been working the thing out in my head and had come to the conclusion that the De Beers stunt wasn't for us. I wasn't after a big fortune and Johannesburg is a long way from Beira. I figured that we'd better pull the Hebrew at Salisbury that had sold us our guns and gear into the show, sell out for as much as we could get and think ourselves lucky.

It wasn't only the want of ready money that made me think like that but the fact of those two dead chaps lying behind us. I knew we couldn't be touched not even for justifiable homicide, seeing that only Shan and myself could give the show away. But mind's a queer thing and that night I dreamed I was going to be hanged for doing in Heffernan and his pal. I was as innocent as a milch cow, but there you are. Dead men are dead men. Even if the chaps had been shot by Shan without a chance of shooting back they deserved their gruel since they'd stripped us of weapons and given us over to wild beasts, so to say. But *still* there you are. Those corpses were after me and I was unhappy. So was Shan, I ex-

pect, for two days later when I showed him my mind he agreed to talk with the trader chap and sell out and quit. We did this later on and managed to get twenty-five hundred dollars gold coin out of the business. I'm getting ahead of my story, though. But not much.

What I'm coming to is a thing that happened two days later. Lord! What a volcano we were walking on all that time without knowing it—with the diamonds in our pocket and blackmail or the gallows walking either side of us.

Two days later, as I was saying, toward evening I was a long way ahead of the others. It was a bit of bad country, all broken with thorn and cactus spread in patches. I'd stopped to light the camp fire when I heard the *crack* of an automatic. Looking back, I couldn't see anything of the others. Presently along came Shan all alone.

"Where's Pongo?" said I.

"Way back there," said Shan. "Shapira near did us."

"How's that?" I asked.

"I was behind the black," said he. "He didn't know I was so close to him. A wait-a-bit thorn ripped his leg and I heard him say 'Damn.'"

"Great Scott!" I says, "then he's not a deaf mute!"

"I'll bet you a dollar he is," says Shan.

But knowing Shan and his ways I didn't take him.

He'd killed the black, that was clear enough—a bit too clear for me, even though the chap deserved his gruel. I'm against killing. But there was no use talking to Shan. He'd done according to his lights and he wasn't a chap to argue with. So I kept my head shut and next morning we hiked on to Salisbury.

We had a two hours' interview with the Hebrew in a back room smelling of kerosene oil and Boer tobacco and he took the diamonds from us giving us twenty-five hundred dollars gold coin. We sold the lot, all but two, which I kept back telling Shan I had a meaning.

When we were in the street with the money in our pockets I took him by the arm and led him a bit out of the town and we sat down by the railway line on a balk of timber.

"Look here," I says, "what's wrong with De Beers?"

"I don't know," he says, "ask me another."

"I mean," says I, "what's wrong with having a try to sell them that mine? I know I was off it the other day, but it's different now. I feel a different man now we've got that money in our fists and I want more, that's a fact. The appetite comes with eating, as the Frenchmen say, and I'm hungry."

"So'm I," says Shan. "The only thing that bothers me is those three stiffs."

"Forget them," I says. "I was more nervous than you, but I've lost all that now I've touched gold. It wasn't our fault. They'd have done us in, wouldn't they? And who's ever to know? My mind's clear enough about them."

"You didn't do the killing," says Shan. "Not that I wouldn't do it again. Swabs! Only it makes a chap a bit careful. Well, I don't see why we shouldn't. There's no evidence and skeletons don't talk much. When would you start?"

"To-day," I says. "We can take the night train and we've time to get a decent rig-out first."

We started that night and a mortal long journey it was, through the Matoppos and past Palapwe and Kanga till we struck Diamond Town, never wanting to see another railway again.

We put up at the best hotel and next morning with our hearts in our mouths we came into the head office of De Beers and two minutes after we were sitting before a desk table with the acting manager at the other side of it. Just a plain sort of man without any diamonds on him, friendly sort of chap that made me feel everything was all right, and we were sure to pull off the deal.

"We've come to sell you a diamond mine," says Shan right out.

"Whereabouts?" asked the manager as if diamond mines were lying thick all round.

Then Shan begins his yarn, telling how we were out hunting and struck blue clay and picked up two specimens, but being short of food couldn't stop to look for more.

Manager sucks it all in, then he asks again for the whereabouts.

"I can't tell you that," says Shan, "without a contract."

The manager says right out he can't make contracts on nothing and Shan had better go away and buy the land, but if he chooses to tell, the good faith of the De Beers company was a sufficient guarantee that we would be fairly dealt with.

I knew that right enough and I says: "Go on, Shan, tell it all and show the stones."

Shan hands over the stones and spits out the location, giving so many days' march from Salisbury and the figuration of the country.

The manager goes and fetches a map and broods over it.

Then he says: "I'm sorry but you've come to sell us our own property."

"Your which?" cries Shan.

"All round there the mining rights are ours," says the manager. "At least they belong to an allied company—see the map. That blue ground you speak of is known—rather poor stuff—doubt if it will pay the working—but I hear they are beginning next month. Was no one there?"

Then it leaped into my mind that the chaps Shan had done in were no toughs but companies' men put there on guard.

"No," says Shan, "there wasn't."

"Well, I'm sorry," says the manager, "it was decent of you to come to us. These two diamonds belong to our allied company, but I'll take it on me to give them back to you for your trouble. Good day to you."

Outside I said to Shan: "Shan, those two chaps——"

"I know," says he. "Kim on! I want to get out of Africa and get out of Africa quick!"

I parted with him at Durban, he taking half our pile, near a thousand dollars, me the other half, and the last words he said were: "Well, here's luck to you. I've been a bad man, but I'm never going to bother to be good, for as sure as certain if I get to heaven I'll find De Beers has taken the best seats."

"Well," I says, "I wouldn't worry too much about that, Shan, not till you get there."

"The System," by Mr. Stacpoole appears in the next issue.

INTENSIFIED INTEREST

HAVING "become unexpectedly rich" during the war, Mr. and Mrs. Profits had treated themselves to a European tour as soon as they thought that part of the world safe for travel. Returning home, they entertained the neighbors with highly colored accounts of the thrills they had accumulated. He was particularly enthusiastic about the pictures he had seen in the Paris galleries.

"The one I liked best," he confided to a bored, old lady who had done a lot of sight-seeing herself, "represented Adam and Eve, with the apple and the serpent in the foreground."

"And what made it all the better, you see," put in his wife, "was that we already knew the anecdote!"

INVOLUNTARY CONFESSION

WHEN you are tempted to voice impulsive, derogatory criticism of others, hesitate! Judgment is confession. The only possible way for you to size up the motives actuating a man under given conditions is to decide what you would think and feel under the same conditions. What you say about him is, therefore, a detailed statement of the kind of person you would be if you were situated as he is. What you attribute to him is a confession of what you are. When you, without certain facts to go on, declare that a rich man is a snob, you merely proclaim that, if you had riches, you would yourself have the impulses and viewpoint of a snob.

The kindly critic is, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, a good man with possibilities for greatness. The faultfinder and "knocker" is punishing another for the shortcomings of his own character. "Judge not, that ye be not judged," was a warning against exposure of one's weak points.

The Spark in the Tinder

By Holman Day

Author of "The Psychomancers," "On the Long Leash," Etc.

(A **Six-Part Story—Part VI.**)

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE NIGHT.

ON the night when the pilgrims from Boisvert lodged humbly in Quebec's Lower Town the mistress of the Double T was installed grandly on The Heights in the city's most palatial hotel.

She had been defiant when she made her declaration to John Lang that all was not over between them. The spirit of defiance was persisting in her. She had always been able to assume that attitude with men, even when she was merely a slip of a girl in the woods, meeting her first ardent wooers, her chin uplifted, her narrowed eyes flashing her disdain—as naturally a protector of herself as one of the wild things of the forest would be.

In the matter of Lang her mood was of a mixed quality. She was defying the conditions with which he had surrounded himself, because that impulse helped the new determination to win him for herself. She was proceeding according to the code of those materialists who are convinced that nobody will think well of a person unless that person thinks extremely well of himself. She was putting herself into a condition of mind where she would be able to cope with this amazing, new personage whom she had overtaken on the Chaudière highway. She was encouraged, being no analyst of mental qualities, by his spirit of humility. In the back of her head she was patronizing this man whom she had seen trudging in the dust; she held to that last mental photograph of him, for her own stimulation of purpose.

Lang, she thought, was going through some sort of a period of folly and she was sure that she would be able to make him see the way back to common sense.

She knew that she was the mistress of much wealth; she did not know how much—she had never asked; she was waiting for John Lang to tell her, desiring to share with him the joy of realization.

She was not able to grasp the idea of great amounts—it would have meant little to her to know in detail her holdings and their totals. Money was for the day—for what it would buy for the enjoyment of the day—the jewels that flashed radiance into her admiring eyes, the comfort of attire and surroundings, the subservience of underlings. Exploitation of wealth made her conscious of its value—of her own importance as its possessor. And if she were important, desirable, powerful, who was John Lang to deny her influence and repel her, when his mind and his natural desires were brought back to normal? In Anita's judgment, being pretty much a pagan, a man who would persist in putting aside such love and riches as she could offer was merely suffering from a mania that must be cured.

Therefore, she nursed her mood of magnitude and catered to her sense of power and possessions.

She was glad because she had ordered her maid to pack several cases. A trail of lackeys followed her when she walked from her car into the hotel, each lackey with a case. She demanded the best suite that was available.

She took no thought about what custom prescribed for a woman who had been recently widowed. She had been mourning only for John Lang—and that period of mourning was over. She attired herself for dinner in resplendent fashion, with the aid of a hotel maid, regretting that she had not brought her own attendant from home; but it had been in her hopes that John Lang, at sight of her, would desert his folly of the dusty road, and she wanted no maid to share the intimacy of the limousine.

She dined in the public hall and was proud of the attention that she attracted.

But when she was back in her suite, alone, and had put off the rich garb and the jewels and sat beside the window, looking out on the river and the lights and up into the starred heavens, she set herself to ponder on the manner of John Lang when he had last talked to her.

At the first, it was only a vague, indefinable uneasiness that she felt. She had never bothered her head much with introspection or with reflection on the subtler incentives for human action. She had seen the visible objects of desire, had promptly desired, had reached out, had employed the beauty that was powerful in the winning of the ordinary run of men and had prevailed.

But it was borne in on her that John Lang had been fortified that day by something against which she had thrown herself only to her own hurt. Her vague uneasiness grew swiftly into anguish of apprehension. There was something deep, strange, compelling that actuated men at times and she did not understand it. Her sense of power and ability of persuasion were slipping from her in spite of all her efforts to assure herself. She clenched her fists and tried to put away such thoughts; she moaned when other thoughts came to her. She had been able to keep them down in the past, when she had been dealing with only material matters—holding her mind on her desires and her ability to proceed in accordance with those desires.

What was this wall against which she was vainly beating—and what was the mystery of Sainte Anne—the thing that was calling John Lang to go on foot, wheeling a cripple in a chair?

The next morning she went forth, seeking a solution.

She did not call her limousine; she went in plain attire and walked to a railroad station to which her inquiries directed her.

She alighted from the train along with many other women and men and she beheld the twin towers of the basilica and went near enough to the door to hear the pulsing roll of organ music and the chant of voices. But she did not enter. She had never been inside a church. She had heard lay preachers in the woods and they did not interest her. According to her notions, church services consisted of prosy talks about goodness, and most of the folks she had known went to church only for the looks of the thing.

She strolled about the village of Sainte Anne, along the narrow board walks, past the little shops crowded close to the street, elbowing strangers and wondering what there was in the place to attract so many persons. She ate lunch in an inn where the linen was spotted and the dishes were nicked and the food was greasy.

Constantly her depression of spirits, her sense of importance, went lower and lower. She went on and walked slowly past many booths where folks were buying little images and crucifixes and other strange knick-knacks.

There was a great statue in the yard before the church—the statue of a woman who held a small child in her arms. Flanking the doors of the basilica were other statues in robes. She felt no interest in them. She did take a moment's interest in a man who was crouched at the gateway of the yard, a man with empty eye sockets. He was rattling a few Canadian coppers in a tin cup. She threw a bill into the cup and it made no sound and he did not thank her as he thanked the others who dropped pennies.

There was a hill up which whiplashed a broad gravel walk along terraces. By the side of the walk were groups of statuary, the figures molded in heroic size. She stood long in front of one of these groups and found it very dreadful, according to her way of thinking. A man with savage countenance of bronze, an expression of malice hardened everlastingly into fierce determination was driving a nail into the foot of a man who lay on a cross.

After a while she came to a building where a broad stairway led directly up from a porch. Men and women and children were slowly climbing those stairs on their knees. She wondered what there was above to attract them and started to walk up. A cassocked priest halted her and told her politely she must go up on her knees. She would not do that and she turned away and left the place.

She saw many persons going into the church by way of the wide doors but her prejudices against going to church persisted. Then she walked far out into the places where the houses were fewer, along the road which led to Quebec. She sat for a long time beside a wayside trough where the water came plashing down from the high hill. She was looking for a man to come along, wheeling a crippled girl in a chair. But when she took thought on distances she real-

ized that he must still be far from Sainte Anne.

There was nothing in the place for her —she was growing more lonely and heart-sick every moment.

There was her grand suite in the big hotel! She wanted to go back to it—to recover her poise and her sense of power! However, when she arrived at the railroad station in the village she remembered the supreme misery of her night thoughts in the hotel and was afraid to go back to the scene where those reflections would be revived.

The afternoon had nearly dragged its length and she found food in another inn and sat for a time in the tawdry parlor of the place, looking at the pictures of holy personages on the walls. In the twilight the chimes sent their slow melody over the village and the countryside. From the inn window she beheld a movement of the people in one direction and she went out and joined the throngs.

While the chimes played and the organ pealed a long procession came out of the door of the church. It swung with slow and solemn tread and went up the walk along the terraces. There were many torches above the heads of the marchers. Constantly the cassocked priests and the men who followed them chanted. The slow pulsations of their voices echoed back and forth between the walls of the great church and the steep hillside. The smoke of the torches swirled up among the branches of the trees and the hill was veiled in a mystic shroud.

Anita asked somebody what all this meant and she was told that it was the solemn procession that made the stations of the cross on the night before the Feast Day of the Good Sainte Anne.

She began to be aware of an emotion that had never entered her soul before. It was something that was issuing from her anguished uncertainties of the night in the hotel on The Heights. She had never known that there was any mystery in religion; she had merely viewed the outside of a matter that was reserved for folks who liked to listen to sermons or hear a choir sing hymns. Her emotions, if ever they had possessed any especial depth, had only been concerned with human affairs. But now she found herself swayed by new and strange and vivid emotions which she could not understand.

When the slow procession returned and reentered the church she followed. With John Lang in her thoughts, she was seeking what she had come to Sainte Anne to discover, if she could. Just inside the broad door there was a display of crutches and canes and all sorts of evidences of human infirmities. She saw a man add another crutch, thatching it with the rest; he went hobbling along into the church.

Anita sat down in a pew near the door.

Splendidly illuminated, far up the nave near the marble rail of the chancel loomed a splendidly illuminated replica of the statue which she had seen that day in the yard—the woman who held the infant in her arms. Jewels gleamed on the statue's head.

The organ, hidden from Anita, rolled great volumes of sound through the vast interior and melodious voices chanted. Everlastingly people came and went. They bobbed at the entrances of the pews with respectful genuflections. Others passed into the arched entrances of the chapels that flanked the main body of the church.

It was the night before the feast day and pilgrims were constantly arriving. Train loads were being poured out at the station. All the forty confessionals were crowded, men and women awaiting their turn. A priest mounted into the pulpit and solemnly dwelt upon the need of telling one's sins to God through the intercession of a tender church and of the saints who pitied those who had sinned through human weakness.

Hour by hour, the girl who had never known the mystery of the divine searching of the heart sat there and listened. At midnight the confessionals were still crowded, the masses were going on. She saw all those thousands owning to their sins and coming away with faces calmed by peace or brightened by new hope. She had seen other persons come out of some woods camp or from a wayside schoolhouse, of a Sunday, their countenances smoothed by the same contentment that marked those folks coming from the chapels of confession.

What did it all mean?

She ventured to put questions to a woman who knelt in the pew and was telling her beads.

"I don't know so as to explain. But God forgives all sinners through the saints and the blessed Mother. Ask the priest. He will tell you."

Something was awaking in Anita—creature of impulse who had been always a feather on the tide of strong emotion.

The music of the organ, the chanting voices did not soothe her; the sounds stirred more deeply her longing for help from somebody—somehow—till that longing became agonizing. She had been depending on John Lang. He had refused to help her.

She rose and went to a confessional but she had not the courage to kneel and appeal to the unseen. She wanted to look into somebody's eyes when she told her story; her spirituality was too benumbed to understand any other way of confessing.

She did not dare to remain any longer in that place, the influences of which seemed to be tearing the secrets from her soul. The feeling that she must tell somebody—ask help from somebody—had become an obsession that was forcing her to a state of hysteria. She was afraid she would leap upon the seat of the pew and cry aloud her appeal for help; in that throng there must be somebody who would know how to aid her. The feeling that had come over her was so new and strange that she had not provided weapons in her armory of self with which to resist it.

She fled from the church and was amazed to note that dawn was gray in the eastern sky. Breathing the fresh air she felt the relief of one who had escaped from danger and she was resolved to put that danger behind her. Therefore, she made hasty inquiry of a person whom she met in the village street. He told her that there would not be any train for Quebec for many hours. She decided to walk; exertion, physically, might help to dull her sharp-edged thoughts.

She was glad to be headed away from a place whose effect on her had been so mysterious—where her secrets had been imperiled.

But as she walked on despondency overtook her and kept step with her. She had not found what those others had seemed to find at Sainte Anne; and she realized how bitterly she needed counsel and consolation. She knew that she would not find those aids in her lonely suite in the grand hotel. There were no friends awaiting her there. The woman in the pew had said that the saints were friends. However, she hurried on along the narrow road. There was danger back there where the words had been striving to rush out past the sobs in her throat.

Borne to her ears on the morning breeze came the mellow clangor of the chimes of Sainte Anne. She strove to hurry faster but she could not. They said it was back there that one could find peace. She stopped and listened and wavered. Then she turned and slowly retraced her steps.

Advice—and counsel and consolation!

Some mysterious power had broken down the strong resolution that had enabled her to keep certain thoughts tamed and in their allotted places in the dark cells of her conscience. She felt that self-control was leaving her. She was dominated by an influence against which she had no further will to fight.

She remembered that once Serenus Trask had asked her if there ever had been insanity in her family; his query had followed on prolonged scrutiny of her after one of her fits of emotionalism provoked by some happening.

She did not know anything about her family. Now she was wondering. Her temples throbbed. She wanted to shriek there in the morning silence of the countryside. The sound of bells—mere bells—had obliged her to turn and go toward them in spite of what she had considered was a definite resolve to keep on to a place where she would never hear those chimes again. She shuddered when she remembered those confessionals and the men and women kneeling at the wickets and murmuring into unseen ears the recital of their sins.

She kept on toward Sainte Anne; but every little while she looked anxiously over her shoulder, seeking the expected coming of a man who was wheeling a crippled child in a chair.

She was between the magnets of the mystic and the mortal; she was wondering whether the mystic or the mortal could render the aid which she so cruelly needed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TRUTH FROM THE EYES.

That morning peculiar constraint marked the manner of Mavis with Lang; and his mood matched her own.

Knowing Anita, he did not permit himself to hope that she would not fulfill her implied threat, and he glanced up nervously whenever a motor car whirred past them on its way to Sainte Anne. Sight of her, and his approaching and inevitable return to that world of his former activities—a return already heralded by the declaration he had made to the clubman in the valley of the

Chaudière was stirring into uncomfortable activity the self that had been John Lang; a self that jeered at this incredibly childish and superstitious thing that the new John Lang was doing, insisting with diabolical plausibility that it was but a phase of the old, self-advertising instinct of the Lang who had sought selfish ease of mind and personal advancement by a show of generosity which, so he was honest enough to acknowledge, mocked the real thing. He wondered whether all his new impulse of tenderness and penance might come from the weakness of weary nerves and a blind man's long thoughts and paralyzing fears.

Then, mentally canvassing all the reasons that had sent him faring in the open along the broad highway, he was almost willing to cast aside all the casuistry and admit, man fashion, that the compelling motive of his action was the deepest motive of human life —strong, earnest, self-effacing love of man for maid; in offering to help one who was dear to Mavis he realized that he had looked forward to these days of close companionship and leveling intimacy with her.

Mavis walked silently, intent on the woman conflict that woke in her as she neared the place where she had promised to reveal her secret.

Therefore, depression beclouded them within sight of the town and in hearing of the bells that should have lent poignancy to their joyful expectation. Jessie, sensitive to their mood, huddled in her chair, silent and wide-eyed. Even Jock Duncan was dour and silent that morning, wearing the air of a man who had allowed a will-o'-the-wisp to lead him but who had set himself to carry through a fool's errand.

They were going down the long slope into the village of Sainte Anne when a woman rushed from the wayside and clutched at Lang's arm, halting him; a woman so haggard from sleeplessness and fear, so dishevelled and dusty and distraught that it took his unready wits a few seconds to make sure that it was really Anita Trask who beat on his breast with her clenched fists as she raved from command to accusation.

"You planned it to get me here, you John Lang, you tool of the law! And their devilment has got me and pulled up into my throat all the words I had hidden! They're choking me—choking me—do you hear? Once you helped me to hold back the words. Now you've got to help me to get rid of them! You thought those clever ones would get me to talk with the rest of the fools that were doing that thing they call confessing —but I'm afraid, I'm afraid! Only I've got to get rid of these words in my throat and get peace again. You put an iron band around my throat—you did all the talking in the courtroom! Now you must take away that band!" She bared her teeth and struggled with her fingers at an invisible circlet on her neck. "I've got to feel the way those people felt in the confessionals last night—not afraid any more, not covering things any more! And you know how to help me, you know how to speak for people to get them free. You shall do it for me! Do you hear? Else I'll——"

He gripped the hands which pommeled him and forced them to stillness while he strove to warn and quiet her by his steady look. When he broke in on her with a sharp command to be quiet till time and place were suitable, she wrenched herself free with the shrill, short cry of mounting hysteria.

"I tell you, now!" she raved. "I will not suffer like this. You worked on me to get me here! You set those hidden men in the confessionals to frightening me all through the dark, dark night! You want to be rid of me and get out of me what I owe to your law! I've got to let you do it. I can't stand any more. I can't keep my head steady any more. Now that I'm letting you do as you want to, you must do it. Hear me now and let me have my peace again or I'll scream to all this town—I'll run up and down the streets screaming about you and what you want of me!"

"Stop! Listen to me a moment!" Beyond all doubting Lang knew that this was no mere whirlwind of Anita's temper, unstable though he had found that nature in the past. This half-demented creature, worked upon by some impulse at whose whole scope he dared not guess, was bent on making a confession that he shrank from hearing even though he felt there would be no surprise for him in what she had to say.

Crazed she was, to be sure, but in a flash of realization he perceived the working of the Great Law which he was beginning to understand—the Law that evil unwittingly invokes for its own undoing. He felt that he was a servant of that Law.

"I will listen to all you have to say," he assured her. "But you must come with me into the village to the proper place. An-

other must listen along with me. I'll arrange it. If you are determined to speak out, it must be as the law provides." With impulse to put a check on her speech he directed her attention to his companions whom she had been ignoring. "These friends of——"

"Friends?" She flashed a glance at them. "Thieves!"

There was utter contempt in her tone. There was fury in her mien. She turned her back on the others. "These people all work together, you poor fool, to steal honest selves away and sell them to whatever it is that rules in this place and makes people afraid. They've worked on me and they've worked on you, and you're not yourself any more than I am myself. Do you dare to tell me you're the man I used to know? Don't you know you are different, John Lang, and can you tell me what it is that changed you?"

In the stress of the moment there was no utterance possible save the simple truth. "Admitting that you find a change in me, I can only tell you what started that change." He did not intend to be cruel; he was in no mood to bare his soul before this distracted girl; but he felt that she would understand, out of her knowledge of her plot with the squatters, the full significance of the rift between him and her. "I am changed by the words and example of the old man who was called Ashael."

"I knew it! I saw what he could do! And I hated him—hated him! He meant to put me away from you. It is his spell that is making me say the words I don't want to say. But he is too strong for me. I can't fight any longer. Come—wherever it is we must go. Hurry!"

Disregarding the others she caught at Lang's arm and jerked him along with her for a few paces; but with a reassuring nod to Mavis he pushed away the clinging hands, strode back to Jessie's chair and grasped the handles again, calmly taking a pace that forced Anita to a normal gait. At first she repeatedly darted ahead, spurred by the thoughts that kept her whispering and glancing from side to side; then she came sidling back and remained close to him as they entered the main street of the thronged village.

"About that old man—Ashael?" she questioned with crafty repression. "Do you believe the lies about me? Do you believe I told them to set that fire?"

Over her shoulder, as she stood, he noted on a window the sign, "Raoul Grivois, Avocat;" and early though the hour was he saw a man at a desk inside. Lang went on, his face grim with distaste for what was before him to do. Anita repeated her question, her tone sharp with demand.

"Ashael is gone," he parried quietly, "and there will be words enough to speak without troubling his name in this matter. Be quite sure that he would wish you no ill and that he would bid you have no fear of him, whatever the manner of his taking had to do with you. I feel sure of what I say. Even at the last he was calm—he had no reproaches. As I have told you, his words and his example urged me to make a test of the comfort and philosophy that are in humility. So, I have taken this road. And the road ends here!"

He halted with the subdued throng at the church itself, as he spoke, gesturing Jock Duncan to wait with the wagon; and turning the chair from the highway he wheeled it into the yard, close to the statue of Sainte Anne in the grassy park.

"You and Jessie are safe here," he assured Mavis gently. "I will tell your father where to put up his horses, and then he will come to you. I will be back as soon as I have done what I must for Mrs. Trask. You are not afraid?" His solicitude was profound; in her eyes there was a wistful dread which he was not able to interpret.

Under his compassionate gaze Mavis' courage came back to her. "I am not afraid!" This was Mavis with her former poise; she looked up at him with clear and confident straightforwardness; and John Lang permitted himself one long second's refreshment in the blessedness of her eyes before he turned away to guide the fretting Anita to the ordeal of Raoul Grivois, Avocat.

That individual, a brown, gnomelike, old-young man, looked over his shoulder at their entrance, pushed his chair back hastily and came forward with a profound salutation.

"I am honored, Monsieur Lang!"

"You know me?"

"When I was taking a special course in your city, monsieur, I went to court always when you pleaded a case."

"That you know me will make my business more easily done. This is Mrs. Trask."

The discreet Grivois permitted himself to

see the evidently fearful woman for the first time and made her welcome with a deep bow.

"Mrs. Trask," Lang proceeded, "is the widow of a former client of mine and she is —she desires——"

Anita flung out her hands so suddenly that Grivois jumped. "I killed a man. That is why I am here—you! I am here to talk to your law and make peace with it. I killed Mack Templeton." She hurried on. "And I killed another man—I suppose your law would say that—though it was not as I killed the first. That second man was a fool!"

"You will take down this statement, Attorney Grivois," cut in Lang; and the steadiness of his tone brought the dismayed *avocat* to himself and set him at his desk before pen and paper. Rapidly but with dreadful coherence Anita Trask told of the killing of Mack Templeton, her confession tallying in essential details with the picture John Lang had reconstructed of the affair out of his knowledge of the crime in the Brassua woods and its aftermath.

"Then a fool came to me in my home that I had bought with blood and had given my soul for, and he kept saying to me, 'Mack Templeton! Mack Templeton!' Kept saying it and threatening what more he had to tell. How could I know that he was only guessing? He had a revolver to hush me with, or to kill my husband with—I don't know which. He was promising dreadful things! But I got my arms around him before he knew what I meant to do and I—the thing was done somehow. I don't know how! It killed him. Somehow I pulled the trigger. And there was the old man, Ashael —not that it was with him as with the other; only I hated him and was afraid; but I did not set the fire with my own hand. Only he is the one who wants me to tell everything!" Her mania again overwhelmed her. "And I want to get it over with—all of it—all—all——"

With a quieting hand on her shoulder Lang checked her rising voice and sketched to the dumfounded *avocat* the essentials of the confession, briefly and dispassionately.

When Lang halted and devoted himself to deep thought there was silence in the room until he went on.

"In the affair of young Trask," he said, "I am, morally, more to be blamed than this poor girl. Yet the law leaves me to work out my responsibility without interference."

"*Oui*—yes, Monsieur Lang," stammered Grivois. "It is—it is—a sad business!"

It was plain that Lang lacked words with which to express his own convictions on that point. He walked across the room and came back and faced the attorney.

"This girl has been tried and set free on that charge. Now you can understand, sir, the spirit in which I attempted her defense. I, myself, was on trial before Almighty God," he declared with deep feeling, "while she was before the bar of human justice. You and I understand that her life cannot be put in jeopardy again on that charge. As to Templeton he was a renegade who forced this wife of his to the thing she did. Yet an innocent man is held for Templeton's murder and we must consider what is to be done in that man's case." His voice broke when he cried, "My good Grivois, the boundaries of true justice lie wide outside the limits of our statute law!"

Avocat Grivois gestured helplessly.

Then the attorney set a chair at his desk. "It is true, monsieur! But meantime—if madame will be so kind—she is to sign here and make oath!"

Anita grasped at the pen which he proffered with a bow; she signed with frantic haste. When she had cast the pen from her she waited, looking expectantly from one man to the other. The office clock ticked off ominous seconds. In the street outside the jostling throngs chattered and laughed.

"Well"—her hand went to her throat and her roving eyes stayed on Lang at last, widening and growing wild—"where is my freedom for telling this? Where is my peace again? I have told the truth and all the truth. I have signed it before the law. I have looked into a face and spoken the truth. But I am the same. And the whispering devils in me are the same. Have you lied to me? Is there some more to do? Is there somebody else to tell?"

"Your peace will be given to you in good time, Anita," Lang answered her gravely; "but it is not a gift in the power of man."

Her grief-stricken wail was so keen and despairing that both men winced.

"Where do I go for it, then?" She turned to the timid Grivois. "Is it only those in the church who know how to find help? And how do they find it? And who will tell me? Is that where the old man is driving me? Is it in churches that the dead folks want us to make our peace with them? Then I

will go there to them—I will tell this over again there—I have gone too far to stop now—and still the words choke me!"

Before either man could move or lift a hand she had rushed to the door, torn it open and was away, running.

"She must not!" Grivois spun around in a circle, seeking his hat, straining toward the door.

"She will go to the church," Lang assured the lawyer with a certainty which stirred his own wonder. "Send a man—or go yourself—to watch her, if you will, but let us show all the consideration we can. It may be—there is always the chance, you know—that she may find that peace she seeks."

Grivois crossed himself unobtrusively and busied himself with putting away the papers before leaving the office. "As you say, Monsieur Lang, she may—and to-day of all days. You will come again later—when?"

"After the feast-day procession is over."

The crowd in the narrow street had settled to a slow-creeping mass, and automobiles were lined close to the board sidewalks as Lang stepped down from the notary's office. There was no sign of Anita; and so rapidly had moved the sequence of her coming and her confession, and so nightmarish had been the distress of her story and her danger that when a gloved hand was thrust from a touring car to bar his way, he had a flicker of expectation that he would behold Anita's face, dispelling what seemed like a dream; he would not have been surprised to see that face, laughing and mischievous once more.

But Reba Donworth smiled at him, greeted him and quickly stepped from the car to join him. She nodded an apology to her friends, took his arm and led him away through the crush. She chatted composedly, her topic the picturesqueness of the occasion that had brought the throngs to the village of Beaupré.

After a few rods a tree-shaded lane invited Lang's volunteer guide and she led him off the street and halted him beneath a big willow. As he stopped in obedience to her pressure on his arm she stepped in front of him and threw her veil back over her hat. Her poise was perfect. He lacked self-control lamentably.

"The advantage is with me, John. I have surprised you. But I knew you would be here to-day. Is all well with you?"

It was like her to face him squarely, like her to disdain the revealing strong light that showed unfamiliar shadows faintly laid in under her eyes, and the delicately indicated threat of lines running from nose to mouth, betokening old pain and enduring courage. A handsome woman still; fit mate for a man at his finest, a woman capable of unusual determinations and their determined carrying out.

Once he had loved her by the standards of the man he then was. Now, giving full due to the splendid poise and grace and womanliness of her, he felt nothing save an all-masculine dread of her reason for seeking him; her declaration that she was seeking him was frank.

"How—how did you know you'd find me at Sainte Anne?"

At that she laughed delicately but with such unfeigned amusement that John Lang blushed like a boy at his gaucherie and grinned back at her with a twinkle of shamefaced apology.

She patted his arm with a friendly palm. "It's all right, John! We're simply agreed at last on a most essential fact. But it may set your last qualm at rest if I tell you something about myself, even though you won't see at once why I tell you. Remembering what you said to me once in the way of certain permission, what I have to tell you may comfort you. Some day—not soon but in my own good time—I shall marry a man who is as strong as you are, so wise that he knows he needs my sort of woman to help him, and kind enough to take—what I have to give him and be content. I am beginning to hope that I shall give him more than I suspect now that I have to give."

She smiled into his wondering, questioning eyes.

"May I know—is it simply a future—is it——"

"It's a present reality—back there in that car with my friends, John."

"Thank God!" he blurted with a sincerity that stirred her amusement.

"Enough of me and my affairs! I came here to speak to you of this." She opened her wrist bag, took out a travel-worn letter and put it into his hand, holding it there between both her own. "If you were not a changed John Lang you could not have inspired that letter, nor should I have traveled many miles to get it to you. But you are changed. I heard! Now I see! Tell me—do you want me to say that I forgive,

fully and freely, any unhappiness that may have come to me through you?"

Lang clenched his free hand about the small ones that were holding his. "Reba, it's one of the things I had set myself to work for——"

"Forgiveness is yours, John. It's the sort of gift that is a responsibility; and I have learned its value through suffering and I have learned that only in giving do we get. This letter between our palms is a token of that truth! It's a wonder that the holy flame of it doesn't burn our hands. It's my blessed privilege to give you this letter with its message of love; because only a woman who loved in full measure could write such a letter. You love her, don't you, John?"

"Mavis?" The question came from him almost in a cry.

Reba nodded in full understanding, answered by his tone. "Yes—you love her! Never forget to tell her so. The gift of love is a tremendous thing to receive, also—the greatest! And so—this is good-by between us, John, my dear friend, and God bless you both!"

What John Lang tried to stammer of protestation and gratitude he hardly knew so choked he found himself with joy and wonder and humility. He stood in his tracks, allowing her to go on her way.

"Oh, you women, you women!" he marveled, watching the graceful figure pass along the dapplings of sun and shade. "You keep a key to heaven and the password to hell. The wonder is that you abuse your power so seldom."

He held his right hand, palm up, in blessing and farewell, as Reba turned to wave before she was lost in the throng. Then he was free to read the letter from Mavis!

With his shoulders squared proudly, head erect and eyes triumphant, he strode to the maid of his heart where she waited at the foot of the statue of Sainte Anne; he gently had put away the myriads in his path without being aware that they were humans who gave place before him. The girl looked at him quickly, apprehensively, and whitened. She had marked his joy when he was at a distance.

"Something—something pleasant—has it happened?" she asked. There was a pathetic upcurve of her lips—she meant the grimace for a smile.

"Yes; something!" Then the conventions of the commonplace were swept away in the rush of his yearning. "Mavis! Mavis!"

He gripped her hands in his, disregarding the ears and the eyes of the curious throng massed about them.

"The love that desires and seeks selfishly, Mavis, is common enough, but the love that steps aside for the greater happiness of the one beloved is rare on this earth. Have I won that? I have seen the one to whom you wrote. She read these words but her true woman's soul saw what you did not write on this paper. She knew what the letter meant. She guessed what it might mean to me. Just now she asked God to bless us—her last words before she went away to her own happiness. She was right, wasn't she Mavis? Just for now let me have something to live on till we are by ourselves and I can show you how I welcome the glory that has come into my life—the glory of real love. Look at me—Mavis!"

He knew that to his last day he would carry the sacred memory of the slow upward lift of her eyes, brave and appealing, pure and passionate, taking his breath with their revelation of utter surrender. Tears stung his own eyes and speech left him as he pressed her tight-held hands to his breast.

Over their heads, over the hushed throngs, over the broad meadows and the sparkling river, the chimes were calling the devout to come and receive the blessing of La Bonne Sainte Anne.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A GLANCE BEYOND THE RIM.

There had been clouds in the night when the solemn procession had wound its way up the hillside past the stations of the cross; the clouds had made a fitting pall for the ceremony of the penitential devotion.

But for the glory of the feast day the clean heavens were blue and the sunshine sparkled through crystal air. Sainte Anne in massive and sacred effigy blessed the throngs from her station on high between the basilica's twin towers; those who came up the river's sunlit flood could see her from afar; those who streamed from the trains and who came along the highway gazed up at her reverently.

The great crowd packed the church's park, overflowed into the street outside the gates, and people were tiered along the hillside un-

der the trees. All sorts and conditions of humanity were there.

Inside the church the procession was forming.

The pilgrims from Boisvert remained in their place beside the statue in the yard; they had been told that the procession would pass close by along the graveled walk.

There were others who had been brought in wheel chairs, and the respectful throngs parted and gave the sufferers passage to the edge of the walk where the hoped-for blessing would not be intercepted. Lang talked with some of these suppliants; the old men and aged women said that they had been coming year after year, on the feast day, and did not despair because they had not been aided.

He saw two men who particularly attracted his attention; one was old, with a white beard, the other was a young man whose eyes were sightless. They were robed in the fashion of Trappist monks—it was penitential garb that was donned for that day.

Lang put some questions to the young blind man when the two pilgrims took their stand near him. The young man said that he had been coming there for a number of years and explained that his companion was his friend, a celebrated surgeon who had sought with all professional means to restore his sight but could not.

"And do you hope to see again?"

"Yes, I hope! That's my comfort. I have faith. Without faith nothing can be accomplished. But for me the matter of seeing has become a small consideration since I have been coming here. I make my pilgrimage each year in order to hear the cries of joy from those who are healed. Those sounds stay with me for the whole year until I am allowed to come again. They make up a large part of my happiness."

"He will never see again," confided the surgeon to Lang. "But he tells the truth about the joy of coming here. Look at his face!" The smile that wreathed the young man's countenance marked his serene and comforted contentment with things as they were.

After a time the great organ thundered behind the basilica's façade and the mighty volume of music rolled out through the open doors. In the church nave the slow chant of the canticle began, adagio, raised by a thousand voices of singers as yet invisible to those who stood without in the sunshine.

Some of the more reverent who were near Lang sank to their knees, and he could hear their mutterings, "*Prie pour nous! La Bonne Sainte Anne, prie pour nous!*"

There was a clutch at his throat. He pulled off his hat and crumpled it in his hands.

The sunshine slanted across the ranks of vested priests who came from the gloom of the church through the broad doorway, swinging to the slow movement of the sacred harmony. There were flashes of rich color from their robes. The sunshine glinted on holy vessels borne aloft and on the tassels of banners. There came canopies, the banners supporting the staffs of the corners, and under the canopies marched dignitaries of the church, their hands crossed upon their breasts or elevated in attitude of prayer.

The sacred solemnity of centuries of human devotion in that little village at the foot of the Coté de Beaupré—the aura of holy thoughts and consecration—wrapped the scene and made for mystic tenderness and the stimulation of faith and new purpose.

Out into the sunshine and along the broad walks of the park went the procession, swaying to the majestic tempo of the chant. Acolytes swung their censers and faint veils of smoke rose in the still air. Behind the ecclesiastical pomp of the vested priests and the dignitaries, behind the banners and the canopies, came the long ranks of the pilgrims who had been healed beforetimes and who visited Sainte Anne on her feast day to render grateful thanks for mercies.

There was the holy relic of the saint, a bit of bone in a medallion—like a fleck of gray moss on its velvet bed.

The Host—with its mystery!

The ranks of the crowded thousands swayed and, section by section, they went down upon their knees, with the effect of a grain field that was being swept by the strokes of a mighty scythe.

Lang and Mavis and Joan—they knelt.

Jock Duncan stood erect. His features were grimly set. He was smoothing emotion from his countenance by a mighty effort. He folded his arms and looked up into the sky, keeping sedulously from contemplation of the images of the procession's pomp; it was as if he were saying by his pose, "There's

the one God. He is here, over all. I will worship Him."

The child in her wheel chair was between Lang and Mavis.

All the tense expectancy had departed from Jessie's face. Her lips were apart in wistful wonderment; there was no element of reality in all this for her! The head with the lint-white locks swayed slowly in time with the chanting voices. She had forgotten self and the infirmity that fettered her.

For a time, when the procession moved, she could see only the great statue of the saint between the towers of the basilica, raised there above the heads of the men and women who were pressed about the chair. When the people knelt she could behold the rich treasures of the church under the moving canopies.

"Pray, child!" whispered a withered old woman who was crouched just behind Mavis. "The holy relic is going past you."

A moment later Lang was holding his breath, steadying with both hands the wheel that was near him.

The child was rising slowly.

Mavis, frightened, was about to put out her hand to assist Jessie, but Lang made a dissuading gesture.

Jock Duncan, his steady gaze on the sky, did not behold.

For a moment the child stood on her feet. Then she sank down slowly and made a pathetic little figure, crumpled on the turf, her head bowed on her clasped hands.

They did not disturb her.

The long procession passed and reëntered the broad doorway and the chant was mellowed by the distances of the interior and the organ music died down into silence and the chimes announced that the great event of the feast day was over.

But the child did not move.

Mavis went to her and gently lifted Jessie's head from the clasped hands. Lang nerved himself to see the tears of despairing grief. But when he looked into Jessie's face he found a smile which greeted both him and Mavis and her father.

"I stood," she said in low, thrilling tones of joy. "Did you see me? I stood!"

No one was able to make any reply to her.

"I don't feel that I can stand now," she went on. There was no trace of mournfulness or regret in her voice. "But I am happy! I did stand! Will you help me back to my chair?"

Mavis and Lang lifted her between them.

"I have dreamed of coming here so many times," said the child. "I longed to come. I have wondered what would happen and I have been very sad because I could not be taken here. I'll tell you that now, Papa Jock, because you have been so good. I thank you all. I shall never wonder and worry any more."

"But I've been praying to my God that ye could walk, lassie. And noo ye canna walk," mourned Duncan, the tears on his cheeks.

"But I did stand!" insisted Jessie. "And it made me happy. I don't need so very much to make me happy. If I never do walk I can never forget how good you all have been to me—and that will always make me happy. I'm ready to go home, now!"

"There's a blessing at this shrine that's more wonderful than being able to walk—and she has found it," said Lang to Mavis. He took her hand in his. "We have found it, too," he declared earnestly.

The young man who was without sight came to them, led by the surgeon.

"Child, I have heard many utter thanksgiving," he assured her, "but what you have said is the humblest, sweetest word of hope I have heard at Sainte Anne. I shall never forget it. It will brighten my darkness. And I believe—I know—that you have received a promise. You have stood on your feet. You will stand again and walk and be strong! for God keeps His word!"

"'First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear,'" quoted the surgeon, his caressing hand on the child's head. "Forget what you have heard us doctor men say, and expect the best, expect it and hope!"

"That we will," said Jock Duncan huskily. "Amen!"

With the child in their midst they were irresistibly caught in the throng that had begun to mill with a mighty din of chattering toward the gates and they had been forced on a dozen paces when, cutting sharp and high through the babel, came a woman's eerie outcry. Struck in his tracks, John Lang turned and all the moving hundreds faced again to the wide door of the basilica. Anita Trask was framed there against the inner gloom, crying out so incoherently that her words were indistinct to him, though their import ran back to him, relayed by mouth to mouth from the front ranks.

"A crazy woman—she has been troubling the priests and the sisters—she says she must confess—saints of mercy! Murder? Is it murder she has done?"

Lang caught some of her broken shrilling as he forged through the press toward her. She was wailing that she could not speak into the dark through a little hole—that some one must look her in the face and help her—help her! She beat upon her breast and besought the very world.

Lang saw Avocat Grivois foremost among the men who sought to restrain her, but with her innate and long-suspected madness now at its climacteric she fought off their hands, her outcry rising to a veritable shriek of agony.

Within and without the church the masses pushed toward her, the front ranks driven off their footing by the pressure of the curious farther back. It was Avocat Grivois first, then John Lang, who saw the danger that threatened her and shouted—one stridently, the other in a roar of warning.

The persons in the vortex near Anita were helpless against the thrust of those coming from behind.

Just inside the church door, thatched in a heap a score of feet high, planted on an iron standard attached to an unsecured pedestal, were hundreds of crutches, trusses, canes and other aids for ailing bodies—votive offerings from devotees who had left them behind.

The pedestal was joggled by the throng.

From the top a crutch launched itself into the crowd, and the people, dodging, surged wildly. They were forced against the melancholy monument. The mass of crutches swayed and toppled; the men and women herded back on their companions, howling, "*Les béquilles—les béquilles!*"

Hands were outthrust in futile snatches at Anita who remained heedless of all save her own obsession. Then with a crash those impedimenta of human infirmity piled over the distracted creature, burying her where she was pinned down by the iron standard.

Leaping over the crutches that went scaling down the church steps into the sunshine, Lang reached her and lifted her while Grivois pried away the sticks above her. The surgeon companion of the blind young man had hurried on the heels of Lang and was beside the rescuers when they laid the bruised body gently on the proffered wraps and coats that had been tossed to the floor of the vestibule. Skilled fingers searched deftly for a few moments; then the surgeon rose, stepped back without a word and gestured gravely to the Redemptorist sisters who had gathered to give aid.

And the crowd melted away from the spot to which death had lent sanctity.

It was Avocat Grivois, voluble and sympathetic, who gave what information was necessary and who saw to it that Lang was no more beset with questions than was unavoidable. It was Grivois who carried out what Lang suggested, even to the details of sending a telegram to Judge Cleaves to take steps for the relief of Onésime Ouellette so far as the law could be moved at that time.

Finally, it was Grivois, the discreet and observant, who in his comings and goings had seen and understood and had a pregnant suggestion to make to Lang who had remained in the church in conference with the Father Superior's secretary.

The nerve-racked counselor of the Trask estate followed Grivois into the sunshine.

"Monsieur Lang, all has been done that may so far be done for the poor madame. I shall be at your call, while you remain here, to do all else that's needed." He ventured a bit of his philosophy. "While it is not for me to know, one is permitted to hope that because of her great need and suffering she has found that peace which she sought."

The avocat hesitated a moment—then glanced toward the statue in the park.

"The friends with whom you came—I have seen that the little lame angel and the others are at their luncheon yonder in the arcade in comfort. But Monsieur Lang, the mademoiselle waits!" He bowed and walked away.

Lang ran across the greensward and drew Mavis along with him—away from the arcade where many pilgrims were eating from their hampers. She was patient, tender, with an understanding of his mood that held her silent while he walked beside her for many minutes. It was good for the soul of a penitent man that such a woman as Mavis had been waiting for him.

By the broad gate, out into the street and past the little booths, they took their way.

At the hillside chapel that housed the Scala Santa—the Holy Stairs—he shook off his morbid memories and turned to her with the smile his lips had learned for her alone. Still Mavis, not presuming to question his

mood, waited his pleasure, tranquilly watching the devout pilgrims who ascended the steps on their knees to bow at the top before the representation of Jesus and Pilate —the humility which knew how vain were the judgments of mortals.

"Haven't you questions to ask me, Mavis?"

"None!" Her gaze, water clear, soothed and quieted him like a draft from a pool in the woods.

"You wonder among women! But, Mavis —you'll have to take my past along with my future. When I have told you that part which you deserve to know you'll wonder whether or not I have been pretending a lie, these weeks past, to win you. For I'm confessing to my soul that it has been, for the most part, to win your love for me! I learned much from the old man, Ashael— he set me on my way. But all the ghosts of a man's nature are not laid in a matter of months. I have a fight before me—out there!" He waved his hand to indicate the rim of the hills along the southern horizon. "All the more do I need you and want you and mean to have you, and I swear that I'll keep you from too much unhappiness on account of me. I give myself into your keeping, Mavis, my own girl! I have walked with you in the dust of the long highway— and I treasure every moment of that journey as those folks on the stairs, telling their beads as they climb, treasure their rosaries. I've half a mind to go up those stairs on my knees with the rest of the seekers. Anything to be else than the John Lang I used to be! Shall I do it?"

"Together—if you wish it," she made answer, mother tender; his heart throbbed in his throat as he realized more fully with every look she gave him how he had found the true complement that made his nature whole and sane.

"You girl-greatly-to-be-loved, Mavis, I'm still only a poor earth man—don't leave me too far behind! Walk as you walked down the Chaudière—still side by side! Because —because I want the woman you are. I want my mate!" No longer was John Lang making the test of human trustworthiness by an appeal to the eyes. All his cynicism was gone from him. But he yearned for another draft of that blessed promise she had given him when he came to her in the park of the church. "Mavis—look at me!"

And because he beseechingly commanded, bravely she looked at him. And after an immeasurable space the glory ceased blinding him and his heart took up its steady beat again.

With impetuous tenderness he faced her about, away from the penitents who were dragging their slow way up the Holy Stairs that had been glossed by many weary knees.

He pointed to the quiet, tree-crowned heights cupped about the village of Sainte Anne.

"Mavis, come with me up there—and so far as my soul is concerned I'll be climbing on my knees up nearer—near enough to thank the Good Giver. I want my first kiss under God's sky, with the honest trees for witnesses. Just for our one hour out of the world! Come with me!"

Her hand reached for his and rested in his clasp—tender, clinging, trusting, ardent; and they turned to the hills.

THE END.

Mr. Day will continue to contribute to THE POPULAR.

A LAND OF PRECIOUS STONES

ALMOST every known gem is found in Australia. The island continent's most beautiful stone, the black opal, is said to be found in but one place in the world —Lightning Ridge, in New South Wales. This stone varies in size from one to one hundred carats, and is worth from thirty to forty dollars a carat. Pearls, sapphires, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, topaz, and turquoise also are found in paying quantities. Other Australian stones of less value but of real beauty are the peridot, zircon, tourmaline, and aquamarine.

Fanny Wins

By Frederick Stuart Greene

Author of "Texas Burke: His Father's Son," "Fanny Burke and the Statesman," Etc.

Texas Burke makes his last book

ON a day late in August Fanny Burke watered the honeysuckle growing about the porch of her Lake George camp and sang softly to herself. Usually all of Mrs. Burke's songs and all her ways of doing things were marked by happy gayety but to-day there was a plaintive note in Fanny's clear voice. She was thinking, as of late she had so often thought, of her husband's trade.

When Fanny had married big "Texas" Burke three years before she had felt that to have for a husband the most daring bookmaker on the metropolitan race tracks was rather a fine thing. "Tex and his business are both to the good," is the way she had put it when telling one of her old stage friends of her marriage. But now she disliked it—all of it—the gay crowds, the shouting grand stand, the band on the lawn, the betting. Especially the betting.

Why?

Fanny, neglecting her flowers, sat upon the step, her round chin in her hand, and thought the problem out. First of all had come that unexpected meeting the year before with old Mr. George Claiborne, her husband's father, or rather the man Texas still thought was his father. That reserved, scholarly gentleman, so different from her easy-going husband. Yes, Fanny could picture Mr. Claiborne at a race track, felt quite certain that he would show pleasure at a game head-and-head struggle through the stretch, for all Southerners love a thoroughbred. But instinctively she knew that no opportunity for gain, no circumstance in life, could ever force that dignified man to play the part of bookmaker. She knew now that it was after her one short meeting with George Claiborne in that mountain village down in Virginia that she had first begun to question the—well, the righteousness of her husband's mode of gaining a livelihood.

Then came the Gage affair. Only a week ago she had seen J. Harold Gage, the chinless politician, come within an ace of sending a bullet through his featherweight brain because of losses at the track.

From Gage her thoughts moved swiftly to Jimmy Finch, Finch of the shifting eyes and twisted nose. And it was men of Finch's caliber that her splendid, big-hearted Texas had to know and associate with daily.

No! The race-track game was not—well, not respectable. Fanny stamped her small foot. Respectable? Fanny, you're hedging, trimming! It's wrong. That's what bookmaking and gambling is—all dead wrong! And Texas, such a good, honest old scout, could she ever make him see it her way?

Then opened the door to an uneasy, secret thought, a fear that had gently persisted since that unforgetable talk with her husband's supposed father. "Pray pardon my seeming rudeness," Mr. Claiborne had said, "but have you ever seen your husband in a temper or"—his old face had grown more grave—"become enraged?" And Fanny had answered reassuringly, "Why, Tex ain't got a temper. He's *too* easy." Mr. Claiborne had leaned toward her, his brilliant eyes serious. "I ask your forbearance, dear child; though my words may bring some sorrow, in the end they will safeguard your happiness and with your help may mean your husband's salvation."

In that bare room, lighted only by the flames rising and falling on the hearth, the old gentleman had then told Fanny of Burke's inheritance. How her husband's grandfather had killed a man, how Burke's father, mad with rage, had killed the one most dear to him, his wife, the mother of her Texas. "With your help," Mr. Claiborne had said. And now each day, with ever-increasing anxiety as Fanny thought

of the stress of her husband's life at the race track and of the Jimmy Finches and his ilk, she whispered to herself: "With your help, dear child—your husband's salvation."

By a determined shake of her pretty head Fanny drove the troubling thoughts from her and, going to the well, refilled her large water bucket. Back again at the porch she staggered slightly under the load. Fanny hastily set down the bucket and, walking unsteadily, sank into a chair. She pressed her hand against her forehead. "Here it is again," she said aloud. "Dizzy. You never used to feel like this. What is getting wrong with you, Fanny?"

For a long time she remained seated, looking out over the sunny waters of the lake, her face made more lovely by a smile, a puzzled smile that asked a question and that happily answered the question she had asked herself.

The postman's whistle broke in upon her thoughts. Fanny rose and walked slowly to the road. She took the letter the postman had left in the mail box. It was a long, legal-looking envelope with the first and second address scratched out; the third, in red ink, had brought it to her. The date of the postmark showed twelve days of wandering.

Oh, just another one of those wonderful opportunities to invest, big dividends from sound—they are always absolutely sound—business propositions. Fanny returned to her seat on the porch. How did those tireless promoters get her name on their lists? Leisurely she opened the envelope. Well, if they thought little Fanny Burke didn't know enough to buy only listed securities, they were out of step. She unfolded the typewritten pages and read carelessly the first lines. Suddenly Fanny sat quite straight in her chair and read the letter through to its end. Then turning again to the first page, slowly and with a saddened face, she read once more the close-written pages.

"That poor old man," she said softly, "the dear old gentleman, all alone."

The open letter was still in her hand when a rowboat shot into view and headed for the landing. The oarsman drove the light boat toward her, each of his great strokes forcing the keel for half the boat's length clear from the water. Fanny hastily folded the letter and, slipping it into a pocket, ran down the path to the lake. The last stroke of the oars sent the boat, grating loudly, well up on the bank. Fanny, looking with mock severity at her husband, dramatically misquoted:

> "'Wreck it you must, this new green boat,
> But spare your Fanny's beach!' she said."

Big Texas Burke sprang over the gunwale, his browned, broad face glowing with health, his wide smile beaming good nature. He lifted his wife clear from the ground and kissed her upturned face.

"I've got to hand it to you, honey, it's great! This back-to-nature stunt you led us into makes a different man out o' me."

He lifted Fanny again and, holding her easily at arm's length before him, smiled at his pretty wife.

"You old bear, put me down!" Though pretty and pink, there's no other way to say it—Fanny stuck out her tongue at her husband. "If you want to flash that Samson stuff of yours, save it for Dempsey."

They walked together to the house, his arm resting lightly about her shoulders.

"Tex," Fanny began when they were seated, "I want to ask you a serious question."

Texas settled comfortably back in his steamer chair.

"'You may fire when ready, Gridley,'" he answered in his deep voice.

"Well then, what makes a man—a professional race-track man like you—give up the track? What are the reasons?"

"It ain't reasons, Fan. There's only one reason—just one."

"And that's?"

"Death!"

"Oh!" Chin in hand, Fanny thought over this; then after the pause, "Sure that a live one doesn't, once in a while, quit?"

"Surest thing you know! Why, Fan, just give the list the once-over; Plunger Walton, Sammie Mulford, Riley Grannan, Pittsburgh Phil—death was the only thing that pried any of those old-timers loose. An' look at the flock of old birds that's totterin' about the track these days. No, honey, once in the game, you can't break away."

"Well," Fanny sighed, "I don't want you to die."

Texas sounded his good-natured laugh. "But you do want me to chuck the ponies, eh, Fan?"

She turned his face until his eyes looked straight into hers.

"Oh, Tex, I want you to quit more than —more than anything else in this world!"

"We talked that all out the other day," Texas answered kindly. "An' I told you then that the only thing I knew was horses an' layin' odds. Honest, honey, we couldn't get on if I was to quit. You'd have to go back into the show business; an' you wouldn't like that. Now, would you?"

"No; I'm through with the stage," Fanny said positively, "and I want you to be through with the track."

He drew her down beside him.

"I hate to go against you, but you know I ain't no good at nothin' else." Burke's deep voice was all kindness. "Tell me, Fan, why you're feelin' so bad about racin' lately."

"I'm beginning to get wise to a lot of things, Tex. Things I never thought about before. I've told you that there's nothing useful in our business; well, it's more than that. I want you to know better men, be friends with people who are more—more respectable."

"Why, Fan, I know a lot of the big guns. Look at the classy bunch that bets with me."

"Yes, Tex, they bet with you. But do you really know these men? Do they want me to know their wives?"

Beneath the tan Burke's cheeks reddened. "Sure, sure, they'd like their folks to meet you; an' if you wasn't such a homy sort of a kid, you'd know them all right." He was silent for some time, then turned suddenly and faced his wife. "Why, Fan, are you gettin' the society slant in that little head of yours? You're not wantin' to break into the four-hundred game, are you?"

"That's the last thing in this world, Tex, that I'd ever want," Fanny said decidedly, "for the perfectly good reason that none of that four-hundred crowd seem able to stay married to the same man. I want you to give it up because sometimes, deary, I'm—I'm afraid for you."

"Afraid?" Texas looked at his wife in blank surprise. "Afraid for me! Afraid of what?"

But Fanny shook her head; she could not answer this.

From the sawmill, high up on the mountainside, came the sound of a whistle. Burke rose hastily.

"Great Scott! It's noon. You'll have to hurry, old girl, or we'll miss the first race. Jump into one of your classy outfits an' we'll be on our way."

"I'm not going to-day," Fanny answered.

"Not goin'?" Texas returned quickly to her. "What's wrong, honey? You ain't sick, are you?"

It was the first racing day since their marriage that, rain or shine, she had not gone with him to the track.

"No; I'm all right, but there's something here I've got to do."

"Oh, pshaw, Fan, the camp's neat as a pin. Come along, we'll have dinner at the hotel and a show after."

"No, dear, there's something I must think out by myself. Go alone to-day and when you come back perhaps I'll have it all worked out and then I'll tell you about it."

Texas waited, uncertain; then the boy in him pushed the man aside.

"You ain't mad with me, are you, honey? Have I done something that hurt you?"

"You've never done that," Fanny said simply. "You'll never hurt me and I'm not going to let you hurt yourself."

When he had climbed into his car she kissed him and stood watching until a turn in the road took him from her sight. Then Fanny went back to the porch and, seated behind the honeysuckle, brought out the letter that had come that morning and slowly reread its pages.

When Texas returned that evening Fanny had waiting for him a well-cooked dinner. The Burkes could have afforded a servant, two or three for that matter, but Fanny, whose early girlhood had been a procession of theatrical boarding houses and later, when success had come to her, an array of expensive hotels, liked to play at housekeeping and her game was played with perfect technique.

The table was set out on the porch. Before them lay the lake, its surface crumpled into even, sharp-pointed ripples that caught and held for an instant the moonlight, then tossed it away in silver sparks.

"How did they break for you to-day?" Fanny asked.

Texas looked across the flowers to her, a smile spoiling the gloom he tried to register.

"Fierce, old girl; they hit me hard on all six races."

"Yes," answered wise Mrs. Burke, "and how much do I bank to-morrow?"

"Didn't you hear me say they got to me hard?"

"You said just that little thing, Texas, but don't you know by now that I can tell the minute I lamp your face whether you've lost or won?"

Texas surrendered and, following a bookie's unwritten law regarding the verb, answered: "We did pretty good. I win seventeen hundred on the day."

Silence.

"Well, ain't you glad, Fan?"

"Yes—and no. Of course, I don't want you to lose, but how much gladder I'd be if you'd collected all that in some other business."

Again silence. Texas gave strict attention to the chicken on his plate. Fanny looked out across the shimmering water.

After long minutes she broke the silence. "Tex, do you know how big our roll is now?"

"Something like a hundred and fifty thousand, ain't it?"

"Besides what's in your pocket we have a hundred and forty thousand dollars cash in bank and seventy thousand in bonds. That's a lot of money, old scout, and if you didn't need so much cash, I could make it come through with a sure twelve thousand each year."

"But, honey, we're spending about twenty thousand now."

"That's on account of traveling most of the time and staying in swell hotels. If we'd only stay put and you had a nice, steady business, I'd manage on six thousand and——"

"It can't be done, Fan. I just couldn't do it!"

"Let me fill your cup again, deary. Don't you think this coffee is all to the good?" said wise Fanny Burke.

After dinner they looked out over the silver lake and talked. Fanny told in her cheery way the adventures she had had with the natives who brought their supplies. Her clever mimicry of dialect always charmed Texas. She was speaking in the drawling, nasal voice of the up-State farmer boy when a motor stopped at the gate. A moment later a man came around the house and called out to them. It was Jimmy Finch and the return greetings from both Fanny and Texas were not cordial. Upon the plea of household duties, soon after his arrival, Fanny left the men together on the porch.

She went into her kitchen where all was in order and began making a small clatter with the utensils. She didn't like his coming here—that rat of a man. It was the first time he'd had the nerve, thought Fanny, and he wouldn't now if he hadn't been drinking. What did he want with Texas, anyway? Important business! No one as unimportant as Jimmy Finch could—— Fanny gave the saucepan a vicious bang. She didn't like it a little bit! Well, anyway, they had his number! That was an ugly scowl Tex had when Finch lurched up the steps. Never fear, he knew the crook. That sneaking smile wouldn't fool him.

No, it wouldn't be right—none of the lady heroines ever eavesdropped. But what had he come here for? And that scowl! My, but it was savage! Fanny moved nearer the door and tilted her head to one side. Only the smooth, oily tones of Finch reached her. What was the use of being foolish, she thought; they're quiet enough. There! That was Tex. Wasn't his voice cold? Icy! Fanny drew a step nearer. That was Tex's voice again—sounded like watch your step, it did! Her lips tightened. She didn't like it—never played the heroine's part, anyway. Right here would exit Lady Frances Burke-Claiborne and little Fan O'Connor would get on the job!

Fanny left the kitchen and, crossing the room on tiptoe, seated herself near the open window. The porch light fell full on Finch's twisted face; he was leaning forward talking earnestly, if a trifle thickly. Burke lay, stretched at full length, on the steamer chair.

"It's big and of course it'll take big money to pull it off, but it's a sure thing if we can put it across," Finch was saying.

"Cut the introduction and state your proposition." To Fanny, there was a new precision, an added coldness in her husband's tone. Apparently Finch felt something of this. He drew back and sat up straight in his chair.

"Well, then, Burke, what's going to win the Saratoga Special to-morrow?"

"War Mast should win easy," Texas answered.

"How much would you say will be bet on him, all told?"

"Two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand."

Finch smiled shrewdly. "Nice little bit of change, that. Now if you felt sure—*knew* he wouldn't win—how much could you take in on him?"

"Not less than fifty thousand," Texas answered, in even voice, but there was that in his tone that caused Fanny uneasiness.

Finch leaned forward and touched Texas on the knee.

"Would it be worth ten thousand to you to cinch that fifty thousand?" He sat back again, his twisted mouth grinning.

"Cut out all these questions, Finch. What brought you here to-night?"

"All right, then." Finch brought out a flask. "Have some? No? Well, you don't mind if I do." He held the flask open while he talked. "Harry Cramer rides War Mast to-morrow and seven or eight horses will start. Harry's promised five thousand over his regular fee if he wins. But he's a wise lad, is Harry. He says that twenty-five thousand listens well to him, and that he might find a pocket somewhere among those eight horses—and get through at the last moment and lose by an eyelash at the finish."

Finch paused, his shifty eyes turned vaguely toward Texas, but Burke, waiting, did not speak. Finch cleared his throat nervously and continued.

"There are to be just four men in on this," and he mentioned three names. "They'll put up fifteen thousand and we thought as you made such a big book, you wouldn't mind putting up ten thousand."

It was out at last! Fanny felt suddenly sick. She rose, watching Finch's sly face as he raised the flask again. What would Tex do? Was this the real inside race-track stuff? Did all men who followed her husband's calling play the game this way?

During the short pause following Finch's words, Fanny lived a long time. She stood by the window, rigidly still, cold and physically sick. At last her husband spoke.

"So you want me to put up ten thousand?"

Fanny sank to the chair, limp. Texas had not roared out at Finch nor thrown the wretched man from the porch. No; he had asked his question with business directness, his voice low, controlled. Though Fanny's body felt cold, her forehead was on fire, her cheeks burned.

Then Finch spoke again, his words came thickly now: "That's fair, ain't it? Look at the class that bets with you. You just said you'd take in fifty thousand." The whisky had given him courage. "Ain't forty thousand bucks good enough for you? What do you want—the earth?"

Fanny's hands clenched. Finch had overstepped; she thought, now "He'll get what's coming to him."

But no sound came from the big man lying carelessly in the steamer chair.

"Well, I'm waiting. What's your answer?" Finch said.

Fanny sat breathless, ashamed, her faith in Texas tottering. Was it merely a question of how much he must pay?

The steamer chair creaked loudly. Texas swung his legs from the rest and sat up.

"That will be about all for you, Mr. Finch!" The words snapped from Burke with a sound like crackling ice. Fanny stifled her cry of relief. "I know that I ought to wring your neck," Texas went on evenly, "and kick you into the lake; but I'll make allowances for you. Only get out of here and get out quick!"

Finch held his seat, his small eyes gleaming through half-closed lids. He lifted the flask and after a long drink grinned impudently.

"Is that so?" he sneered. "Since when has Mr. Burke, the gambler, become so touchy?"

"You had better go, Finch," Texas said quietly, but to Fanny menace stood close behind the words. The half-drunken man took no heed.

"Make allowances, will you?" Finch dropped the flask and slid his hand into a side pocket. "Who the hell do you think you are to pull that stuff? You two are a swell outfit, ain't you?" Finch got to his feet. "You and that woman of yours. Why, every feller at the track knows about her, knows——"

Texas leaped from the chair. A knife in Finch's hand flashed and fell, driven into Burke's forearm. The fingers of Burke's big hands closed about Finch's throat. A snarling curse and both men struck the floor heavily.

Fanny rushed out through the door. She gripped her husband's arm with both hands and, bracing her foot against his body, tried to tear loose his hold on Finch's throat.

"Let go, Tex! Let go, you're killing

him!" The sound of panting breaths forced through his clenched teeth was her only answer. Already Finch's twisted face had turned an ugly purple.

Frantically she tried again to break Burke's hold; the arm beneath her hands was hard as iron. A froth had gathered on her husband's lips.

The thought flashed clear to her. It was like this with his father. "It's what the old man warned me of! Well, here's where you get yours; take it like a man, Fanny," she prayed. She let go his arm and, knotting her small hand, struck her husband full in the face.

"Let go! Stop, I tell you!" she cried, and struck him again with all her might.

Snarling, Texas turned his head. The moonlight shone full upon him and Fanny saw his eyes. She cried out and covered her face with her hands. Shrinking back from him, she fell against the wall.

"Steady, Fanny," she said aloud; "you can save him. He *shan't* do this thing!"

She dropped her hands. Finch's eyes stood out like white marbles on his face; his tongue hung far from his mouth.

"'With your aid, dear child—your husband's salvation,'" rang through Fanny's thoughts, and she wrung her hands. In another minute it would be over. Against Burke's strength she was helpless.

"It's all up to you!" she was telling herself in a low, tense voice. "Don't scream—there's no one to hear. There is your chance! Don't fail him!"

She ran to the end of the porch and seized the bucket she had left by the honeysuckle. It was full, heavy. She ran back to the struggling men, set herself for the throw and dashed the water full in her husband's face. Drenched from head to waist, Texas loosened his grip on Finch's throat. Instantly Fanny threw herself against him.

"For my sake, Tex, stop! Let him go!"

With all her strength she pushed him away from the gasping Finch and locked her arms about her husband's neck. Texas did not struggle against her; breathing hard, he sat quite still, only the fingers of his big hands moved. Then, watching, Fanny saw his eyes slowly grow sane again.

Still with her arms about him, she looked toward Finch. The man was getting shakily to his knees.

"Now, rat!" Fanny's voice was hard. "Get out of here and take your miserable life with you!"

Finch crawled from the porch and away from their sight.

The knife had fallen from Burke's arm during the struggle, but his sleeve and hand were bloodstained. Fanny rolled back his shirt. The stab, luckily, was through the fleshy part of his arm and Fanny quickly washed and bandaged the wound.

"For steadying the nerves," she said, when her surgeon's work was done, "I prescribe a long, mild cigar." She brought it to him and struck a match. "Now, while you smoke, Tex, we'll have a quiet little talk. You asked me a question this morning, dear, that I could not answer."

"Did I, Fan?" His voice had now the slow, deep tone Fanny liked. "I don't remember."

"You asked me what I was afraid of for you and I could not answer. But now I'm going to tell you."

Tactfully, kindly, she told her husband that George Claiborne, the man Texas had always thought of as his father, was not his father. And then, with tenderness, she told him of his grandfather and his real father, how both had been cursed with a temper that when aroused was close to madness, how each had killed a—a man. For here Fanny lied like a soldier and a gentlewoman. She did not say to him that his father had killed his wife, the mother of Texas. She dwelt on the good qualities of Burke's people that Mr. Claiborne had been so careful to mention—told him how all his family, when not enraged, were easy-going and kind. She told him at length what she knew of his mother, that talented, high-spirited girl whom Mr. Claiborne had loved and lost to the handsome mountaineer, Burke's father. She had died, she told him simply, up there on the mountain, unforgiven by the father she had disappointed, still loved by Mr. Claiborne.

At the end, Texas covered his face and cried out, asking her if she was not afraid to live longer with him. Fanny tore his hands away from his face and left him with no doubts.

"Tex, there's something else," she said, and waited.

"Yes, go on, honey."

"I got a letter to-day from Virginia and

it told me—that that dear old gentleman, who so loved your mother, was gone."

Texas started. "Oh, Fan, not that! I never got on very well with him, but I'm sorry, sorrier than I can say." He looked away from her.

Fanny drew closer to her husband. "And, Tex, he remembered our visit and thought of us."

"Yes; no one is likely to forget you, Fan."

"The letter said that he wants us to have the farm, overlooking the river. Your old home, Tex, before you ran away so long ago."

"Well, I'll be—— I never thought of his doin' that." There was a catch in his voice.

"Don't you want it, Tex? Ain't you glad?"

"Why—er—yes, honey. But what can we do with it?"

"I've got that all worked out," Fanny answered promptly. "You don't know anything except horses. Well, we'll have horses down there; we'll raise them, not bet on them. Nice, big, honest horses that can pull a plow or haul a load of hay."

"And give up the track? Never see a race again?"

Fanny smiled. "Yes, give up the track. Now brace yourself, Tex. Here comes the big jolt!"

"What, another?" he asked, bewildered.

"The biggest of all," Fanny said gayly; then was suddenly serious. "Have you ever thought how you'd feel if we should some day have a son or a little girl? If we ever should—would you want me to take her from one hotel to another—following the races all over the country? Would you want a son of yours—or your daughter—to know men like Jimmy Finch and—for let's look this thing square in the face—and never really know any other kind of people—except racing people?"

Texas dropped his head. "No, Fan, I wouldn't."

She put her arm around his neck. "You'd rather give up racing than have that happen?"

"Yes, honey."

She drew still closer to him. "Well, Tex, it's—it's—just that little thing—a son—or a daughter—is going to happen!"

Look for more of Mr. Greene's work in the future.

SOMETHING ELSE FOR IRELAND

"YOU see," said the Scotsman, "you Irish are different from the rest of the world, anyway."

"An' thot's a lie!" shouted Pat, instantly pugnacious.

"Take the matter of time," pursued the patronizing and placid Scotsman. "Even there you're different."

"An' thot's a lie! But how differ-r-int?"

"You're always too late over there. Here we are having a good time this evening; and right now everybody in Ireland is sound asleep in bed. It's after midnight over there."

Pat scratched his head.

"B'gorra!" he said at last. "It's the same old story. Ireland niver got justice yit."

"Etchin's"

By George Hugh Banning

Author of "Spunyarn," and other stories

Old Captain John Guthrie of the *Dorris Crane* didn't know much about his adopted son's art, but he knew what he didn't like done about it.

"THE ship's laid up and so am I." This was the comfortable platitude worn threadbare by the crew of the *Dorris Crane*. She had been one hundred days on her voyage from Sydney and was now awaiting her turn in dry dock. Members of the ship's company, however, were waiting for no such a thing. San Francisco was "wet" in those days and dry docks, much to Captain John Guthrie's displeasure, applied only to ships.

The old man lounged in his sanctum, straining smoke through his great red mustache and skillfully inhaling half of it back again through his nostrils. Silently he was reproving the mate for his sudden show of apathy with regard to the schooner. Peter Vronski, his former mate, his prize, his own adopted son, had never shown such marked disregard. Peter was a man. Captain Guthrie had made him so, teaching him the value of self-reliance and the meaning of discipline, pointing out the proper use of a kind word and the occasional need of a ready fist, instructing him in the ways of good and warning him against those of evil. The old man had picked him up in Vladivostok —a twelve-year-old orphan, a half-starved waif, a wharf rat.

That was long ago. Peter was gone now. He was not dead, but—— Bother him! What was the difference? When a sailor—a real deep-water man—falls prey to "idees," what's the use? Peter had been cut out for the sea; patterned in designs fit for no other setting. Captain Guthrie had devoted his life to the boy; but the boy was devoting *his* life to—what the devil was it?—"etchin's," he called it—one of the most vicious "idees" the lad had ever had. The scoundrel! The best man that ever sailed a ship, "etchin'" his way to hell!

Captain Guthrie, his huge, round face parched and red, lowered his pipe while two shining tears paused at the corners of his eyes. A halo of smoke rose and circled around an exact likeness of himself, sketched as if by a single stroke of the pencil. A "car-toon," the old man called it. But if it were that, the cabin was full of them. There were "cartoons" of quaint old wharves, bridges, landings, of old Spanish mission districts and of haunts in Chinatown and of ships—ships whose masts and spars were traced with the lacelike delicacy of cathedral spires with all their minute carvings.

But these pencil scratchings were not "proper." There was the bark *Ella Lane*, for example. Peter had omitted many things common to all such vessels. The doubling on the mainto'-gallant was too short. There were too few ratlines on the mizzen rigging and the gooseneck was wrong on the fore-staysail stanchion. And, what was more, you could not, for the life of you, read the name plate. Who could identify that vessel as the *Ella Lane?*

Captain Guthrie turned to a painting done in oil of the *Dorris Crane*. There was a work of perfection! The work of a man who knew his business! A professional painter in Sydney—one who painted ships and nothing but ships—had done it. It was complete in every detail. There was not a halyard, brace, sheet nor stay missing. Every shroud, every block, purchase, pendant, brail, buntline—everything was there. Even the reefing points—every one of them! Where the *Dorris Crane* was black, the painting was black. Where the *Dorris Crane* was white, the painting was white. Every wave, every whitecap and ripple was distinct on the surface of the sea. It was something Peter could never have done. It had cost Captain Guthrie two pounds. Peter would not have given two shillings. He said it lacked "perspective," "depth." There was not the "feeling" there.

But the old man knew better. Peter, in his own heart must have known the same. Depth and perspective—these were only "idees." And "feeling!" What difference did it make how a picture *felt*.

Poor Peter! He was just a little envious, that was all. The only fault in his work was laziness. His sketches were good as far as they had been drawn, but why the devil didn't he finish them? It was another one of his "idees." And now, as scandal had it, he was "etchin' "—giving up the sea—*"etchin'!"*

The old man lowered his head. He was crying—not just sniffling—*crying!* All that was left of his only charge, his one tie in the world, were *these* and *these* and *these*. Lazy pencil scratchings! The panels of the cabin were nearly hidden by them. And not one was "proper."

College did it. College was the first "idee" Peter had ever had; and, with his return, had come not one "idee" but thousands of them; and thousands upon thousands! It was as if the boy were cursed by plague. Thought in itself is dangerous enough, but Peter's thinking was confined to dangerous things. He studied "color schemes." He bothered about lights and shadows. He even altered the course of the vessel at one time to catch certain shades on deck which otherwise would have changed their direction. Education, for Peter, was the road to ruin.

Three years ago the young man had left the ship—given up the sea. Some fool in San Francisco, a dealer, had seen the sketches and advised him to give his life to "etchin'." That was the end of Peter. If he could only get rid of those damnable——

But the old man's thoughts were interrupted by three rapid knocks at the door. The mate knocked that way when he was drunk.

"Come in, Mr. Scott," sighed the old man. And Mr. Scott hurriedly squeezed himself through the door, his wild eyes sparkling with something stronger than alcohol.

He was a stocky, wire-haired man with square face, square shoulders and thin lips. He was biting the upper one, as was his habit when he wanted to say something but did not know quite how to start. Captain Guthrie braced himself in his chair and glanced up, frowning.

"You've been a stranger around here, Mr. Scott," he remarked coldly.

The mate's smile vanished, giving way to superficial dignity. He released his upper lip as if to speak, but the skipper relieved him of the responsibility.

"And another thing, Mr. Scott: you know me well enough when you're sober to keep away when you're drunk!"

"I'm *ab*-solutely sober, cap'n. *Ab*-solutely sober." He cleared his throat and began to survey the sanctum as if this were his first visit. "I come t' see yeh, cap'n. I wan' t' talk t' yeh about—it's my idea, cap'n——"

"What's the matter, Mr. Scott? You're out of breath."

"Just took a little run down t' th' ship. Wanted t' see how things was settin', sir. Yeh know, cap'n, it's my idea things ain't movin' here as they—well, they ain't shipshape. That's the short of it. Not shipshape. Not at all." Again he seemed to lose the thread of thought and again his eyes wandered strangely about the bulkheads.

"Sit down," ordered the skipper gruffly.

"Thanks, cap'n. Thanks. And now it's my idea——"

"This cabin is too damn full of idees already!" the captain interrupted. "Now listen to me, Mr. Scott. We're *not* shipshape, and that's the truth of it. What're you going to do about it, hey? Aren't you man enough to handle your men?"

"That's just what I'm gettin' at——"

"Well, get at it then! And if you don't, by Jove, I'll get a man that will! And damn all this nonsense!"

"That's it, cap'n. *Ab*-solutely! It's all nonsense. I never saw so much of it aboard any vessel in all my life. Never! And now that brings me to what I'm workin' up to. These pitchers, cap'n—these here pitchers"—the mate drew a deep breath, he seemed dazzled by them—"them there pitchers, cap'n. They ain't worth much, are they?"

Captain Guthrie was struck with a passion for murder. He could have sprung across the table and wrung the man's neck.

"What I'm gettin' at is, they ain't actu'lly much account here where nobuddy can see 'em. Course I know they're putty pitchers and all that. You know that yerself, cap'n. Putty, ain't they? I allus took a heavy yaw toward 'em. Funny thing about me, ain't it? Allus liked pitchers. Allus. That's what I come here t' talk t' yeh about. Yeh know, cap'n, I'd give two months' pay t' own them there. Two months' pay, cap'n. And yeh can strike me dumb. Yeh can take it out o' my fifty per cent hold-off, and I'll

make up the differ'nce at sea. Ain't that a fair proposition? Ain't it?"

Captain Guthrie could not speak. Scott had been with him for nearly a year. The old man had seen him sober and drunk, but never quite so far beyond the range of common reason.

"Ain't it, cap'n? Ain't it fair?"

The old man stared at him like a huge bear about to eat something alive. Mr. Scott rose in self-defense but did not flinch. Perhaps, after all, he was sober.

"What the devil do you want?" cried the irate skipper. "Did you come here to talk about ships or is it those fool car-toons you're after?"

"There now. That's what I'm gettin' at: fool cartoons. They ain't really worth two months' pay, are they now? 'Cept I allus liked putty pitchers. Ever since I can remember. Funny thing, ain't it?"

"Too *damn* funny! And the funniest thing about it is, blowed if you're not sober."

"Dry's dust, cap'n. Dry's dust. And yen can strike me dumb."

"And you mean to stand there, sane and sober and offer us two months' pay for a raft of fool car-toons?"

"That's the short of it; and that there colored pitcher too. Good money ain't it, fer cartoons? All I got comin' and the rest when we get t' sea?"

"Mr. Scott," said the skipper sternly; "I'm not parting with one of them—not for a thousand dollars!"

The mate dropped his lower jaw and stared.

"We don't consider everything in money terms, Mr. Scott. As far as money goes, they're not worth anything—except that oil painting of the *Dorris*. That's worth two pounds in Sydney."

"Two pounds, eh? I'll give yeh four fer it. Four pounds right now! How's that? Fair enough, ain't it, cap'n?"

"Fair, yes. But I'm not in the picture business and not so anxious to sell even the oil."

"Six pounds! Six, cap'n. Call it six! Six pounds fer th' oil pitcher!"

The old man grinned and shook his head. "Of all the rattlebrains!" he exclaimed, studying the mate carefully. "Well then," he concluded, shrugging his shoulders, "if you want to throw your money away——"

Scott, impelled by a sudden ecstasy, rushed to the picture and attempted to wrench it from the bulkhead where it had been fastened by brass screws. Failing in this, he withdrew his knife and before the old man could stop him cut the canvas from its frame.

"Fool!" roared the skipper. "The frame goes with it!"

Scott heard nothing. He stood transfixed, trembling as he rolled his prize. He spoke, but the words came as if from a dream.

"Frame?" he said. "Yes, the frame. Sure. The frame, of course." Then, suddenly starting: "Oh! The *frame!* You keep that, cap'n. You keep that. Put one o' them pencil scratches in it. Fair enough, ain't it? Just take it out o' what's comin' t' me. Six pounds, eh? G'by! G'by, cap'n."

He hurried through the door and slammed it to. Captain Guthrie fell back in his chair. A drunken crew, a crazy mate—that was what he had to contend with!

He shifted uneasily and frowned up at Mr. Scott's vandalism. The empty frame, like a socket robbed of its eye, stared dismally from the cluttered panels. For six pounds he had sold the picture of the *Dorris Crane*. He would give eight for its recovery. But this was impossible. Mr. Scott would have paid twelve had the old man asked it. What in the name of common sense did he want with it; or the sketches—Peter's "car-toons?" What did he see in them? What was his hurry? Where was he bound?

One by one the questions came taunting for an answer and the last one bore him to his feet. By the Lord Harry, he would find *out* where that fool was bound! He would find *out* what the hurry was! By Jove, he would get to the bottom of it! It was something to get to the bottom *of!* If the mate was insane, it was the skipper's place to know about it!

By this time the old man was swinging along the Embarcadero, bearing steadily down on a brown Stetson hat which appeared and vanished in the crowd some distance ahead. The clock on the Ferry Building moved its hands toward noon. This was Saturday and as Captain Guthrie luffed up Market Street he bumped homebound pedestrians off either bow. They crowded and jammed at the terminal like logs in a river and several times Mr. Scott was lost in the maelstrom. But when the brown Stet-

son loomed again the old man took a new bearing and set his course accordingly. At Post Street the mate fell off to leeward and hauled sharply alongside an art shop.

The skipper hove to, squared his foretop, and read the sign: "Sylvester Goldstein." Underneath hung a framed canvas: *Special Exhibition and Auction To-day.*

Captain Guthrie was more perplexed than ever. The name, Goldstein, was familiar. As he followed the mate between the polished show windows strange things linked themselves in his mind, only to be fouled by stranger things. Everywhere he seemed to hear the name of Peter—Peter Vronski. Everywhere he seemed to see his face only to find himself staring into the eyes of a stranger. The brown Stetson was lost in the crowd, but no more so than the old man himself. Had some one asked him what he wanted, he could not have answered. It seemed he was in his own cabin aboard the *Dorris Crane* and that all these strange people were intruders. Conversations lulled as he passed. Long rows of eyes peered at him. They surveyed his boots, his breeches, his coat and vest. They marked his mustache and his cap. Then, as if by a signal, they turned away and the chatter began anew.

"I'd give an eye to own that dry-point etching!" came a voice from beside him.

The speaker was a slender man with sparkling eyes and a black silk ribbon dangling from his glasses. He addressed a fat woman with a lorgnette.

"The technique," he went on, "may well be compared with that of Rembrandt. The softness of tone, depth, balance and the careful haphazardness—if I may use the phrase—of symmetry——" He paused, fairly gloating over one of the etchings on the wall before him. "Even Whistler could never have equaled that one! They say that Vronski, by a mere chance, discovered a purely mechanical touch which accounts for those soft, feathery lines. The secret was thought to have died with Whistler. It was a lost science in the art of etching until reincarnated through Vronski."

"How interesting! I love Whistler don't you? Isn't that interesting?" exclaimed the fat woman, removing a vanity case from her bag.

Captain Guthrie was gathering his scattered wits. He followed the man's gaze to the "dry-point." It dazzled him. It fairly leaped from the wall. In every line and in the absence of more, he recognized Peter. Peter had drawn it. Peter Vronski! He heard the name now from the lips of every one. Vronski this and Vronski that! And the walls of the gallery, like the bulkheads of the sanctum, were covered with "cartoons." And even here, the old man saw plainly, not one was "proper."

What did all these fools—these landlubbers—know of Peter? What did they know of ships? The dry-point portrayed the Alaskan Packers' fleet and even from where the old man stood he could see that Peter had been careless—even more careless than before. It resembled more a devastated forest than a fleet of salmon ships.

"Did you meet Mr. Vronski at my reception last year?" asked the fat woman.

"No, I'm sorry to say, I did not. What sort was he?"

"Oh, not particularly interesting and hardly what one could call polished. On the 'self-made' order, you know."

"Well, we can't help admiring that type. However, I prefer to devote my time to the artist's work rather than to the artist."

"Decidedly! A self-made man takes himself so seriously, and the rest of us so lightly, he can't really be genial."

Genial! What did that woman know about it? Self-made, was he? Self-made! Is a man self-made who has had nearly a fortune spent on him? Is a man self-made who has been afforded a college education? Is a man self-made when an old salt like Captain Guthrie has stood behind him, body and soul? Is a man self-made who, with chances to become a ship's master, throws over the opportunity for "etchin'?"

"It's a fact," replied the man, "these so-called 'self-made' creatures, with all their democratic ideas, are the worst snobs of us all. But that's neither here nor there. We can't get along without them. Their children and their children's children will be as human as the rest of us."

"Yes, I suppose," sighed the woman. "I suppose so. When does the auction start? I want a dozen Vronskis—two for each bedroom. You don't think they'll bid very high to-day, do you?"

"In Eastern galleries, before they sold out, they averaged between seventy-five and a hundred dollars. Oh, I judge bids here will go little above seventy-five for the best and fifty on an average. People don't appreciate Vronski in the West. Knowing the name,

you understand, they'd rather pay fifteen hundred for a Whistler—and what's left of the latter can't really be compared with Vronski. Take that one, 'The Old Custom-house' and that other—'The Tumble-down Dock at Tiburon'—*masterful!* But I'm here to go the limit on that dry-point. It's the only one he ever did and the most ingenious bit of them all."

The old man's eyes were the size of twenty-dollar gold pieces as he listened to the astounding figures. Seventy-five for an "etchin'," and fifteen hundred for "etchin's" not so good! Humph! What kind of a business man *was* Peter? But no wonder! Peter was a born sailor and was there ever a real deep-water man with an eye for business?

His eyes wandered about the wall from etching to etching. Even at fifty dollars apiece there was money here for Peter.

The old man counted them. There were more than two hundred. Think of it! More than ten thousand dollars for Peter's "etchin's!" For "*etchin's!*" And they were no better than the "car-toons" in the sanctum.

Now, for the first time since the old man had entered he recalled Mr. Scott's intrusion into his quarters. The strange motive of the mate cleared in a flash. It was a cold money-making proposition with him. He had mistaken the oil painting, however, for one of Peter's artistic attempts. He was here trying to sell it. The old man burst out into a roar of laughter. All eyes were on him again and unsuppressed giggles swept the groups of spectators. Captain Guthrie resumed his former dignity, flushing scarlet through his red cheeks.

"If that dry-point goes to me," continued the man, "I can forget all the others. I love it. It would never part from me as long as I lived."

"I want a dozen," said the fat woman. "You see, I have three children—that's four for each when I'm gone. By that time, if they chose, they should get two or three times the amount I paid for them, don't you think so, Mr. St. Clair?"

The man with a ribbon on his glasses glared down with contemptuous scrutiny.

"Madam, I warrant you, that if your heirs choose to let them go, they'll get twenty or thirty times what you may pay to-day."

The woman smiled and focused her lorgnette on the wall before her. "Oh, I just love etchings!" she said. "Maybe, I'll stretch it a point and get twenty-four. I suppose, Mr. St. Clair, there are many horrid people here with purely speculative ideas. A person *could* make money, you know. It's interesting to see the queer types attending an exhibit like this. Why I wouldn't have believed it! People whose personal equations show positively that, to them, such masterpieces mean nothing!"

Apparently Mr. St. Clair had not heard a word. He gazed hungrily at the dry-point. The old man studied the pair with scorn. "What do they know of Peter?" he asked himself over and over again. Here was a hypocritical woman designing on the works of Peter's own heart—works, of course, which really were no good but which nevertheless embodied the boy's life and soul. She was intending to make money on Peter's "etchin's"—thirty times as much money as he could make. She had said that he was "unpolished"—intimated that he was a snob. That fat woman! That bubbling bundle of bloated flesh! And here was a numskull, praising Peter's work—longing for it! And yet he had never known the man who had done it. He did not care to know him! Snob, was he? Self-made, hey? Aboard the *Dorris Crane* Peter was "chief kicker" and the men loved him despite it! They worshiped him! Such a thing had never been recorded in the annals of the old man's career. He would find Peter and tell him everything. Peter Vronski was not to be made small of by this dried-up bevy of landlubbers.

At that moment a man appeared on the balcony—one Captain Guthrie recognized immediately. He was the same who had lured Peter from the sea—Mr. Sylvester Goldstein. He wore a frock coat and in his left hand he carried a silver-handled stick and a pair of gloves. Murmurs from the crowd abated as he faced it.

"I'm very sorry, indeed, to have detained you so long," he began in a well-modulated voice, "but circumstances were brought to my attention a few moments ago which may cause another slight delay in proceedings. As you doubtless understand, I was Mr. Vronski's business manager throughout his short career and am now authorized through his will to become the executor of his estate."

Captain Guthrie felt the blood rush from his cheeks. He moved back, started to speak, but the bald forebodings of Mr. Gold-

stein's words gripped and held his tongue. He could not believe it. It was vile chicanery! It was a lie!

"Now it might clear matters," Mr. Goldstein continued, "to state that according to conditions of the will I am to dispose of the property—the great work you see here—'as I see fit.' Having known the artist, perhaps more intimately than any one, and knowing his ideas regarding the well-being of his beneficiary, I propose to dispose of the estate at auction, feeling confident that in so doing I am bequeathing Vronski's works to a world of appreciation and giving to the beneficiary all that was believed would best suit his purpose.

"Now the beneficiary, you must understand, has for many months been beyond the range of communication. He is a sea captain—Captain John Guthrie, the artist's foster father. But it was by a strange coincidence, a moment ago, that the chief officer from the ship entered here on—on business" —Mr. Goldstein paused on the word *business*, suppressed a smile, and continued—"and with him came the news of Captain Guthrie's arrival in San Francisco.

"For this reason I feel it my duty, before opening auction proceedings, to confer with the heir. These etchings are a complete collection and comprised the personal belongings of the artist. Every other copy has been sold. I feel satisfied, however, that the captain will give his consent. He is to be notified immediately by Mr. Scott, the first officer, to whom I was just talking, and you may be sure——"

But now all eyes were focused in a new direction and Mr. Goldstein glared down from the balcony at the somewhat shabby figure that marked his man.

Captain Guthrie saw nothing, looked for nothing and thought only of Peter—Peter Vronski, who was no more. He wandered through the sacred recesses of his memory where smiled the face of one gone forever. He saw not Peter the artist but Peter the little "Rooshen" lad, sitting on the quay in Vladivostok, kicking his torn shoes toward the rigging of the *Dorris Crane*. He saw Peter, the sixteen-year-old seaman, struggling with the wind and the canvas on the royal yard. He saw Peter, the fully developed man, the mate of the *Dorris Crane*, singing out wildly from the forecastle head, rallying his men, keeping twelve busy at once. He saw Peter, the pencil scratcher, perched on the taffrail, a piece of papered boxwood resting upon his knee and a quick-moving pencil in his hand. He saw Peter in every phase of his life in every shade of expression and variation of posture. He—Peter was gone. Peter Vronski!

Mr. Goldstein, who had hurried down from the balcony, was now extending his hand toward the unexpected visitor.

"Go away," murmured the skipper without changing the focus of his gaze. "Go away—all of you."

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm sorry I didn't see you," Mr. Goldstein apologized. "Is it possible, Captain Guthrie, that you did not know? Hadn't you heard?"

Again the skipper motioned him away.

"Don't you remember me, captain? Don't you remember the day we talked it over together—you, Peter and I?"

Slowly the old man raised his head and more slowly took the hand of the executor.

"I'm sorry, old man," repeated Mr. Goldstein with sincerity. "It was a great shock to us all."

Captain Guthrie drew away sharply. "Us all!" Who were they? What was Peter to them? These landlubbers!

"You'll excuse me, captain, won't you? I didn't know you were in the crowd when I spoke. But now, I suppose, it is taken for granted that you leave the matter of disposition to me?"

"Disposition! What disposition?"

"Why, that is we—we were to sell these etchings at——"

The old man's eyes flared, like beacons. "Sell! Sell Peter's etchin's—to these—these swine! Hyenas, trying to dig money out of a dead man's boots? Buying what's left of Peter t' sell to other hyenas? No sir! You'll sell nothing!"

"But captain! My dear fellow! What in the world will you do with them—two hundred and fourteen Vronskis!"

"I tell you they are not for sale. They're mine—every damn one of 'em. Give 'em to me now! I want 'em!"

He turned on the audience as if to tear it to pieces. "Out of here!" he cried. "Out! Every hand of you!"

"But, captain, these are my customers! I have charge of this establishment."

"I don't care what you have charge of! Mr. Goldstein, I want every one of those etchin's and I want 'em now!"

Further pleading by the executor did no

good. He had only to shrug the hopelessness of the situation from his shoulders, and obey. The etchings were taken from their mural setting and stacked, one by one, on the table. "The Old Customhouse" and "The Tumble-down Dock of Tiburon" found their places among others. Mr. St. Clair looked on with horror. He fairly groaned his anguish as the dry-point was tossed upon the pile and covered by two or three dozen more Vronskis — those that the fat woman might have had for her bedrooms.

"Surely," panted the executor, "surely there are some you would like us to frame for you?"

"Frame? No. I got a frame. Sell me some thumb tacks, if you want."

Mr. St. Clair gasped as if stabbed to the heart. The cold, glassy lorgnette of the fat woman glistened before her bulging eyes. Mr. Goldstein drew himself to the height of his natural dignity and, taking a paper from his pocket, tossed it upon the table before the captain.

"Sign this, please," he said coldly.

The old man studied the document, and scrawled his name. "I now renounce all further responsibility. The etchings are yours, Captain Guthrie."

But Captain Guthrie did not reply. Slowly he bent over the table, shuffling the great stack of etchings together. The noise resounded through the gallery. Then came silence. A hundred eyes were staring and a hundred eyes witnessed a teardrop fall beside the bundle. To some he must have resembled a huge gorilla with ten or twenty thousand dollars in currency bundled in his arms; and to others—an ungainly ape into whose clutches had fallen the very soul of art.

But the old man looked neither to the right nor the left. He raised the heavy stack as if lifting a dead child from where it had fallen. Without raising his eyes, without a word, he turned toward the door, turned from the building and vanished while the crowd looked on and wondered.

More of Mr. Banning's work will appear in future issues.

AMPLE OPPORTUNITY

DURING the last spring training trip of the Philadelphia American baseball club Connie Mack, the manager, was tipped off to the existence of a phenomenal player in a little Southern town. Unheralded and alone, Mack set out to have a look at the "phenom" and arrived one afternoon in time for the game.

The first man up for the home team was a giant who looked as if he had never seen a baseball game or anything else representative of an effete civilization.

"That's a new man we're trying out," a local fan informed the great manager.

The giant let two balls go past him without swinging his bat. The third he caught "on the nose" and with a terrific wallop sent it over the center-field fence with twenty feet to spare. But he did not run. Instead, he stood with bat on shoulder, eying the somewhat discouraged pitcher.

"Run!" yelled the crowd. "Why don't you run?"

"Run nothin'!" growled the recruit. "I got two more strikes yit."

Sleight of Hand

By Lucia Chamberlain

The prestidigitator juggled with more than money

"YOU will observe," the prestidigitator said, "that I have no concealed apparatus." He had pushed up his sleeves and showed to the company a pair of white, muscular arms contrasting sharply with the black of his evening clothes. "I have only my hands," he continued. He turned them about, the long fingers moving and stretching themselves before the attentive circle of eyes.

"They look able enough," the host remarked.

"They must be," the prestidigitator answered gravely. "They have to do many things that appear difficult. Your handkerchief for a moment," he added, addressing one of the young men. He took the crumpled linen, shook it out and plucked from its folds a rose perfectly fresh. "Permit me," he said, offering it to the daughter of the house.

"Why, it's real!" she exclaimed.

"Of course. All these things are real. Reality is my specialty. Something for nothing. Very popular. And costs me—a gesture! Only the human eye is so slow." He looked as he spoke at the girl's brother, a boy of fourteen. His attention from the first had been fixed unwaveringly upon the speaker's hands. Now, however, he transferred his interest to the black, deep-set eyes. "I'll catch you at it yet," he remarked with a grin.

"No doubt. But first give your sister back her ring. It's not at all the sort of an ornament for a young man."

The boy clenched his hands nervously, stared at them and snatched off the sapphire. "Why, I never——" he began indignantly.

The girl laughed. "I know. *He* did. But give it back all the same." She slid the ring on her finger and turning again to the prestidigitator, asked, "Aren't you going to do something really wonderful for us?"

"I do nothing wonderful," he replied. "You can do far more wonderful things. You make fancies bloom in a dry mind. Youth does that. But I am forty-six. I create only material things."

"I have been given to understand that you are a very astonishing fellow," the host remarked, bringing the conversation with a round turn away from his daughter. His tone was perfunctory and a little patronizing. "It was Mr. Colton who spoke of you —Henry Colton; recommended you, in fact. He said that you had really succeeded in startling him. And if you can startle a man like Colton——"

The prestidigitator seemed to perform a feat of memory. "Ah, that! Yes. But in Mr. Colton's case I was helped by circumstances. I see no such help here to-night. And, as you suggest, people like yourselves are——" He looked over the group before him. They were an informal party. In town for an evening at the end of summer, idle, bored, hunting amusement, they had been gathered together on the spur of the moment; and now their host who had promised them something really amusing had found nothing better than this: this singular freak! They waited indulgent, scarcely expectant of what he was to do for them.

"People of your sort," resumed the prestidigitator, "aren't easily startled. For, suppose I take a singing bird out of the air there in front of you, you'd merely say, 'That's old stuff.' Or if I should turn every one in the room black——"

A stir was felt among the company. Involuntarily they glanced at one another. The color of their faces, however, had remained the same. "Is that what you did to Colton?" the host wanted to know.

The prestidigitator seemed not to have heard, as he resumed:

"Why then you would say, 'It is hypnotism.' And you would probably be right. I can't even hope to please you by some unusual little gift, some trifle; for you have all

these things." His gaze rested for a moment on a woman—or rather on her ornaments, since she herself appeared but as the background for them. Between her collar and the dry flesh of her neck the pearls seemed fairly alive. These might have been said to return his gaze. Certainly her eyes did not. They failed altogether to be aware of him. On the other hand, her husband, the banker, a blond and florid man, watched the prestidigitator with alert attention. The young men tapped the ash of their cigarettes, glanced at their finger nails, at each other. The boy, son of the host, was eagerly skeptical, ready to contend against mystery to the death, though not without admiration for the inventor of it. The daughter of the house was the only person in the room who regarded the alien being with any touch of personal interest.

He was dark, as magicians are supposed to be, and would have been handsome except that certain features were exaggerated—his nose, his eyes, his extraordinary double-jointed fingers, giving him a fantastic appearance. In this assemblage with their neutral manners and their neutral-tinted clothes colored like heather and the earth, loose fitting, his severe black and white had all the effect of a costume. While he talked he moved restlessly here and there, as though the atmosphere of indifference was affecting his nerves. "No," he continued, "you have what is called 'Everything.' That is understood. Now I posture a paradox. Because you have everything there is inevitably one thing that you have not. And by giving you one of the things you already have, I shall create at the same time the thing that is lacking. Do you follow me?"

He had reached the upper end of the room where against the smoldering red of the drawn curtains he turned again and confronted them. He was in the position of a lecturer before his audience. A cleared space of floor separated him a little from them—from everything. There was no furniture that he could touch. The windows were at least four feet behind him; the people in front were beyond reach of his arm—though not beyond reach of his eyes, his words.

"Before I can proceed," he went on, "there is a point upon which we must all be in agreement. What is to follow is entirely detached from the ordinary conditions of life and I am asking you to accept it in the spirit in which it is offered. Otherwise it cannot be successful. In short, I must ask you to be——"

As he hesitated for the word the banker put in, "Credulous?"

"No. Sincere. I don't ask you to believe that I perform miracles. That won't be necessary. I only ask that you be entirely truthful with yourselves and with me, as I shall be with you; that you behave, in short, like natural men and women; throw aside, for the time, the amenities of the social relation—dignity, courtesy, scruple, honor."

He had them aroused, finally curious. That hint of something lawless had done it. They assented impatiently, oblivious of the compact. They would have assented to anything that would make him go on. And what was a compact with a prestidigitator? His manner was far from being solemn. It had the lightness of his gestures.

He threw his head a little back with the effect of looking at them from a distance. "I shall begin," he said, "by asking a question. What is it of which no human being ever has enough?"

The ensuing silence was broken by the sudden treble of the boy planted in the front of the group. "Experience."

There was a gasp from one of the women, his mother probably, and then a general shout of laughter. He flushed, digging his hands nervously into his pockets, glaring at the prestidigitator for help.

The prestidigitator shook his head. "That won't do. There are several persons in this room who, if they are sincere with themselves, will not agree with you."

The laugh this time had less volume. Heads turned as if in the hope of detecting these individuals. The banker's wife glanced at her husband maliciously.

"Try again," the prestidigitator suggested to the company.

"Life." It was the girl who spoke. She looked hard at the man before her. Her blue, unshadowed eyes conveyed a challenge. "You dare not make fun of this," they seemed to say.

He glanced sidewise and down. "Ah!" he observed and looked up again over her head into the corners of the room. "I am waiting now for a voice to say 'Happiness.' Or is that too old-fashioned?"

"I'll say happiness," the banker replied. His compact and florid face, without trace of a smile, yet looked amused.

"Good," the prestidigitator remarked. "We have now three statements of three general conditions—experience, life, happiness. I can give you twice as many more in as many seconds: Love, peace, faith, adventure, trouble—and so on. None of these answers my question. Men have sickened of every one of them, and done frantic things to escape from them. But that is beside the point. I am not here to philosophize. I asked that question because I had it in mind to make you all a present of something—and it should be the same thing—that which you really wanted. Incidentally it must be evident to you that in spite of my skill I cannot present you with a general condition. I can only present you with the means to it, which in every case is the same. If you will allow me——"

He stretched out his hand, plucked from the air a concrete object, holding it so that it was easily visible to all. It appeared to be a greenback with the denomination of ten.

"You do not agree with me?" he continued severely to the girl whose lips had opened as if to protest. "But be very clear in your own mind before you deny this symbol. It represents life itself. Don't be afraid. I shan't give it to *you*. But for the rest of us, men and women of a modern world"—his smile, singularly warm and winning, was fixed upon the banker's wife—"you won't refuse?"

"Oh, not at all." She advanced a step, taking what he offered carelessly. "How odd! It looks genuine."

"Let's see." The host joined her. There was a general movement of the group forward.

The prestidigitator waved his arms. "Don't crowd. Stand back; give me air. I must have air in order to materialize this fact."

Alone once more in the cleared space, he raised his hand, and plucked down from an invisible tree another bill. "Here. Here's for experience." He tossed it to the boy, who seized upon it.

"Pelham!" his mother said warningly.

The giver turned to her quickly. "What harm? You know it vanishes immediately."

"It looks all right," the boy exclaimed.

"It is," the prestidigitator assured him.

"You ain't joking?"

"Should I give it to you if it weren't? Here's another," he continued, catching a fifty as though it had been tossed from some outlying section of the universe.

The very young man to whom he offered it betrayed embarrassment. "I don't want that thing."

"Don't?" the banker retorted. "There never was a time when you didn't. Come!"

"How about that twenty you owe me?" another very young man demanded.

"Get into the game, Jimmy," his host admonished. "Play up. Got to tell the truth, you know." Then in a lower voice, "Don't make it awkward."

The young fellow took the fifty cautiously as though it were hot.

"Say, I'll use it if you're afraid to," his friend suggested.

"No, here's for you. Two for you. Look out! Don't spill the silver. Your bill at the club exactly. Wondering how you were going to get it, weren't you? And—this is yours, madam—charity—generous of you!"

His host's wife stared at what she held in her hand.

"Out of the fourth dimension, you know," the prestidigitator cried gayly. "Oh, there's plenty of it; only you don't know how to look for it there. I have to get it out for you, into the third. Like this." Both hands were above his head, plucking freely as if at some enchanted branch; and magically out of nothing, the money appeared between his fingers.

They laughed, jostling one another to peer, still keeping the distance but pressing forward. They had lost self-consciousness. The women especially showed a flushed intentness. Now and then a hand was thrust out. "Is that for me?"

"No—for *you*. And this—this also." The fate was arbitrary, showering thick here, scant there. "One for happiness. Catch! And here's yours again, madam—I recognize it. But not these. These are yours." He crossed the cleared space and handed the host three bills together.

"You've given me a good deal already," he objected.

"Well, here's more."

"I don't get your system."

"There's no system. It's a case of attraction."

The host assumed a playful tone. "How is that? You've given my friend here"—he glanced at the banker—"scarcely anything. And yet, if there is a man present who can attract money it's he."

The banker with his air of unsmiling amusement watched the magician's hand which was again held up. Both men stared at it. The palm was empty. Then it was not. The prestidigitator handed the bill to his host. "No, it's no use. There's no more for him." He stepped back and stood, facing the company, stretching out his empty hands. "Ladies and gentlemen, it is finished."

The host murmured to his friend, "Well, what do you think?"

"Rather amusing."

"Yes, but"—he considered the money in his hand—"is it genuine?"

The banker looked surprised. "Why not?" He glanced at his own single greenback held between thumb and finger, then at his friend's. "I'm no expert, but it seems all right. Let's see. Oh, I think it's the real thing."

"That's damn queer!"

"Queer? Why? He knows, with people like ourselves that he's perfectly safe. Even if there happened to be a kleptomaniac in the crowd we'd make the loss good. Simply add what he's thrown at us to the check you send him to-morrow. That's what he expects. We can settle after he goes."

"But look," the other insisted. He ran his fingers through the sheaf of bills he held.

The banker's glance followed. He gave a low whistle. "Lord! He does have expensive effects! I'd no idea of the amount. How in the world did he get it to you without any one realizing?"

"Three and four at a time, large denominations rolled up so tight they looked like nothing. I didn't realize, myself, at first."

Bending forward the banker inspected the equivocal substance earnestly, felt it, held it between his eyes and the light. "If it's not genuine," he said slowly, "it's so good that it's very bad indeed. I think, on the whole, I should take up the collection before he leaves; not such a graceful gesture on your part. Still——" He broke off, seeing his wife approach them.

"Here," she said giving him several bills, "get these back to him as quickly as possible." She dusted her hands together, a motion of light disgust. "I can't think why I took them," she added; "only, while he was doing it, it had a queer effect."

He smiled outright. "My dear Caro, I never saw you repudiate money before."

"Take money from that man?" She eyed him with astonishment. "Do you suppose any one is going to keep it? You must be crazy. They're all too anxious to give it up. It's awfully awkward, really. Every one feels it." She looked plaintively at her host.

He glanced over his shoulder at the restless, murmurous group, drawn together while the prestidigitator, a little apart, talked to the daughter of the house.

"Now's the time," the banker advised. "Alice is diverting him. He didn't give her anything, I notice."

"He gave her hot air enough," her father muttered.

"Well, give him these." The banker included his greenback in the roll his wife had given him, and handed it to his host, who added it to the amount he held. Going to a secretary he took an envelope and inclosed the money. With this, inconspicuously held, he made his way into the gathering of disquieted people.

As the banker's wife had remarked, they were anxious to give up their strangely acquired possessions. They seemed to feel guilty in merely holding it. Even the young man, who by his friend's remarks, was declared to be financially embarrassed, relinquished what had been given him as promptly as though it had been the devil's donation. It was all very quiet and a little furtive, as though they didn't want to be caught in the act. Awkward! That was what they all felt about it. Though of course the tall figure talking so absorbedly to Alice could expect nothing less of them. He appeared unaware of what was going on behind his back; and, as the host intended, all would have been accomplished quietly and the total put into the man's hand at the moment of his departure had it not been for the unexpected encountered in the person of the host's young son. He neither offered what he held, nor relinquished it upon demand. His treble rose suddenly high and assertive.

"I'm going to keep it."

The prestidigitator raised his head, listening.

"He said I was to," the child insisted. "Why can't I?" And then again, in answer to his father's low reply, "Well, why can't you? Why can't all of us?"

The prestidigitator turned about. "Yes, why can't you?" he inquired. He was so placed that once more as he stood before

them he was at a little distance from them. "I thought," he continued, "that this was understood in the beginning; that we had detached ourselves from the amenities of society and were to conduct ourselves naturally and speak sincerely. Yet it is only the boy who has lived up to the agreement."

The host had come forward quickly, and now stood close to the prestidigitator. "*I* understood," he said in a low voice intended for that person's ear alone, "that the agreement that we were to take this matter seriously held good only while the performance lasted. Now that it is over you can hardly expect it to continue."

"Why not?" the other insisted, still speaking to the entire company. "You assume a delicacy as though I had taken that money from my pocket; whereas you all saw—for you watched me—how I got it out of the air, out of the fourth dimension."

The faces confronting him showed embarrassed smiles.

"Is it worth so much to you that you dare not keep it?" he demanded.

"It's worth," the banker replied, "exactly what the treasury will give for it."

"Counters!" the prestidigitator exclaimed mockingly. "Are they valuable?"

"*This* is not valuable in the least to any of us," the host answered coldly. He held out the envelope.

"Then why return it? Why not throw it in the fire? I don't want it. As far as I'm concerned it's worth no more than any other trick material—white rabbits, paper roses, handkerchiefs!"

The host colored sharply. Still speaking in a low voice so as not to be heard by those behind him, he said, "You are making my position extremely difficult. Realize, please, that your show is over, and act like a responsible being." He presented the envelope close to the other's fingers.

"Do you insist that I take it?" the prestidigitator asked.

"I do, certainly."

The prestidigitator took the envelope and holding it in front of him so that it was clearly visible, looked over his audience. "I take you to witness, all of you, that I offer this to you in good faith. Is there no one here who will accept it?"

The silence was negative, conclusive.

He drew up his long, thin figure, flinging back his head with an impatient movement. "Ladies and gentlemen, I confess your scruples are dark to me! I have told you this money is worth nothing to me, and my actions bear out my words. You insist it is worth nothing to you. Yet instead of giving it to the boy to amuse him, or throwing it away, or forgetting it, you show the greatest concern! As I have not. To me it is not worth——" He snapped his fingers in the air. "To you——" His eyes sparkled in their hollow caverns. "My dear fellow mortals, I am afraid you have broken faith with me! You are not telling me the truth. I wish you good evening."

"I didn't break faith with you," the boy protested with a quaver, and darted toward the tall figure.

Already upon the threshold it looked down on him with a smile. "No, you didn't. Thank you for that." The figure disappeared with surprising swiftness. There was the sound of a muffled movement in the hall, that of receiving hat and coat from the servant, then the shutting of the outer door.

The company looked at one another. One of the women laughed nervously. The girl exclaimed, "He said that last as if he meant it."

"What? His 'thank you?'" one of the young men inquired.

"All of that; about our breaking faith with him."

The banker's wife answered impatiently. "My dear Alice, can't you see it was part of the trick? Pelham's break made a horrible anticlimax for him—having to take his money back under our eyes. He had somehow to build up another exit for himself. I must say he did it cleverly."

"Perhaps. But I had an impression, somehow, that he really wanted us to keep it."

The banker glanced at his host. A significant look came and went between the two. "I don't think I care myself for trick money," the latter remarked.

His wife's voice at an excited pitch exclaimed, "Pelham still has it!"

"What? The magician's? Oh, the devil!" He made an angry snatch at his son who dodged and secreted himself behind his sister.

The banker interfered. "Oh, let him keep it as a present." Then, in a lower voice, "No harm in having one of them to check up on—take it into the bank to-morrow." He caught his wife's eye and continued,

changing to a pleasant, conversational tone. "It's been an amusing evening and I for one have enjoyed myself. Sorry I must say good night." He took his hostess' hand, nodded to the rest and strolled out into the hall. From here he was heard presently to pronounce his host's name. "Jack, can you come here a minute?"

His friend went out. "Yes?"

"As usual, I haven't a cent. Lend me a tip for James."

The host laughed. "Absent-minded beggar! I've plenty. I'm lined. With all these people on my hands to-night——" His expression as his fingers ran through his pockets changed curiously. It was as though he listened intently to himself. Catching the expression on the banker's face he let his hands fall. "Why did you call me out here?"

"Well, I thought I had a fifty in my clothes; but, as you say, I'm absent-minded."

"Look here, I'm not. I know exactly what I had. And now I've nothing."

"Cleaned?"

"Completely!"

"I was afraid!"

"What do you mean? Suppose you have been robbed? Why should I be, too? Both of us? Where? There's no knowing. We've been all over town this evening. I remember some one knocked against me in the Commodore lobby."

"I don't believe it happened in the Commodore."

They looked at each other a moment. The host opened the outer door and glanced up and down the empty street.

The banker put a hand on his arm. "Let's get at this quietly," he said. "Find out if Jimmy or the other chap have missed anything. In that way we can make sure. Don't call them out here. We'll speak to them in there; attract less attention."

They reëntered the room. On the threshold it was apparent they had entered a fresh situation. They were met there by the banker's wife.

"Bob," she began hurriedly, "do you remember I told you that I had forty dollars when we left the house?"

"And now you've nothing. Yes, I know."

"You took it?" She was bewildered.

"I didn't. Now don't make a noise, Caro. Jack and I have been cleaned out, too. Everything lifted."

She ignored his warning, raising an excited voice. "Robbed?"

"Be still!" her husband said warningly. But the word had been spoken. The whole company had heard it. There was nothing for it but to deal with them collectively.

The banker raised his hand. "Let me ask you to listen to me for a moment, all of you. There has been a most unfortunate occurrence. Will you please find out whether you miss anything, valuables or money?"

"If you want to know, I miss everything except my studs," one of the young men remarked laconically.

The other broke out excitedly, "And everything I had I'd borrowed. I haven't a nickel. How in the name of——"

"I've lost a hundred and fifty-seven dollars," the hostess declared. She looked around upon her guests with rising emotion. "To think this should have happened in my house!"

A panic of voices filled the room. "Here?" "You mean the magician?" "Why of course! He——" "But Colton recommended him." "What did Colton know about him? Only had him for one evening." "And how could he, anyway?" "He could do anything. Didn't he pull money out of his clothes as if he got it out of the air? Fourth dimension, he called it." "That's our pockets!" "But he gave it to us!"

The banker made himself heard with difficulty. "Every one stop talking. *Stop talking!*" In the hush that followed he went on in a calm voice. "What has happened can be explained in a word. We have been made the victims of an extraordinary sort of skin game. This man first, by sleight of hand, took the money from our pockets; again, by sleight of hand, he returned it to us in a startling manner."

"Returned our money!" the impecunious young man burst out.

"Yes. Think a minute. What did he give you?"

"By George!" the other youth shouted. "Twenty-three and silver was what he gave me, and that's exactly what I had. He said—— I never thought of it at the time. I was watching him."

"As he intended," the banker said quickly. "So was I. We all of us were. You remember," he added, turning to his host, "you called his attention to the fact that he'd given me almost nothing, a single fifty—it

was all I'd had at the beginning of the evening—and kept on handing it to you."

His host's face was curiously mottled with red and white. "And I," he said, "counted it, my own as well as yours and the others', added it up and gave it to him." His voice shook. "What goats he's made of us!"

"You seem to forget that he tried to make you keep it."

The girl's voice, quiet and argumentative, had all the effect of water on a red-hot surface. If the room did not audibly hiss at her, the fierceness of its exasperation was none the less evident. The air was thick with it. Her father turned upon her furiously. "Don't be a *fool!*"

She was frightened, stammered and became inarticulate. "But he really meant—he took us all to witness——"

"My dear Alice"—the banker's voice showed an edge as though his self-control was wearing thin—"he knew perfectly his position. It was safe. He knew that as we supposed the money was his we would return it. We must. We were bound to in honor, no matter what he protested, to force it back on him. Which we did. He took it and vanished."

"But why go through all this rigmarole merely to rob us?" the hostess demanded tearfully.

"Because he got into the house in the character of an entertainer. He had to give some sort of a show—and this suited his game and his humor. He seems to have a curious sort."

"You mean he's not an entertainer?" She looked terrified. "But Mr. Colton——"

"We don't even know he is Colton's man."

The assemblage had reached the brink of the unknown. The empty space of floor in front of them and their empty pockets seemed to be part of a mysterious nightmare.

"Why are we standing here yammering?" the banker's wife began vehemently. "Why don't you do something? Get the police!"

"With your usual tact," her husband observed. "The police don't come in on this. We should be the laughingstock of the city. It's a case for a private agency. How about yours?" he added to his host.

"Yes, that's the thing. Telephone immediately." He started for the hall; then, catching sight of his son who was being as inconspicuous as possible. "Give me that," he said sternly.

The boy backed away. "No, I won't." Tears were in his voice. "He didn't take anything from me. He was all right to me. You lemme alone!" He thrust the twenty into his pocket, jamming his hand down upon it. Suddenly he became limp. His mouth opened round and his face grew crimson. "I've—I've——" He yelled with terror and snatched out his hands. The bill fell on the floor, but still his hands held something. Both hands were full. He stared appalled. "I didn't take 'em!" he gasped.

His father held him by the wrist. "Give that to me." He began taking from the boy's unresisting fingers rolls of greenbacks neatly inclosed in paper bands and labeled. Suddenly he said in a loud voice, "Our names are on these. Jimmy, here, catch. That's yours, Hal; Violet, here you are; Bob, a single fifty; Mary."

The banker's wife was making hysterical sounds.

The host plunged his hands into his son's pockets, rummaging like an insane highwayman while the boy, holding up his arms, wept.

"I didn't, I didn't, I didn't take them. I didn't know!"

His sister's arms were around him supporting him. "Of course. We know you didn't," she murmured soothingly. "You couldn't. It was the man. That was the trick." She put her lips against his hair to hide a smile.

"That's all," the host said, standing in the midst of a silence. "Count it. Make sure. Mine's right, short the twenty he gave to Pelham." His voice was crisp as that of a paying teller. He did not look at any of them; apparently could not. His expression was as blank as a wall. Suddenly he wheeled upon his friend and shouted, "I tell you, Bob, he was laughing at me!"

"What did you hire him for?" the banker retorted, letting go his temper. "Colton said he'd startle us. And, by Heaven, he has!"

A Chat With You

I HAVE read a great deal of fiction and fact," writes Mark Trimmier of Georgia, "so much fiction that the most intricate mystery story is as open to me as the weather reports in the daily papers. This, of course, providing the author does not turn liar in the last chapter."

Mr. Trimmier has the advantage over us. We too, have read quite a bit of fiction in our day but the mystery stories still fool us. So far as authors who turn liars in the last chapter are concerned, they can't break into this magazine. But we continually read stories which keep us guessing up to the last chapter.

THERE are, of course, several ways of reading a story. Some choose to hurry through, victims of a ravenous curiosity which demands a final answer in a hurry. They are like people who bolt their meals or who see the country from a racing car traveling at ninety miles an hour. They get there in a hurry and save a lot of time. But what is time for? Some of it we hope is for enjoyment—and is it not enjoyable to chat leisurely through a meal, to jog pleasantly along the countryside, seeing the landscape and loving the road, or to read at ease and for the pleasure of the story, tasting its flavor as it spins itself out, lingering rather than hurrying to the end?

IT has seemed sometimes to us that literary critics, editors and experts generally, in discussing the art of writing, neglected the question of pace. We have heard people say that every story ought to begin with a bang, and ought to move fast from the first page.

WE have our misgivings about this. A story should start promptly. Nothing is worse than dullness. But we think that the pace of a story should gradually increase as the tale unfolds and that the hurry, if hurry there is, should be at some crisis, some climax, some emotional lift toward the end. The story that starts with too loud a bang, that runs the first hundred yards too fast, is apt to blow up toward the end. Goethe says that only the lonely heart knows earth's sadness. We say that only the man who has read a lot of unavailable manuscript knows the full sorrow of the brisk beginning and the flat ending. Stories are like fights, easy to start but hard to wind up properly. The story that promises too much at the start is dishonest. The story that delivers more than the opening promises, that saves up its greatest strength for the last round, that leaves you thrilled, stirred, surprised, uplifted or what not, is the story we admire.

This may seem like rank heresy to the bang brothers who shoot everything they have in the first ten minutes. We, however, are continually reading stories that start well and peter out and in our determination to keep them out of this magazine we have conceived a violent prejudice against them.

WE wonder if reading this magazine has a beneficial effect on the health. We wish some good life-insurance doctor could examine the steady readers of THE POPULAR. We think they would all turn out to be exceptional risks. Being men and women of good judgment, as shown in their choice of reading matter, they would naturally take good care to keep fit. Their interest in life would indicate that they had physical and mental vigor. Their fondness for humor predicates good digestions and a general sense of well-being. Their taste for the sound, the sane, the outdoor, the wholesome—what better testimony could there be of a moderate blood pressure, a heart that beats as evenly as a Swiss watch but not as fast, good health in general and a good constitution? Are they healthy because they read THE POPULAR, or do they read it because they are healthy? Who knows? At any rate the list of those who have been reading it from the first number all these eighteen years grows and grows. The death rate among the original readers must have been low indeed.

WE are all of us—the readers, the magazine and ourselves—still, so to speak, "violets in the youth of primy nature." Wait a while. Let Time roll on, as it undoubtedly will. In sixty years from now we shall be reading bits like this in the paper:

"Samuel Truesden, of Weilsbeak, Mass., celebrated his ninety-fifth birthday yesterday by playing thirty-six holes of golf, three sets of tennis and swimming across the bay here. He is well and strong, straight as an Indian and sees perfectly without spectacles. The only evidence of his rather advanced age is in his golf. He never misses a two-foot putt and never slices a drive.

"'I owe my health to my habits,' he said in answer to the questions put to him by reporters. 'I am moderate in my use of tobacco—that is to say I seldom smoke before breakfast and never after I have gone to bed. I eat only three regular meals a day with an occasional bite between and breathe regularly. I attribute my fitness chiefly, however, to the fact that I read THE POPULAR steadily. I have not missed a copy in seventy years. It keeps me young spiritually and mentally. It is the mental and spiritual attitude that counts for health.'"

We are looking forward eagerly to the day when this item will appear. There's something to live for!

TO get back to Mr. Trimmier and his ability to see through the mystery stories at a glance, we wish he would try out "The Red Redmaynes," by Eden Phillpotts, which starts in the present issue of the magazine.

We did not solve it until the author solved it for us. But then, we must admit we forgot to try to solve it. We were too much interested in what we read as we went on, too much interested in the characters, the events, the atmosphere, the dramatic situations, too bewitched by that magic that animates the well-told tale.

Maybe you can keep a clearer head and resist the spell, but we found our way of reading it a lot of fun. Try it yourself.

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$60—$200 a week. Free Samples GOLD SIGN LETTERS for store fronts and office windows. Anyone can put them on. No experience necessary. Big demand.

LIBERAL OFFER TO GENERAL AGENTS

METALLIC LETTER CO., 433T N. CLARK ST., CHICAGO

"DON'T SHOUT"

"I can hear you with the MORLEY PHONE." It is invisible, weightless, comfortable, inexpensive. No metal, wires nor rubber. Can be used by anyone, young or old. The Morley Phone for the

DEAF

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Write for Free Booklet containing testimonials of users all over the country. It describes causes of deafness; tells how and why the MORLEY PHONE affords relief. Over one hundred thousand sold.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 758, 26 S. 15 St., Phila.

High School Course in Two Years!

You Want to Earn Big Money!

And you will not be satisfied unless you earn steady promotion. But are you prepared for the job ahead of you? Do you measure up to the standard that insures success? For a more responsible position a fairly good education is necessary. To write a sensible business letter, to prepare estimates, to figure cost and to compute interest, you must have a certain amount of preparation. All this you must be able to do before you will earn promotion.

Many business houses hire no men whose general knowledge is not equal to a high school course. Why? Because big business refuses to burden itself with men who are barred from promotion by the lack of elementary education.

Can You Qualify for a Better Position?

We have a plan whereby you can. We can give you a complete but simplified high school course in two years, giving you all the essentials that form the foundation of practical business. It will prepare you to hold your own where competition is keen and exacting. Do not doubt your ability, but make up your mind to it and you will soon have the requirements that will bring you success and big money. YOU CAN DO IT.

Let us show you how to get on the road to success. It will not cost you a single working hour. We are so sure of being able to help you that we will cheerfully return to you, at the end of ten lessons, every cent you sent us if you are not absolutely satisfied. What fairer offer can we make you? Write today. It costs you nothing but a stamp.

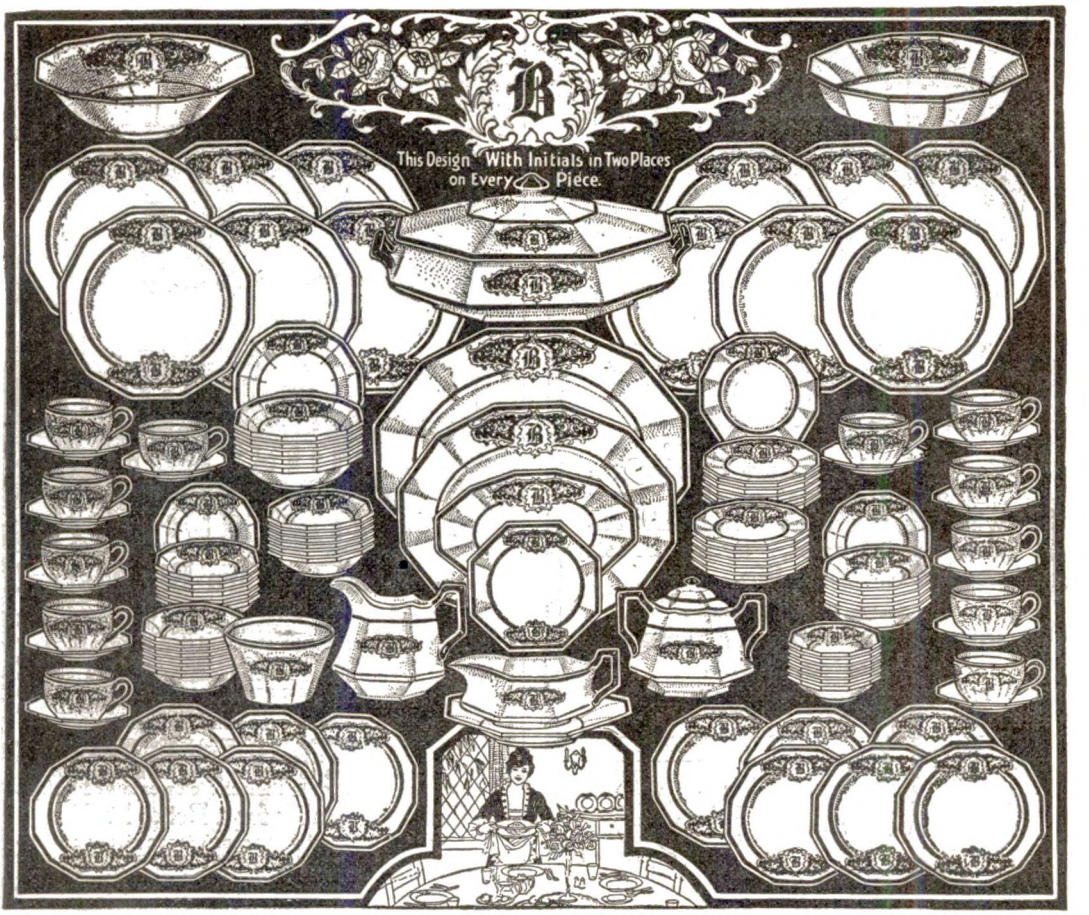
AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. H-44, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

AMERICAN SCHOOL

AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. H-44, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago
Explain how I can qualify for position checked:

...Architect $5,000 to $15,000	...Lawyer $5,000 to $15,000
...Building Contractor $5,000 to $10,000	...Mechanical Engineer $4,000 to $10,000
...Automobile Engineer $4,000 to $10,000	...Shop Superintendent $3,000 to $7,000
...Automobile Repairman $2,500 to $4,000	...Employment Manager $4,000 to $10,000
...Civil Engineer $5,000 to $15,000	...Steam Engineer $2,000 to $4,000
...Structural Engineer $4,000 to $10,000	...Foreman's Course $2,000 to $4,000
...Business Manager $5,000 to $15,000	...Sanitary Engineer $2,000 to $5,000
...Certified Public Accountant $7,000 to $15,000	...Telephone Engineer $2,500 to $5,000
...Accountant and Auditor $2,500 to $7,000	...Telegraph Engineer $2,500 to $5,000
...Draftsman and Designer $2,500 to $4,000	...High School Graduate In two years
...Electrical Engineer $4,000 to $10,000	...Fire Insurance Expert $3,000 to $10,000
...General Education In one year.	

Name..... Address.....



This Superb 110-piece Set, with initial in 2 places in wreath with 5-color decorations on every piece and gold covered handles, consists of:
12 Dinner Plates, 9 inches
12 Breakfast Plates, 7 inches
12 Cups
12 Saucers
12 Soup Plates, 7¾ inches
12 Cereal Dishes, 6 inches
12 Fruit Dishes, 6¼ inches
12 Individual Bread and Butter Plates, 6¼ inches
1 Platter, 13½ inches
1 Platter, 11¾ inches
1 Celery Dish, 11¾ inches
1 Sauce Boat Tray, 7¾ inches
1 Butter Plate, 6 inches
1 Vegetable Dish, 10½ inches, with lid (2 pieces)
1 Deep Bowl, 8¾ inches
1 Oval Baker, 9 inches
1 Small Deep Bowl, 5 inches
1 Gravy Boat, 7¾ inches
1 Creamer
1 Sugar Bowl with cover (2 pieces)

368-Page Book Free

Brings 110-Piece Gold Decorated Martha Washington Dinner Set

Send only $1 and we ship the full set—110 pieces. Use it 30 days. Then if not satisfied, return them and we refund your $1 and pay transportation charges both ways. If you keep them, take nearly a year to pay on easy terms.

Your Initial in 2 Places on Every Piece—5-Color Floral Decorations and Gold

Wonderful artistic effect is given by the wreath and rich design surrounding the initial. Your initial appears in 2 places on every piece.

All Handles Covered with Gold

Every handle is covered with polished gold. Shipping weight about 90 lbs.

Important! Hartman guarantees that every piece in this set is absolutely first quality—no seconds. This is a standard or "open" pattern. Replacement pieces may be had of us for three years. Each piece wrapped in tissue paper. Excellent packing to prevent breakage. Shipped without delay.

Order No. 324DMA13. Bargain price, $32.85. Pay $1 now, $3 monthly.

HARTMAN Furniture & Carpet Co.

Dept. 4527 **Chicago, Ill.**

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368 pages of bargains in furniture, rugs, stoves, silverware, washing machines, kitchen ware, gas engines and cream separators, etc.—all on our easy terms—30 days' FREE trial. *Post card or letter brings it FREE.*

"Let Hartman Feather Your Nest"

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
DEPT. 4527 CHICAGO, ILL.

I enclose $1.00. Send 110-piece Golden Martha Washington Dinner Set No. 324DMA13. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If not satisfied, will ship it back and you will refund my $1.00 and pay transportation charges both ways. If I keep it I will pay $3.00 per month until full price, $32.85, is paid. Title remains with you until final payment is made.

Name .....

Street Address .....

R. F. D. ..... Box No. .....

Town ..... State .....

State your Occupation ..... Color .....

Give Initial Wanted (Any One Letter) .....

Keep the story with a Kodak

Today it's a picture of Grandmother reading to the children. Tomorrow it may be Bobbie playing traffic policeman or Aunt Edna at the wheel of her new car or Brother Bill back from college for the week-end or—

There's always another story waiting for your Kodak.

Free at your dealer's or from us—"At Home with the Kodak," a well illustrated little book that will help in picture-making at your house.

Autographic Kodaks *$6.50 up.*

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y. *The Kodak City*


LIFE SAVERS
Old King Cole loved
the Mint with a Hole.
"I enjoy Life Savers,"
said he;
"One after my pipe,
two after my bowl,
They're always Lifesavers
to me."
PEP-O-MINT
LIFE SAVERS
THE CANDY MINT WITH THE HOLE
Pep-O-mint
Wint-O-green
Lic-O-rice
Cl-O-ve
Cinn-O-mon