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BY

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"The Man Who Knew"

BY

EDGAR WALLACE

. . .

also stories by

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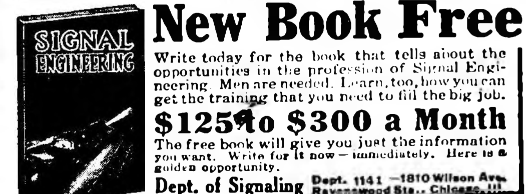

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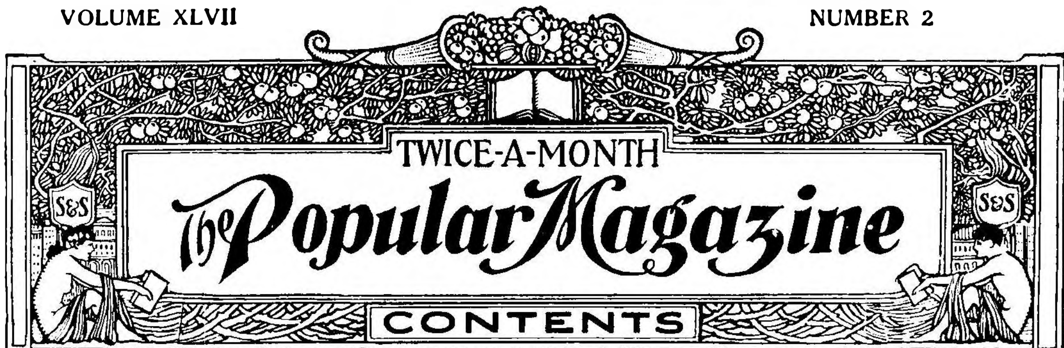

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Just to show you that we're keeping up the pace in this new year, the same number will contain stories by Cullen, Stacey, Beeston, Spears, Steele, Rucker, Roy W. Hinds, and Victor Lauriston.

This number will be on sale January 20th

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XLVII. JANUARY 7, 1918. No. 2.

The Scarlet Walnuts

By Patrick and Terence Casey

Authors of "The Wolf Cub," "Where Gold Is, Death Is Near," Etc.

Deadly delicious were some of these walnuts of the O'Donoju, and they enslaved their eaters; others were still more dangerous when used as arrows. Who was responsible for them, and what was their purpose? This question agitated the whole Panama Canal Zone. Aside from the mystic power of the walnuts, the tale is a vivid, glittering panorama of Spanish bullfights and their proud matadores, Panamaian political cliques and intrigues, and the intense hatreds and loves of the tropics. There is a girl and a song running through the story that are the leading motifs of the drama:

"O my dark Rosaleen,
Do not sigh, do not weep!"

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN WITH THE JESUIT'S FACE.

IT used to be said along the Isthmus that the whole Canal Zone moved toward Panama City every Sunday. The National Lottery was the magnet which allured and compelled thither Gold Men and Silver Men alike. Every one played—white-collared clerks, roughneck steam-shovel men, khaki-clad engineers, bull-throated foremen of pick-and-shovel brigades, flapping hatted Spiggoties, and jabbering Silver Men in the dark corduroys and black, round-brimmed headgear of the peasantry of southern Europe.

The quarters of the National Lottery were on the ground floor of the archepiscopal palace, next door to the cathedral. Opposite, in the Cathedral Plaza, the whole Canal Zone would stand elbow to elbow, comparing tickets and borrowing one another's tobacco for cigarettes. It was a great and motley gathering, good-humored, oddly dramatic. Every one waited nonchalantly for the posting of the lottery drawings, the while each nursed the secret hope that he might be turned up winner. For the nonce, the common interest leveled Gold Men, Silver Men, and Spiggoties to the same footing.

It was here in crowded Cathedral Plaza, one certain Sunday morning, that Lawrence O'Shane stood and gossiped—and first met Griso Zuñiga.

O'Shane was of the Zone police. He was first class—white—officer No. 51; it said so on the little nickel-plated badge upon his chest. Naturally of a strongly pigmented type—black hair and flushed, olive skin—he appeared vividly colored when his smile showed the contrasting whiteness of remarkably good teeth. Altogether, a cocky-

looking young man he was in his burnished leather puttees, khaki military suiting, and dented Baden-Powell cocked low on left eyebrow.

O'Shane happened to stand shoulder to shoulder in the crowd with a man who attracted his attention; a man who wore the coleta or pigtail. The coleta had been pinned up with hairpins beneath the man's gray cap, yet an inch or two showed in a slight protuberance of coarse black hair below the edge of the headgear. Because of that thick and sacred lock of hair which all bullfighters wear on the hinder part of the head as an emblem of their ancient profession, O'Shane knew the man for a torero, one of the epic Spaniards of the blood and sand.

He eyed the man critically, yet without subjecting him to the nervous sensation of being stared at. The bullfighter was about thirty years old. He was two inches shorter than the policeman; he stood five feet ten. He was in his prime, thickly and solidly built. Yet his was no torero's face--not at all the face one would expect to find surmounting those broad shoulders and that stout column of neck. His face was lean, sharply chiseled, and of an almost ashy bloodlessness. His face was the cold, austere face of a Jesuit; the eyes veiled, yet challenging; the ascetic lines of nostril and lip like graven steel.

He did not smell of strong and cheap perfume, as do some toreros, nor of horses and stables, as do others. He was dressed with extreme neatness, but without ostentation. He wore a suit of quiet gray, tan American shoes, a gray cap, and a sober gray tie. His long, white, dry fingers were ringless.

"'Lo, Larry!" A voice greeted O'Shane from behind, as a swirl of the crowd allowed a Zoner, an expert powder man named Fitzgerald, to slip up beside the policeman. "Thought you were up at Las Cascadas with Flynn. When did you get down here, O'Shane?"

"Last night."

"Anything doing up that way?"

"Not a thing. Nothing to do but sit around all day on the veranda and fill in time counting the dirt trains going by with spoil from the Cut."

"Soft as sitting in the plaza counting 'zits'—what? But say, Larry," Fitzgerald added, his voice dropping to a whisper at O'Shane's ear, "how did you leave 101 and 103? Still on the ground?"

"Yep, though we had telephone orders from headquarters to watch out. Heard that powder magazine No. 63, at Paraiso, went sailing sky-high last Wednesday, and two at Frijoles the next day——"

"And 97 at Monte Lirio last night."

"Whew! Monte Lirio? Earnshaw's station, eh? I didn't know that. Haven't reported in this morning, you know."

"Well, it's so. Four powder houses blown to halifax in one week; more than we lost all along the Ditch last year."

"I don't grab the idea, Fitz. Accidental concussion? Some kind of spontaneous combustion—bad powder? H'm! Four's too many. Look's like a plot, Fitz. I shouldn't wonder if it were some kind of plot——"

The full sensation of it did not come at once, but when it came the policeman broke off abruptly. The bullfighter just in front had slowly turned his head. Thoughtfully now he was eying the policeman.

O'Shane answered the man's look. He gazed into a pair of oblong, amber eyes. He knew, then, from those eyes, that the man was a Moor from southern Spain.

"Hello, Zuñiga!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, leaning forward to catch the gaze of the bullfighter and nodding with eager friendliness. *"Como 'sta?"*

The man's almost yellow eyes lighted with recognition.

"Ah, it is you, Señor Fitzgerald!" he said in Spanish.

An eddy of the crowd allowed the powder man to slip forward in front of O'Shane, who, held immovable by the press of bodies, could not help but overhear the conversation.

Fitzgerald had launched into Span-

ish eulogy. To judge from his words, the powder man had become an *aficionado,* a bullfight fan. Up to the very skies he praised the work of Griso Zuñiga in the bull ring. Such praise is never lavished on common toreros, so O'Shane knew that the man with the Jesuitical face must be a matador, an executioner of bulls, a man of death.

Fitzgerald made no secret of his own yearnings to become a successful matador likewise. The tinsel and bravado of the Spanish-American bull rings had got him; the swagger and thrust, the cloak and color, the play that had become an art and science of death since the days when the noble knights of Spain disported themselves for a pastime in eternal Rome. With the impudence of all professional aspirants, eagerly and bluntly Fitzgerald asked:

"What, *mi amo,* is the secret of your success?"

"The secret of my success?" repeated the matador. His lips curved in a thin smile; his lips only. "It is only this: I look into the bull's eyes! And the eyes of the bull tell me what he is going to do a fraction of an instant before he does it. My eyes never leave the eyes of the bull. I am ready for his charge, then. And when he charges —*carajo!* I murder him. It is just like killing a man, *amigo;* it is all in watching the eyes."

Like a pot of water suddenly starting to boil, the crowd buzzed and began to mill around. Every one pushed and elbowed forward. The machinery of the National Lottery had commenced to grind; the great, thrice-sealed drumwheel, the little, hollow balls within that drumwheel, were being turned round and round. Presently, within the lottery quarters, they were opening the little hollow balls and extracting the numbers from their secret hearts; presently, outside, they would be posting up the winning combinations one by one.

In the compress and shifting turmoil of the crowd, the matador was borne away. O'Shane touched Fitzgerald on the shoulder, asking who the bullfighter was; he knew no more than that the man with the Jesuit's face must be a matador, an espada.

"Don't know that hombre!" exclaimed the powder man, genuinely surprised. "Why, he's Griso Zuñiga! We're all raving about him. He kills bulls in the arena of Panama, and he's great, gorgeous, a world beater! He kills bulls—how do the Spiggoties say it?—he kills bulls like the Omnipotent Himself! I tell you I have been in Cuba and in Chile and in Peru, but I've never seen a matador come up to Zuñiga. You should go and see him perform, Larry; take in the *corrida* this afternoon."

"But I've been to the bullfight all I care to," O'Shane countered; "I've never seen this Griso Zuñiga striding the sand."

"Oh, he came here only two weeks ago. But already he's a top-notch favorite, a howling success. The fans—the boys from the Zone, as well as the Spiggoties—are loco, clear crazy about him. He came here from South America; was some matinée idol down there, too. The Peruvians loved him more, indeed, than they love that *pisco* of theirs, which is saying something, boy, believe me!"

"Well, if I could cop even a consolation prize in the lottery this week——" the policeman began; he fingered his pasteboard and looked toward the quarters of the lottery to compare numbers.

"Wait a minute, Larry; I've got something more to say. There's a story going the rounds. Yes, about Zuñiga. One of the foremen at Peter M'Gill started it; others took it up. They say he bears a striking resemblance to a Spaniard who once worked as a Silver Man in a pick-and-shovel brigade up at Pedro Miguel. Zuñiga, you know, is no slouch in looks—an uncommon-looking geezer with his heavy frame and thin, sad face. They say he's a dead ringer for that 993."

"Eh?" The policeman frowned. The powder man nodded eagerly.

"Yep. They say he's a dead ringer for that Silver Man, who flew the job between two days and was never heard

of again. The number on that man's brass check had been 993."

"Oh, I get you!" O'Shane jerked his head. "Silver Men have no names, only numbers."

"Exactly. But that ain't all; not yet. This particular Silver Man whom Zuñiga so closely resembles had come over from Spain with a batch of pretty hard cases. It was before your time in the diggings, Larry; three years ago or more, anyhow. At that date every cattle boat that came over from Spain was full of sneak thieves, smugglers, and murderers."

The policeman was surprised and a bit shocked.

"You mean that every Spaniard in the Zone is a bandit or criminal?"

"No, no; only the tribe that came over in that year. You see, the Queen of Spain had given birth to a son. Alfonso, to celebrate the arrival, opened all the gray brick prisons of his kingdom and let loose a flock of jailbirds on Panama."

"It was a great day for Spain, eh?" The policeman smiled, showing his vividly contrasting white teeth and deep coloring.

"I guess yes. When a Spanish king celebrates he celebrates, and then some! But it was a great day for the Canal Zone, too, I tell you; we were in a heluva fix, at the time, for want of good pick-and-shovel men. Spaniards make the best pick-and-shovel men possible in this climate. And we were game that the Zone should be the dumping ground for all the riffraff of Spain, so long as we could get husky Silver Men enough to help us put the Big Job through."

"But about this Silver Man of Peter M'Gill?" hastened O'Shane, giving Pedro Miguel its current name in the Zone.

"Oh, one day, about a year or more ago, he beat it off into the jungle and vanished. But here's the funny part. After Zuñiga's resemblance was recognized, the Zoners began to talk. They've been spreading it around that Griso Zuñiga was the vanished Silver Man of Peter M'Gill, 993. And the guy having been shipped over here with a flock of jailbirds, the Zoners went further. Then put him in a Spanish prison, then saddled him with an imposing crime. Their pride in him as a sure-enough Zoner caused them to stretch facts to the limit; they figured it would add to his stature and celebrity."

"So they put two and two together—making five?"

"Uh-huh. And then were fired with a holy desire to prove the correctness of their addition. Some Sherlock Holmes among 'em invaded the Spanish newspaper offices in Colón and Panama and looked through the files of the Seville, Barcelona, and Madrid dailies. Out of those old yellow files he dug stuff that had the look of true gold, and, whether the real metal or not, was as good as gold in the eyes of the gossips."

O'Shane was by this time thoroughly interested.

"And what was the pay dirt, Fitz?"

"A regular romance. Alfonso took over the Spanish job in 1902; it was a great national feast day. Alfonso appeared before the Cortes, got sworn in, then rode back through Madrid at the head of a great procession. The common people banked the streets; it was a day of pomp and pageantry and cheering. Also, a bomb was thrown.

"Rather not thrown, but planted—for it was a suit-case bomb. It was placed in the bottom of an open carriage, which was left standing in a street along the way. Just as the new kid king went by a man appeared in an upper window of a house across the street. He had a rifle in his hands. With it he plunked just once at that suit case full of dynamite.

"Well, some damage was done the royal victoria, one or two royal guardsmen were dissipated into the atmosphere, and where the open carriage had been was a gaping hole in the street. The dynamite struck down, you know. When the commotion had subsided the guy who had fired the rifle and set off the bomb was given a great old chase—and they got him at last."

"And he was this same 993? This Griso Zuñiga?"

"I'm not sure, but the papers gave his name as something like that, something like Juan Griso——"

"It's not a Spanish name," said O'Shane suddenly. "That is, Castilian. The man's of southern Spain, but that name Griso is Basque pure and simple."

Fitzgerald shrugged his shoulders in careless ignorance.

"Well, he was quite a celebrity at the time. Indeed, when Spain heard of the attempt at assassination, a demigod toppled from his place in the sun. Griso was a *diestro;* a young, brilliant, and uncommonly popular Sevillian matador. All Spain had worshiped him; there had been no espada on the peninsula with more courage, more gusto, more verve. He had been popular with the people as only a bullfighter can be popular with those ginks.

"Alfonso was politic enough to let him off with a term in prison. He was very young, you know—only twenty-two at the time. Then, before his sentence was out, he was released at the time of the royal dispensation of pardons, and was told to leave Spain for the good of the country. He came to Panama as a Silver Man with the rest of the prison zebras. If he ain't the one who skipped out into the jungle —993—and if he ain't this here same Griso Zuñiga, then I'm a Dutchman, Larry."

"You mean, then," said O'Shane thoughtfully, "that the matador Zuñiga, whom we just met—— H'm! Then he's a red, a direct actionist, an anarchist?"

Before Fitzgerald could answer, some one behind clapped him a tremendous blow on the back, clapped O'Shane a tremendous blow; and, with rebel yells, tried to clear a path.

"Whoopee! I've got it, Fitz! Got it, got it, Larry! I've copped the capital —twenty thousand dollars—whoopee! It's the system, boys. Played the same number every week since I came down here four years ago; bought that number like a season box at the opera. Me for home now—real opera, steam heat, snow in the winter—the good old U. S. A.! I've copped the capital—whoopee!"

It was a red-faced steam-shovel man named Burns. Through the crowd toward the quarters of the National Lottery he dashed, waving his pasteboard ticket and shouting continually, shouting like mad.

O'Shane and the powder man looked at each other in a dull shock of amazement. With swiftly reborn hope, each turned for another look at the winning numbers going up before the lottery quarters. Slowly each shook his head as if to himself and returned his eyes to the other man.

"Well, what d'you know about that!" ejaculated O'Shane.

"Strikes me like a curious parallel," rejoined Fitzgerald seriously. "Yesterday nobody cared a continental about Burns and his system; to-day the whole Zone will be wagging tongue about him, marveling at his sudden rise, aping his system. And the same with this Zuñiga I was telling you about——"

"Oh, yes; Zuñiga."

"When he was 993, if indeed he ever was," explained Fitzgerald, "nobody cared a tinker's dam how many notches he had in his gun, nobody cared a tinker's dam how many years of penance he had served, how many kings he'd killed. But now that he's a matador and a matinée idol and a general higher-up, every one is raking over the ashes of his past. He isn't aware that a story has spread about him, of course. He, Griso Zuñiga himself, isn't in the know at all!"

The policeman stared at his friend, an odd light coming and going in his steady gray eyes, an odd frown creasing his sun-bronzed forehead and crinkling his cheeks.

"Fitz," he said suddenly, "if this Zuñiga, the would-be regicide, the man with a face like a gray mask—and Griso means 'gray'—if this anarchist still had the blowing-up bee in his bonnet, do you think he might have any connection with the destruction of those powder houses last week?"

The powder man started, shook his head in hurried, vigorous dissent, then abruptly and very seriously paused. His eyes widened upon O'Shane.

"Say!" he exclaimed slowly. "I never thought of that." Mechanically he was tearing to tiny fragments his dead lottery ticket. He repeated, after a moment: "No, I never thought of that before."

CHAPTER II.

WALNUTS—AND A GIRL.

Thoughtfully rolling a cigarette, Policeman No. 51 set off across the Plaza toward Ancon. The cigarette between his teeth, a match in his right hand, he paused to scratch the *fosforo*. Some one roughly brushed against him; the match was jarred from his hand, and he started a scowl. Then, in English with a Latin flavor, the some one courteously said:

"Excuse me."

"No importa," returned O'Shane in the ready vernacular of the Zone. He smiled and dug for another match.

But the some one had paused, and now said in Spanish:

"If you will allow me?"

For the first time the policeman looked up. The man accosting him was Griso Zuñiga. With other disappointed ones of the crowd, the matador had been moving away from the late center of attraction. There was a glowing cigarette between his lips. The two touched their cigarettes, Zuñiga passing his fire to the policeman in the Spanish manner, their heads together, their cheeks almost rubbing.

"A thousand thanks," said O'Shane.

Zuñiga bowed and continued on. The policeman stood looking after him thoughtfully. And, looking after him, he saw a thing occur—a slight, almost commonplace incident—yet one that disquieted him and made him think.

A man got up from one of the Plaza benches and approached Zuñiga. He was a burly giant, ungainly of walk, over six feet tall, and wore faded green corduroys, a blood-red sash after the Basque fashion, and a little, round Basque cap. His eyebrows met in a solid black smear above the notch of his nose, and there was, on his ruddy right cheek, a blue scar formed into somewhat the shape of a ragged five-pointed star.

Had O'Shane not noticed that the man wore a long tuft of hair combed down before each ear, had he not noticed under the man's round cap the knob of his *coleta,* still would he have known from the scar that the Basque was a bullfighter. That scar was the ineradicable and hideous blemish left where a bull's horn had once torn flesh.

He touched Zuñiga on the arm and held out in his right hand, in invitation to the matador, a large paper bag, a bag such as is commonly sold with fruit.

"Eat of the walnuts, *mi amo,* my master!" O'Shane heard him say in the deep gutturals of a native of the Basque provinces of Spain.

As if to press the invitation by himself partaking of the nuts, the scarred one reached his own hand into the bag and drew out a round, brown, and particularly large walnut. Holding that walnut up before Zuñiga's eyes, he closed his great fist upon it and slowly crushed it to fragments, to a pulp—crushed it as an apple is crushed in a cider mill, crushing it so that it wet his hand with juice.

Now it is no feat to crumble two walnuts by vising them together in the palm of the hand. But it *is* something of a feat to crush a single walnut in the hand, and to crush it to a jelly as he did. Why, that walnut actually spurted milk!

Griso Zuñiga was forever pale, pale as a statue in somber granite. But suddenly now a tide of dark blood crept up the column of his neck, crept up his lean face, crept up even into his eyes. His eyes, once amber, became shot with blood, became coated with a sort of red film. The irises contracted to mere pinheads; they blazed like pinheads of glass. A frown had knotted itself in his forehead; now it was smoothed out, and he began to smile—a strange, stiff, fierce, and hun-

gry smile that was like the smile of a great cat.

The man, Griso Zuñiga, was most terribly angry. At a mere invitation to eat, at a few commonplace words from an admirer, he had vaulted into a flaming fury. And now he crouched, crouched like a cougar about to spring.

It was not as if he threw himself into that crouch, posturing himself as other men posture themselves, swiftly and with precipitation. It was, rather, as if his muscular, thick body shrank into itself—drew into less compass—contracted upon itself, each muscle flexing of its own volition, coiling—tightening.

The policeman stood watching Zuñiga. In his mind's eye he could see the matador slipping swiftly and suddenly from the progressions of the crouch to the lightning-quick progressions of the spring; loosing himself, springing up and upon the burly bullfighter, striking him with his full weight and all the velocity of his fury, bearing him backward in one hot, crashing moment of impact.

The ungainly, scarred giant stepped back a pace. The ragged blue scar on his cheek went a dirty white with fear; he cried out hoarsely and dropped a hand to his sash.

On the sudden Zuñiga himself cried out; a sharp, marrow-piercing cry, choked ere it was well begun. He shook himself. His hands flexed and reflexed as with some great inner effort; a cold moisture started upon his face. Still shaking himself, he came erect again. He stood to his full height, his face free from passion, but pale, as though sucked of all blood. He stepped a stride nearer the giant. With one blow of his hand he swept the paper bag from the Basque's grip and knocked it sprawling on the gravel, so that it vomited brown, round, and wrinkled walnuts all about.

"I do not care to eat of the walnuts, Trinidad Moncada," he said hoarsely. "Eat, thou and thine, of the walnuts of O'Donoju—beast that thou art! But what I desire that thing I take, I, Griso Zuñiga. What I desire, that thing I take; aye, and no payment do I give to man or devil!"

He turned and strode swiftly away, but as he turned he made a deep bow—neither to O'Shane nor to Trinidad Moncada, but to the one other who heard his words and saw the scene.

For a long minute the burly Trinidad Moncada stood gazing stupidly at the walnuts that still rattled and rolled across the gravel. Then he lifted his eyes after the retreating form of the matador. It was as if he had lifted a mask of cardboard from his scarred face; it was as if he had suddenly exposed his soul, naked and grimacing, to the white day. To O'Shane, the thrilled eyewitness, it showed the deep wells of rancor lying, cold and still, in the rock of a hate-corroded soul.

Moncada looked down again at the walnuts. He stooped, picked up one from the gravel, crunched it as he had the first in his huge paw. From the crumbs he selected that which was meat, and, frowning still, carried it to his lips. He munched. As he munched, slowly the frown faded from his face, and slowly he began to smile a thoughtful, sly, superior, bare-fanged smile. He leaned over again, swept up the walnuts in his hand, stowed them in the sash that girded him.

Then he, too, bowed; an ungainly bow enough. Still smiling, he turned abruptly away and strode off in the opposite direction to that taken by Zuñiga.

Enthralled in the powerful, emotional grip, swayed by the tremendous and clashing passions of these two men, it was not until now that O'Shane glanced at the other person—the person to whom both Zuñiga and Moncada had bowed, yet to whom they had spoken no word. And as he looked, O'Shane felt something quiver and leap within his soul.

He was carried out of himself, was Lawrence O'Shane; a man of highly nervous organism, refined, sensitive, imaginative—he was transported. His cold, practical, workaday side had for the moment vanished.

Vaguely he realized that throughout

the scene this girl must have been standing there watching, as she was now watching him. Such a girl he had never seen since he had come to the Zone. Clad all in white from shoes to mantilla—not immaculate white, not tailored white of tourist—there was about her garments an oddity that puzzled him. But it was not to her garments, her slender, shapely hands, the long, girlish lines of her body that his gray eyes swung, transfixed; it was to her face, blue-black of hair and eyebrow, ruddy of lip and cheek, with great blue eyes, blue as the deep, glorious sapphires men buy with their blood from the caves of Lung-tan.

O'Shane caught his breath sharply. That face was such a face as drives quick, frightening pain to the hearts of men; a face glimpsed but twice in a lifetime, remembered into eternity; a face that tortures the soul of men with its loveliness, its inaccessibility, its sweet, poised purity.

The girl turned and walked away. O'Shane trembled. He wanted, above all things else, to follow her, to run after her, to look once more into her eyes. But she was gone. And he stood there trembling. Why? He knew not.

He sank down on the bench from which Moncada had arisen, and tried to grip himself into sanity. What had happened here? What had *really* happened, after all? Two bullfighters, unnerved by the strain of the lottery drawing, had quarreled; attracted by their strange attire and aspect, a girl had paused to watch them. That was all.

But it was not all. O'Shane knew very clearly it was not all. What had Zuñiga said? "Eat, thou and thine, of the walnuts of O'Donoju!" What could he have meant? What manner of walnuts were those? And: "What I desire, that thing I take; aye, and no payment do I give to man or devil!" There had spoken the cold, frightful spirit of Griso Zuñiga; the gray, lean, forth-leaping spirit.

And why had the two men bowed to the girl, bowed as though they knew her, bowed and strode away with no second glance? She had stood unmoving, unheeding, but watching. Whither had she come? Somewhere, somehow the three lives were linked.

From O'Shane was wrenched a groan.

"That face—that Irish face! The name O'Donoju! And those men who bared their souls for that one moment —ugh! I feel as though I had been in another country, a dream. Feel as though I'd been hypnotized or something like that. Can't understand it. Lord, what a powerful pair of brutes! And what—what an angel from heaven!"

Uneasily, anxiously, he forced a laugh; he laughed at himself, at the emotion which had seized upon him. Yet he knew it was the sight of that girl which had caused the emotion. O'Shane was no fool, no emotional ass of a man to run helter-skelter after any pretty face. Women had found little share in his scheme of things.

But the very memory of that girl's face, its unutterable loveliness, tortured him.

He looked down at his hand, saw his dead cigarette between his fingers, and with another uneasy laugh reached for his matches. He lighted the cigarette. The act in itself brought him out of his trancelike amazement over what he had witnessed; the acrid bite of the tobacco in his lungs brought him to himself again. He rose.

"Well, I'd better get up to headquarters and report in. I haven't won twenty thou. like Burns, so I've got to pay some attention to my job. I wonder what's doing up at Ancon?"

He was once more Policeman No. 51. He went to his work.

CHAPTER III.

BREECHCLOUTS AND DERBIES.

O'Shane ascended the thousand stairs, went along the copper-screened, wide verandas of the Administration Building at Ancon, and entered police headquarters. It was after noon, Sunday; there were no men in police khaki idling about the outer office. The door

to the captain's private cubby was closed, and O'Shane judged that the captain was out, probably lunching at the Tivoli, the government hotel across the way.

No. 51 rolled up the shutter top of his desk with a bang. Instantly, at the sound, came a voice from the captain's cubby, a high, nasal voice, the voice of Captain Kussey:

"Who's out there?"

"O'Shane."

"Come inside, O'Shane."

O'Shane opened the door, paused in surprise on the threshold. Within, around the center table, were gathered several men of the police. There were Thompson and Carl Davis, from Frijoles, and bespectacled, heavy-shouldered Lem Dubray from Paraiso. Standing at the opposite end of the table, his sharp, dark eyes looking straight at O'Shane from the depths on either side of a high Hebraic nose, was Isaac Kussey, captain of the Zone police. Before him, on the polished surface of the table, was a straight piece of stick about two feet long, broken off on one end.

Asked the captain bluntly in his peculiar nasal voice:

"What do you know, O'Shane, about these powder-house explosions?"

The abruptness of the question momentarily confounded O'Shane.

"I? Why, nothing; only what I've heard. After No. 65, at Paraiso, had gone up on Wednesday night, and the two magazines at Frijoles Thursday morning, O'Brien telephoned us from headquarters here to watch out at Las Cascadas. But we've seen nothing; nothing's happened. Flynn and I have taken watch and watch."

The captain nodded quickly. "I only wish O'Brien had warned all the bush stations when we heard of the first explosion at Paraiso. We thought nothing of it; I said myself it must be internal combustion; these stone powder houses are hot as blazes in this climate. The chief thought it must be an earthquake—but come in, O'Shane, and close the door."

No. 51 hastened to obey. Captain Kussey sat down at the far end of the table. Thompson, of Frijoles, shoved forward a chair, and O'Shane seated himself opposite the captain.

"Now tell us," said the captain more easily, turning to the heavy-set Dubray, "tell us about this mahogany stick and the Paraiso explosion."

"Well, there ain't much to tell." Dubray, one of the senior men of the force, paused to take off his spectacles. "I don't sleep well nights," he continued almost querulously. "I guess I never will get used to this climate. I smoke four cigarettes a day—one after each meal, and one about midnight. I usually wake up about midnight."

"Yes, yes," cut in the captain. "But get to the explosion."

"That's what I am," said Dubray. "It ain't so darned easy tellin' all this stuff in apple-pie order like a Sherlock Holmes story or a Gaborioo." He looked down at the spectacles in his hand with sudden, critical inspection, reached into a pocket for a handkerchief, and, blowing upon the glass lenses, began wiping them off very slowly and very, very carefully.

"I had just sat up in bed and lighted my midnight cigarette. It was moonlight outside. The wire netting on my winder looked like one of them there bags some of the Gold Men's wives carry, and, fust thing I knew, I was thrown plumb out o' bed and came near swallerin' that burnin' cigarette."

"That was No. 65 going off?" said the captain hastily, as some one chuckled. "But where did you get this mahogany stick?"

"Stickin' in the netting of my winder, daylight next mornin'. I was fixin' up my room—things was kind o' mussed from the rumpus. This was stickin' in the wire netting, like it had been thrown by the explosion, I reckon."

Dubray picked up the rod of hardwood. At one end was a deep slit. Running his finger down this slit, Dubray separated that end of the stick into two prongs. The other end was splintered away.

"These two points were separated

just like this, and each had tore through the fine mesh of the screen and buried itself about two inches——"

"But how could it have come from the exploded powder house?" objected Captain Kussey. "There is no wood used in the construction of those magazines; they are built of concrete walls, with roofs of corrugated iron laid on thin but high standard steel girders. Every one is built in a space clear for hundreds of feet around, clear of all trees or shacks."

"This thing has got me beat," said Dubray hopelessly. "Got me plumb beat."

He sat down, slumping deep into his chair.

"H'm!" grunted the captain. He turned to Thompson, from Frijoles. "How about the two magazines at your station? Did they go off the same as No. 65 at Paraiso?"

"About the same, sir, for all we know," returned Thompson. "Only they shot in broad daylight. There was an odd thing, too; don't know as it means anything, only it saved one nigger's life for sure. You know, we were breaking in a new crew of Jamaican negroes; they were handling the powder sacks between the magazines and freight trains, and were blissfully awkward at it.

"Our magazines went up at seven-fifteen in the morning. The crew hadn't been working ten minutes when a big buck came running up to me, the whites of his eyes showing with fright, and half of a queer walnut in his hand. He said the walnut had hit him on the back of the head as he entered the powder house to remove a sack. Didn't know where it came from or who threw it, but it hit too hard to be considered a joke.

"He was still telling about it when the very powder house from which he'd come went up with a bang. I grabbed the half of the walnut from him and started to run. Just then the other magazine, three hundred feet away, went up and knocked me silly."

As he spoke, Thompson was reaching into his pocket. He held up the half of a brown, round, and wrinkled walnut shell. Across the outside was a smear of red paint.

"The walnuts of O'Donoju!" flashed in vivid memory through O'Shane's brain. Then he laughed to himself at the thought.

The telephone bell rang startlingly. Captain Kussey lifted the receiver.

"Yes. Captain Kussey speaking. . . . Oh! Coming right over, is he? On the way? Yes. . . . Thank you, doctor. I'll bear it in mind. . . . Handle him carefully. Yes."

The captain hung up the receiver and glanced around the watching eyes.

"Earnshaw, from Monte Lirio, is on his way here—from the emergency hospital," he said slowly. "They called up to warn me that he's on the way here; he was hurt when his magazine went up last night. Have to handle him carefully; he tells a queer yarn."

There was a moment of silence. O'Shane leaned forward.

"Speaking of walnuts," he observed, to lighten the tension, "I saw a queer thing this morning."

Briefly he told of the encounter he had witnessed between Griso Zuñiga and Trinidad Moncada; the point of his narrative was the fashion in which the Basque had crunched those walnuts in his fist one at a time.

His story, however, merely provoked incredulous smiles.

"You're crazy," said Captain Kussey with blunt finality. "I defy you or any other man to crush a walnut and make juice fly; you can't do that in a hydraulic press."

"But I saw the juice squirt on his hand," protested O'Shane.

Comments resulted unflattering to his veracity. In the midst, footsteps sounded in the outer office.

"That you, Earnshaw?" called the captain in his peculiar nasal voice. "Come in!"

"Yes, sir." A nervous hand fumbled with the knob of the door. Earnshaw entered.

He was a tall, spare young man, white bandages about his head. He seemed nervous and febrile. As he en-

tered, his lower lip started an uncontrollable trembling.

"Sit down, Earnshaw." O'Shane rose, giving his chair to the hurt man. "Hurt much?"

"Nope. Only—well, maybe I dreamed it." Earnshaw sat down gratefully, relaxed with a deep sigh. "But I didn't dream it."

A glance passed around the table, passed without being observed by Earnshaw.

"Well," said Captain Kussey calmly, "let's have the report. What happened?"

Earnshaw straightened up. "Ever since I got warning from headquarters to watch out for the powder house I've sat up on top of that hill all night and slept in the day, when the steam-shovel men came on. The magazine was at the foot of a knoll; I used to watch from the top of that knoll, where I could see over the magazine and brush."

He paused for a moment, getting himself in hand.

"Last night I was up there as usual. I got careless, perhaps; anyway, I looked down all of a sudden to see a man not two hundred feet away, straight down the path. He seemed to have a long, wooden stick in his hand. Even as I got my eyes focused on him, he raised the stick to his shoulder, as if it had been a rifle. But it was no rifle. I heard a slight, whizzing sound ——"

"Not a rifle?" Captain Kussey leaned forward, keenly intent. "Sure?"

"Dead sure. Got plain sight of it. A rifle would have glittered. Anyway, I jumped up and fired at him. He leaped from the path and raced away. Three or four other figures showed up, racing across the opening, then vanished in the bush. And they were singing—singing."

Earnshaw paused, glancing around as if seeking credence in his story.

"Singing!" repeated the captain, his lips compressed. "Singing what?"

"I don't know." Earnshaw made a helpless gesture. "English words, I'm certain; an odd, rhythmic sort of chant; it swung like a marching song."

"Well, can you describe the men? White?"

"Probably. The man, the one man with the stick, was a big, burly fellow who seemed to wear a sash and a queer kind of big, round hat; queer! Like a masquerade costume. I don't understand it. The other men were small; about five feet tall. Looked like brown men or Japs; they didn't wear anything except breechclouts and derby hats."

That amazing anticlimax robbed the word "Japs" of all its suggestive meaning. Earnshaw relaxed again and slumped back in his chair.

"I know you—you think it queer," he said feebly. "It *is* queer. Only, the man I saw seemed to be aiming at the powder house, as if he were firing at the cooling vents."

"And that caused the explosion?" snapped the captain.

"No, I don't think so. The magazine didn't shoot off for quite a bit—five minutes, anyway. I was just going down to see if all was right. That's how a bit of flying concrete took me on the head. No, I don't think so. Masquerade costumes, too. Hell of a thing!"

The policemen looked from one to another, dumfounded. Captain Kussey elicited little more information from Earnshaw. The man in the sash and big, round hat had not fired any flaming arrow; had fired nothing at all that Earnshaw had seen. There had been no noise.

O'Shane said nothing at all. The description of that man in the sash and the big, round hat had reminded him, ludicrously enough, of the burly picador, Trinidad Moneada. He tucked away the thought in his brain, even while he repelled it, laughed at it.

At this instant came a knock at the door. O'Shane, at a nod from the captain, turned and opened, to admit a clerk from one of the other offices. The clerk stepped forward and handed to the captain a folded paper.

"Beg pardon, Captain Kussey, but one of those San Blas Indians slipped up to me and shoved that paper at me

a few minutes ago. It's addressed to you, so I took a chance and brought it along."

Captain Kussey opened the note and read it. His face was inscrutable as he looked up.

"Thanks," he said curtly. "It's some information I wanted. You didn't know the man?"

"Know him?" The clerk laughed. "If I could tell one o' them derby-and-gee-string boys from another I'd deserve a medal."

"Very well. Thanks." The captain nodded in dismissal, and the clerk disappeared. The men about the table gazed at each other in startled wonder that slowly changed to sheepish smiles. Earnshaw, his back to the door, had appeared not to listen to the clerk's words.

"What d'you think of that?" Thompson broke the astonished silence. "A San Blas!"

"A San Blas Indian from Panama!" added O'Shane. "Why didn't we guess it? They all wear those derby hats and breechclouts; those were the fellows you saw, Earnshaw."

"Hold on there!" Captain Kussey was frowning over the note. "A San Blas brought this here—savvy? Those men whom Earnshaw saw last night were San Blas Indians. Was that stick your man aimed with, Earnshaw, a blowpipe? Did he raise it to his mouth?"

"No, sir. To his shoulder. Like a rifle," returned the policeman doggedly.

"Well," said Kussey, "there's a connection somewhere. Now listen to this note."

He read, while a tense silence sat upon his listeners:

"Watch well at Tabernilla to-night. I shall thwart the plan, if possible. ROSALEEN."

Dubray leaned forward, looking at Captain Kussey with solemn eyes.

"Who," he asked heavily, yet with a querulous note in his voice, "who is Rosaleen, sir?"

"How the devil do I know?" snapped the captain, reaching for the telephone. "Hello! Get me Tabernilla, please."

There was a buzz of voices, low voices, while the captain warned Tabernilla and powder station 75 of the implied danger. O'Shane took up the note. It was written in fine, round handwriting; the fine, round handwriting of a schoolboy—or a schoolgirl.

"By George!" From him broke an exclamation of recognition. "By George! Rosaleen, of course!"

There was instant silence; No. 51 was the center of interested attention. Captain Kussey hung up the receiver.

"Well! You know who sent this message, O'Shane?"

O'Shane reddened, then laughed a trifle sheepishly.

"I was thinking out loud; you fellows may think me very foolish. You know, if not from my face, then from my name, that I'm of straight Irish extraction. In the sectarian schools that I attended the majority of the students were of my race. Hence we got copious doses of Irish history; therefore, I admit, I am fairly well up on the stuff."

He paused. The listening men looked bewildered at this seemingly irrelevant exordium.

"To an Irishman," went on O'Shane in explanation, "the name Rosaleen has an immediately vivid, historical, and inseparable meaning. When Irishmen were not allowed to be racially patriotic, when the bards and priests were hunted down and killed and Gaelic prohibited in the land, the poets raised their voices in imagery. One of these poets was James Clarence Mangan. Speaking of Ireland as Rosaleen, an old name applied to the race from the days of the Earls O'Donnell, and of soldiers and munitions as priests and wine and ale, he sang this:

"O my dark Rosaleen,
  Do not sigh, do not weep!
The priests are on the ocean green,
  They march along the deep.
There's wine from the royal Pope,
  Upon the ocean green;
And Spanish ale shall give you hope,
  My dark Rosaleen!
  My own Rosaleen!
Shall glad your heart, shall give you hope,
Shall give you health and help and hope,
  My dark——"

"Stop!" cried out Earnshaw. He was upon his feet, one hand clutching the edge of the table, the other to his bandaged head. His face was haggard, his eyes burning. "That's the chant! That's what the little brown men sang—the San Blas chant!"

There was a moment of silence; a moment of silence, swift frowns, wondering glances. Through the mind of O'Shane flashed the vivid words: "The walnuts of O'Donoju!" But he held his peace.

"I think, gentlemen, that we are getting hopelessly entangled and bewildered," said Captain Kussey, rising in brusque dismissal. "According to the evidence presented, these powder houses were blown up by some of the San Blas Indians; said Indians masqueraded as Irish Fenians or Sinn Feiners, or whatever they are; said Indians pointed a stick at a stone-and-concrete building, thereby exploding the powder inside."

The keen eyes of the captain swept from face to face; the thin lips smiled, a smile that was half-biting amusement and half-helpless anger.

"You men may take some stock in all this farrago. On the face of it, I'll not deny that it's apparently true. The evidence itself *is* true. Earnshaw, I congratulate you upon having the courage to tell us such a story, when you must have known how incredible it would sound. But the conclusions—well, believe 'em if you can. I'm blessed if *I* can! I shall have to put this whole matter up to the chief. In the meantime, you men had better get back to your stations and keep your eyes open."

There was a general scraping back of chairs.

"I should like to remain in Panama City this afternoon, if you will allow it," said O'Shane.

"What is the idea?"

"I want to take in the bullfight."

Captain Kussey gave him a keen glance, then smiled.

"Come, come, O'Shane! Only last week you were declaiming over the brutality of the alleged sport, cursing it up and down. Come, what's the real reason? I'll let you go on the condition that you tell me. A señorita in the case?"

O'Shane shook his head in vigorous dissent.

"No. I merely desire to see Griso Zuñiga look into the bull's eyes."

CHAPTER IV.

GRISO ZUNIGA LOOKS INTO THE BULL'S EYES.

O'Shane bought himself a ticket for a seat in the shade, high up. He had come rather early to the bullfight. He had brought along his binoculars.

A throaty rumble of Spanish rolled from across the arena and mingled with the shrill voices of the fruit sellers who walked about, hawking oranges, bananas, and apricots. There, across the arena in the cheaper seats, already a crowd of men and boys sat in their shirt sleeves, sweating under the full beat of the equatorial sun, and close-packed as olives in a jar. They were mostly Spanish and South American Silver Men from the Canal Zone, and Spiggoties from the city of Panama. But they were the *aficionados,* the real lovers of the sport, the bullfight fans, the bugs.

About the man in police khaki, in the shade of the red-tiled roof, the terraced embankments of stone and stucco were almost empty. In his loneliness up there on the cool, deserted terraces, O'Shane envied those shirt-sleeved, laughing *aficionados* of the bleachers. They let the sun blaze upon them, they were serenely happy as a gang of gods come down from the mountains of old Greece to make a holiday. While the policeman watched them, wine skins passed from hand to hand, from row to row, and sun-browned men leaned far back, held the skins high above their heads, and let the golden liquor trickle down their ever-sandy throats.

The afternoon moved on. Men with canes, panama hats, and little black mustaches ascended into the seats about O'Shane. They were rather paler than the shirt-sleeved multitude

opposite; they were of a more aristocratic hue. They were the richer Panamanians, some of them high dignitaries of the young republic, others landed proprietors from the outlying savannas. And they had their ladies with them, rice-powdered, languorous-eyed, fragile ladies in the white mantilla of Panama's holiday, ladies who settled like a flight of doves and toyed listlessly with fans.

There were also many Gold Men from the Zone in the crowd. Their ladies ascended the terraces with a soft swishing of starched skirts, looking every one in the eye. They wore gorgeous hats and gowns as gorgeous in color. When they sat down they crossed their legs and fanned themselves with free, mannish motions.

The whole great gathering was a carnival of color and sound. There were cascades of women on the steep flights of terraces; there were mounting lines of swaying bodies, whispering lips, bright-glancing, glamorous eyes.

The trumpets blew their tantara, the drums rolled. Across the yellow sand promenaded the bullfighters. Walking with short, stiff steps, walking with a slight swagger of the hips, spaced well apart, they paraded before the thousands to the swinging music of a march.

First came the three matadores, walking abreast. Manuel Gresca wore a costume of lilac blue; Olivarez, the Peruvian negro, wore green; Griso Zuñiga wore a costume of tan and gold. He wore rose-colored silk stockings. His *coleta* was braided and dressed with the rosette and ribbons of black that, from time immemorial, have been the headdress of the Spanish bullfighter.

Behind the matadores came the peones of their cuadrillas, the banderilleros, and the picadores, costumed, like the swordsmen, in the most flamboyant of colors. There were three picadores, great rough fellows on rickety and skeletonlike nags. Their legs were incased in gregorianas, heavy greaves of iron and leather; the heads of their poor nags were bandaged so that they could see out of but one of their eyes.

Among the three picadores, O'Shane recognized one. He was a tall, ungainly giant, arrayed in yellow, the customary broad-brimmed hat upon his head. He was the scarred Basque, Trinidad Moncada.

Behind the picadores trotted gayly a pair of sleek, fat mules, harnessed together and accoutered gorgeously with tassels and bells. It was the office of these mules to drag out the carcasses as fast as the bulls were slain.

The phalanx of toreros ended their promenade before the high box of the President of Panama. They saluted him. The president flung down the key. The key was caught in the hat of the alguacil, the policeman of the arena. The toreros scattered to the four quarters of the great level ring of sand. With the key, the alguacil unlocked the door of the bull pen. The bugles rang again. The first bull entered the arena.

While the picadores were receiving upon their lances the charges of the first bull, while the banderilleros were sticking him with their beribboned darts, while that first bull was gradually being worried into a white rage so that he might account for himself in a manner worthy of the matador who was fated to kill him, Griso Zuñiga walked over to the barrier, took off his heavy, gold-braided tan cloak and spread it upon the *tablas;* then idly leaned upon the barrier beside it. He was a grandee of the ring, this man; his every least action was studied, insolent with slow grace, crowded with effect.

The two other matadores had already spread their cloaks likewise, each before a section of the terraces where were grouped his greatest admirers. The cloaks were the banners of three champions.

Griso Zuñiga ignored what went on in the arena. That first bull was not his. Olivarez, the Peruvian black, had the first bull; Olivarez, like Manuel Gresca, an old favorite of the crowd, but, unlike Gresca, a most consistent

performer. Olivarez spoke the most liquid Spanish; he had heavy limbs and sharp Caucasian features, but he was black as the blackest negro. He dispatched his bull with celerity and ease. But even in the moment supreme, the moment of the death, Griso Zuñiga never looked around. He laxily leaned upon the barrier, and with his slow, oblong eyes studied the faces tiered upon the high banks of seats.

Manuel Gresca had the next bull, and when he came out to kill that bull, a white bull mottled with chocolate markings, the interest of the *aficionados* quickened. Gresca was an Ecuadoriano. He was a small, slight, febrile man of rather effeminate appearance, but in no degree a coward. Despite his effeminate appearance, his heart was the heart of a most brave man. It takes entrails to kill bulls.

There are two kinds of matadores. The one is like the *leventados,* the bold and rushing bulls, utterly brave. The other is cautious, studied, scientific. He follows strictly the rules as laid down in the old textbooks of tauromachy. This sort of matador is the delight of the gray-bearded *aficionados*, who admire nimbleness, grace, expertness; those gray-bearded *aficionados* who hold that bullfighting is an ancient and formal art born of the grandees of Spain, that the killing must be consummated with utmost elegance and ceremony, that the matador must be as filled with solemnity and ritualism as a priest who sings a requiem mass.

Manuel Gresca was of this cautious, studied, scientific sort. But Manuel Gresca was stupid that day. He made three thrusts without finding the bull's life. He was awkward. The bull was heavy-headed as a bison; six beribboned darts hung from his head, and he was streaming blood. Women turned their faces away. The crowd booed and hissed the matador. At last, after three more thrusts, Gresca brought the bull to his knees, but the bull did not die for fully five minutes. The crowd was furious at Gresca. They called him a butcher. Pale and trembling with his rage and humiliation, he hurried from the arena.

The third bull was the color of tobacco, his coat satiny with health. His nostrils were blood-red with health. He was the living symbol of virility and strength. He was enormous. He was superb!

He rushed blindly from the dark bull pen, bewildered by the hot sun, astounded by the yellow sand. He beat the sand with his forefeet. He lifted his head and bellowed a ringing challenge. Toward the nearest horse and the nearest horseman he charged.

He crashed into the picador's lance; that lance was smashed to a thousand slivers. His horns sheathed themselves in the horse's flesh. Up into the air the bull lifted the horse, and over and over, his body horribly mangled.

The cloakmen ran forward, waving frantically their capes. The picador was pinned beneath his dying horse, his left leg broken. The bull lumbered up to worry and to gore him. A cape slapped the bull's muzzle; he turned like a brown flash and charged that cape.

The bull was of the sort called *leventados,* the bold and rushing. He was swift and headlong as a landslide. The torero vaulted the barrier. The bull, a breath behind, crashed full upon the barrier. The timbers screamed, ripped, fell. Crossing himself, the torero scrambled on hands and knees to safety.

Now the bull, lured away from the shattered barrier to which carpenters were hastening, pursued the men who sought to tire him down. The cloakmen engaged him. They flapped their short cloaks in his very eyes, and, just as he charged, slipped away. Then came the banderilleros. Each was armed with two beribboned darts; each maneuvered till the bull charged him. Then, when the bull was but a foot away and coming on with express-train speed, each affixed his two darts and side-stepped with all the expertness at his command.

But what a bull that was! He was not built of beef; he was built of iron.

He did not tire. He had the toreros forever on the run. He charged them to the barrier, as though he were a thousand bulls. He was as good as the gamest Miura ever calved. He fought the bullfighters, not they him. He was the very champion of bulls, a taurine Cid Campeador!

Thrice he cleared the arena. Each time the toreros hid behind the *tablas,* panting, while he, the furious, murderous, superb beast, dominated the empty sands. In the end he tired them out. The last peon he chased to the barrier had grown a little slow. The poor fellow well knew that the horns were but an inch behind the seat of his trousers, yet he could not quickly enough vault the barrier. The bull caught him fairly and stuck him to the upright timbers. He was caught like a fly against a wall. He was horribly gored.

While a man of medicine and a man of God knelt above the maimed peon, the crowd stood up and cheered the bull. Good bull! Brave bull! They should make a matador of him! They should give him the alternative! They should invest him with the red *muleta* and the sword! What heart! What gusto! The crowd loved that bull for his splendid strength and courage.

The priest anointed, with the holy oils, the peon. He was carried away on a stretcher, the priest and the surgeon walking slowly beside. The crowd sat down, each man falling backward as though suddenly gone weak in the knees. There was an abrupt silence. No one seemed to breathe. Suddenly, thrillingly, the last bugle sounded.

Bodily, Griso Zuñiga leaped over the barrier and walked out upon the sand. In one hand, rolled, he bore the red *muleta.* In the other hand he carried the sword of death.

With short, stiff strides, with a slight swagger of the hips, he walked over to the high box of the President of Panama and halted. He made the usual speech of the espada to the president. His head thrown back, his body erect, his hand upon his heart, he swore to do his duty, he swore to kill the bull. Then he made a half turn, and threw his cap upon the sand.

Few heard his words. Thousands watched his every movement, his every gesture, with a great and poignant interest. They saw him slowly unfurl the red *muleta,* slowly raised the sword to a level before him, and slowly advance across the arena toward the bull.

The sand was yellow, yellow as a plate of gold. To Lawrence O'Shane, high above, the man Zuñiga looked very small in that immensity of yellow sand. He looked like a stiff-legged, gayly costumed marionette. He looked like a fragile toy, a futile doll. With short, stiff strides, with a slight swagger of the hips he walked, the gold of his costume flaming against the yellow of the sand. O'Shane drew out his binoculars and polished them. He lifted them. The man Zuñiga looked no longer like a futile doll.

The bull walled his eyes and worked his blood-red nostrils, his muzzle lowered to his fore hoofs, his breath furrowing the sand. He did not move. He stood like a gigantic brown bowlder. His shadow was like a smear of mud. He watched the matador with deep suspicion, with somber interest, with morose and growing fury.

The people of the high terraces rose in a strange silence to their feet, O'Shane among them, and the souls of all those people trembled in their eyes. In the blue disk of the sky a great buzzard wheeled slowly. In the yellow disk of the arena the little man and the immense beast stood close together and utterly motionless.

Slowly, gracefully, with absolute fearlessness, the little man waved the red muleta across the bull's nose from left to right. The bull did not move. Slowly and gracefully, still with absolute fearlessness, the little man waved the red *muleta* across the bull's nose from right to left.

Suddenly the bull smashed forward. He charged upon the red *muleta.* The little man did not move. As the bull threw himself upon the red rag, the man passed that rag above the shaggy head and leaned far over to the right.

He had no need to shift his feet. The bull crashed by on the left like an enormous projectile—a projectile that had missed.

So quickly that his quarter plowed up the sand, the bull whirled about. Zuñiga once again flaunted the red *muleta* before his eyes. Once again the bull charged. And once again Zuñiga merely leaned slightly to the side and let the bull smash harmlessly by. But so close came the bull that his sweat brushed upon the gold-spangled shoulder!

The bull turned, not so quickly. Fifteen feet of sand were between bull and matador. Zuñiga waved his red flag. His sword was ready, raised high, level. The bull bunched himself, lowered his sharp, long horns almost to the sand, crashed forward.

The instant the bull charged, that instant Griso Zuñiga cast aside the *muleta*, bunched his silk-clad body, hurled himself suddenly forward. He drove at the bull in a breakneck charge, his body bent like an animal's, his feet pounding the sand in short, fast strides. He was costumed in tan and gold; he was like some tan-and-gold panther.

The beast and the man met. They met, as it were, in mid-spring, brutally, violently. It was the smashing collision of two ferocious animals. Sand filled the air. The air seemed hot with the shock of that collision.

Backward Zuñiga was thrown, and head over heels. He lay upon his face in the sand, his body sprawled out like a frog's body.

The bull crashed by. But suddenly he stumbled, fell to his knees. There was a sword through and through his body. It had been driven to the hilt, to the heart.

Frantically pawing, the bull rose again, lumbered on for ten paces, limped. He lifted his head, stood rigid and enormous, and bellowed a wild, fierce bellow of defiance. His head drooped gradually to the sand; he stumbled to his knees again. Again he tried to rise, but tried in vain. The fire faded in his eyes, and blood ran from nose and mouth.

The Plaza of Bulls seemed a theater of the dead. Above, the buzzard floated close. Below, in the golden plate of sand, lay a man motionless as dead, a bull quieted and dead. The people stood upon the high terraces as though souls had left bodies; had a snail crawled, one could have heard that snail crawling.

Of a sudden, the man who was pasted to the yellow plate began to move. His outstretched hands clutched at the sand; he slowly rolled over upon his back. For a full minute he lay still again. Slowly, with infinite labor, he drew himself up on one hand. Thus, his head sunk upon his breast, his eyes closed, passed another intolerable moment. Then jerkily Griso Zuñiga rose to his feet.

A deep, thick, rumbling sound swept around the terraces. It was like the heavy ground rumble that comes at the inchoation of an earthquake. It was a wave, a surf, a tide of sound. As it reverberated around the high banks of people, those people, those close-packed masses, came as one to their feet, gesturing vehemently, frenziedly. The tide of sound grew in volume. The red, tile-roofed building shook to its very foundations; its stones groaned against one another as though that building had been indeed seized in the embrace of a *temblor*. Men shouted hoarsely, cursed heavily, laughed for long minutes with an insane persistency. Far up a woman screamed like a damned soul.

What a matador! What a stroke! What bravery! He charged the bull! He charged the bull with the gusto of a hungry animal! He was utterly without fear! He had bowels of iron! He was braver than any matador in the Americas! He was braver than any matador in Spain! He was a man! By the Five Wounds, he was a man!

Reeling drunkenly, Griso Zuñiga stood before his frantic thousands. The great buzzard had by this time mounted so far and so high that it was now merely a tiny black fly in the blue, quiet heavens. Griso Zuñiga was alone alive in that world of yellow sand. Still

reeling, he walked to the center of the arena, put his hand upon his heart, and bowed deeply.

And again the terraces rocked and the bricks ground against one another. On the terraces men clapped their hands, stamped their feet, embraced each his neighbor. Hats, money, new lottery tickets, cigars rained down upon the sand.

"Bravo, Zuñiga!" they shouted. "Magnificent, thou killer of bulls!"

CHAPTER V.

GRISO UNIGA FEELS UPON HIS LEAN CHEEK THE WIND OF DEATH.

Manuel Gresca, the Ecuadoriano, had taken as prominent a part as any in the fight with the superb, tobacco-colored bull. Booed and hissed by the crowd for his butcher's work in killing the second bull, he had returned to prove his skill and mettle. He had waved the cloak before the bull's nose; he had planted the banderillas; he had been skillful and daring as any torero in the arena. At the bugles for the death, he had left the arena, and, vaulting the barrier, he had taken a position behind the *tablas* and below that section of the seats in which sat O'Shane. Thence he had watched the great killing.

By chance the Zone policeman's eyes fell upon him now. To the amazement of the American, he saw that Gresca's face was red with emotion as a ripe tomato. Then, as the shouting for Zuñiga broke forth with renewed vigor, Gresca went pale as death. He trembled violently in the arms and legs; he seemed beside himself. And he cast bitter, malignant glances about him at the crowd which saw him not.

Astonished, O'Shane watched this human pin point in the maelstrom. The man, Gresca, was gone mad with envy. The applause for his brother swordsman, for the amazing thing Zuñiga had accomplished, seemed to outrage him as though that applause were a most terrible insult directed against himself. Suddenly, as if the clamor of acclaim had become unbearable, he turned and rushed blindly from the place.

"Manuel Gresca hates Griso Zuñiga with the hate of envy," said O'Shane to himself. "Trinidad Moncada hates Griso Zuñiga; I don't know exactly why. The maestro with the Jesuit's face seems to make enemies with ease ——"

Griso Zuñiga commenced throwing back the hats to their rightful owners. Slowly he worked around the arena. He disdained altogether the cigars, the lottery tickets, the money. At last he was below the section where sat O'Shane.

The people about O'Shane burst into a fresh roar of applause. Zuñiga paused to bow, a lean smile upon his austere, pale, Jesuitical face. The people only vociferated his praises in louder voices; clapped their hands and stamped their feet with more abandon. And some who had not joined fully in the first burst of enthusiasm now flung down their hats.

The panamas and soft black felts dropped about the *diestro* like a flock of crows and pigeons blown to earth by a wind. One hat struck his shoulder and fell at his very feet. He turned sharply and looked down at it. It was a soft black Cordoban sombrero of felt. It was heavy. It sprawled upon its side, and out of its broad mouth issued a brown stream of walnuts!

Griso Zuñiga looked down at the walnuts. He put out one foot and crushed a walnut beneath his slipper. He stooped over and picked up the hat, turning its mouth down so that it emptied the last of its contents upon the sand. Slowly, thoughtfully, he turned the hat around and around in his hand.

Suddenly he looked up at the steep bank of people. His face was ashen, almost blue; his eyes were sharp pin points glittering with anger; his hands flexed and reflexed spasmodically. He dashed the hat upon the sand. Abruptly he turned about and walked away. Gaining the center of the arena, he bowed once angrily; then walked with slow and proud steps to the barrier, vaulted over, and vanished.

The shouting and the handclapping continued after he had left the arena.

Men had noticed his strange demeanor, had seen the hat of walnuts, had seen him pick it up and dash it down again on the sand. They had noticed also his face, but had thought it blue and distorted from pain. "The bull has injured him!" The whisper swept along the galleries and provoked new cheers and bravos.

The crowd showed little interest in the next bull; they talked of Zuñiga alone, compared him with great matadors of history: Frascuelo, the negro of Spain; Tancredo, the Mexican; the brothers of the Bomba family, and others. But greatest of all was Griso Zuñiga.

Olivarez, the black Peruvian, had this fourth bull. Like the craftsman he was, he slew the animal with one sweet, swift stab of the white sword. A matador was given five minutes in which to kill his bull; Olivarez, in that time, could kill five bulls.

The next, the fifth bull, a small, red animal with snowy dewlaps, was to Gresca. Still pale with emotion, the Ecuadoriano came out to confront his beast. The bull charged. Gresca made the *suerte,* but envy had unnerved him. He stuck the bull between the shoulders; he did not find the heart. The sword was wrenched from him; it quivered in the bull; the bull continued onward. Gresca, forced to flee, ran for the barrier. It was undignified, disgraceful!

Again the crowd booed and hissed the lilac-clad matador. Angered, the crowd threw orange peels and empty bottles into the arena. Again they termed Gresca a butcher. They howled for a real matador, a real man of death. They howled for Zuñiga.

Gresca, another sword in his hand, came out afresh. Pale with humiliation, shaking with rage, he advanced across the sand. He waved the *muleta;* the bull charged; he lunged with the sword—and the steel glanced from the bull's horn.

Down upon the man crashed the bull, butted him, knocked him over like a man of rags. Gresca slipped in the sand that was wet with the blood of horses, rolled over, and swooned as he lay. The bull slid his forefeet into the sand, came to a stop, plowed around, and started back to worry and toss with his horns the motionless body.

Griso Zuñiga, hands empty of sword or cape, vaulted the barrier, dashed across the sand, and hurled himself upon the red bull. Zuñiga, hands to horns, pushed the head aside from the body of Gresca. Then, leaping aside, he grasped the bull's tail, swung the amazed animal sideways, dragged him across the sand by sheer strength. Then he let go the tail.

Stooping swiftly, Zuñiga picked up the sword which Gresca had dropped. Bellowing with fury, the bull turned upon him. Zuñiga stood now like a statue, the sword held out before him; no wild charge now, no fierceness! Mastery, poise—the skill beyond words!

Full tilt the bull slammed down upon the man. A flash of the white sword; the bull fell dead, as though ground into the sand by a falling meteor. Zuñiga took three quick steps backward, folded his arms, stood motionless. A master in very truth!

Again that deep, thick, rumbling sound, that sound like the heavy ground rumble which comes at the inchoation of an earthquake, swept around the terraces of people. Again cigars, money, lottery tickets, and hats fell into the arena, a rain of tribute.

Gresca had come to, not badly hurt. His head limply hanging, his legs moving jerkily, he was helped out of the bull ring by peones of his cuadrilla. Zuñiga, slowly making the circuit of the arena, threw back the hats. But this time he disdained to bow.

"Bravo, Zuñiga!" they roared. "Magnificent, thou killer of bulls! Thou master!"

The man was, in truth, magnificent. He murdered bulls with gusto, with ruthless breakneck fierceness, with terrible poise and surety. As the Spanish say, entirely without sacrilege, he murdered bulls as though he were the Omnipotent Himself!

Lawrence O'Shane, watching, was

struck by the man's awful strength, which seemed to emanate from him as an odor of sweat emanates from other men. O'Shane was fascinated. To him the strength of Zuñiga was not like the strength of other men, not like the strength of wrestlers or muscled men. It was a strength beyond that strength, a strength above that strength. It was not so much a strength of the body, though he had that plainly enough; it was a strength somewhere inside him, deep down and seldom drawn upon. It was a strength such as some animals possess. To Larry O'Shane it seemed the sort of strength that lizards, reptiles possess—an inordinate strength to live—a fathomless, primordial, and silurian strength.

You know. You snap a rock lizard by the tail against a bowlder. The lizard is smashed to a jelly. But the tail, snapped from the body, lies intact and whole in your hand. And it begins to squirm. It squirms this way and that; it twists and twists; it coils; it beats your hand; it leaps in your hand!

You shudder, vaguely sickened, and you throw it on the ground. Still it twists and squirms. The lizard is dead. It has been dead now for five full minutes. But still that horrible, broken tail leaps and squirms with the desperation of a stricken thing. For even a quarter of an hour it throbs and squirms as though in agony, in fierce hope of living on forever.

Then you feel pity for the detestable thing. You smash it to a jelly with rocks. And—even the jelly throbs and squirms!

That was how this matador, this murderer of bulls, Griso Zuñiga, struck O'Shane. And most vividly, too. When first the Zone policeman saw him enter the arena he had thought:

"There would be a hard man to kill!"

An abominable thought, of course. One does not have such thoughts about ordinary men. As O'Shane saw Zuñiga slay the fifth bull, the last bull of the corrida—as he saw the matador rise unscathed and triumphant above the inanimate carcass of that bull, he again had the thought:

"There would be a hard man to kill!"

And just then, as he thought it, a great clamor swept around the terraces. The people stamped their feet; they shouted over and over again: "Give Zuñiga the ear! The ear!"

The President of Panama made a sign with his hand. A mozo of the plaza walked over to the matador and presented him with a small, bloody flap of hair and skin, the point of one of his bull's ears. The ear is given only to the matador who has performed some signal feat; it is a cross of honor presented to the master espada upon the field of battle. The crowd, mad with delight, thundered fresh applause. Every eye was glued upon Zuñiga.

No, not every eye. O'Shane, glancing down, saw two men who seemed to take no interest in Zuñiga's acceptance of the ear. They stood, these two, below the section in which sat the policeman, and just within the arena. Leaning upon the barrier, heads close, they appeared to be in deep converse.

One was a tall, slouching figure, a giant arrayed in yellow, upon his head the broad-brimmed hat. He was a picador, now dismounted that the fight was over; for he still wore upon his legs the gregorianas of the horseman. He was Trinidad Moncada.

The other was Manuel Gresca, the envious one. Recovered now, his lilac-blue costume still mottled and caked with blood and sand, he had returned to the ring. Now, as O'Shane watched them curiously, he saw Gresca start away from Moncada and across the arena toward the applauded Zuñiga. He wore no hat. His three-cornered matador's hat rested on its crown in his right palm. O'Shane could see directly down into it. The hat was crowded with brown, round, and wrinkled walnuts.

"The walnuts of the O'Donoju—again!" O'Shane thrilled to the thought. He leaned forward, watching Gresca with intent, searching eyes.

The envious one halted behind the matador, over whose shoulder he

looked. Zuñiga was ignorant of his presence, until suddenly Gresca leaned over, whispered something, and shoved forward the hat filled with walnuts.

Then Zuñiga swung rapidly about to face him.

"No! No!" he cried out sharply, fiercely. "No!" And he pushed aside the hat so brusquely that it spilled its contents upon the yellow sand.

Gresca looked back over his shoulder. He looked toward Moncada, near the barrier. He nodded once. Then he slipped away rapidly.

Moncada leaped up, heavy greaves and all, upon the top of the barrier. In his hand was what looked like a long stick. It was a string bow set upon a wooden crossframe—a crossbow, no less! An arrow was fitted into it; the string was taut; he raised it to his shoulder. There was a slight whiz. Out in the center of the arena, Griso Zuñiga reeled back across the sand, clutching his left arm, where the arrow had hit; Zuñiga caught at the shaft, clutched it in his two hands, broke it, and flung it aside.

Somewhere a woman cried out shrilly, horror in her voice.

A picador who had not dismounted, and who sat his horse near the barrier, spurred full tilt at Moncada. The Basque was deliberately fitting a second shaft to his bow when horse and rider crashed against the barrier, knocking him off, the bow flying from his hand and breaking into smithereens under the hoofs of the horse.

Blood was spreading through the jacket upon the left arm of Griso Zuñiga. The men who had run to him forced him down upon the sand, closed around him. From every quarter came toreros, running and riding at Trinidad Moncada. Gresca, whose part in the play had passed unobserved, was forgotten.

The toreros pulled Moncada to his feet; kicked by the horses, his head streamed with blood, and he staggered like a man befuddled.

Dismay, consternation, and terror had held the people to their seats, paralyzed by the swift and hideous episode. Now the freezing grip was shuddered off. The spectators leaped afoot, and a low, unhuman growl, a growl as from one immense throat, broke loose upon the day. It was that strange, ominous sound, the mob growl!

Of a sudden men started hurriedly to descend toward the grouped bullfighters in the arena. In a thick, tumultuous mass, they streamed down the steep embankments; they rolled over the barrier like the surf of a sea; they rushed in an overwhelming black tide across the yellow of the sand.

The crowd was loosed.

CHAPTER VI.

A SHORT CHAPTER, EDGED WITH RAZORS.

Larry O'Shane went with the mob, swept along by the crush of bodies. But, as his body was swept along in the grip of that mob, so was his brain swept along in the grip of an Idea.

Earnshaw, then, had told the truth, had seen truly. It was Trinidad Moncada, the scarred giant Basque, who had shot up the Monte Lirio magazine. Earnshaw had seen truly. Moncada had used no gun. He had merely used this stick, this crossbow.

But what, in the name of everything holy, lay behind it? Why should a Basque bullfighter be engaged in such desperate business? Who was the unknown person who had first thrown those walnuts into the arena—and what did the walnuts have to do with it? O'Shane wondered if he were out of his head, seeing visions, smitten by the sun.

He stumbled, ran, fell down the steep bank of seats; presently he was pushed and lifted over the straining barrier with the rest of the mob.

The toreros clustered about Moncada had deserted the menace afar. Grasping the burly picador, dragging and shoving him, fighting off those who impeded the way, they rushed over the sand. Despite the impeding iron greaves, they hustled Moncada out of the ring, through the gate of the bullfighters, and into the chapel of the Plaza.

Growling, the crowd followed, seething through the gate, breaking about the little church like a sea about a rock, hammering at the stout door. But no more.

"Shame!" arose the cries. "Would you profane the toreros' church? Would you commit sacrilege in the presence of the Host? Shame!"

The menacing growl hushed. Men remembered they were Spaniards and "old rusty Christians," and crossed themselves. The crowd lingered, but only to watch, to wait.

Like other men before him, Trinidad Moncada received sanctuary in the House of God. Already the policemen were coming, the ostentatious, little five-foot Spiggoty policemen. Already they were trying to get through the crowd. Presently they would take Moncada to the calaboose.

O'Shane, however, was not with the crowd before the chapel. He was standing on the yellow sand of the arena, as a whirl of the mass had spewed forth his body to one side. He was standing apart from the seething mass of men, motionless, staring down.

As a policeman, the crime did not interest him; he was a policeman merely within the Canal Zone, and here in Panama he was as nothing. Yet, as he stared down at the thing which lay in his hand, he felt that he was everything. His brain swirled a little at the immensity of it, at the chance which had sent him stumbling upon this thing.

It was the broken head of the arrow which Zuñiga had flung aside. Realization came upon him slowly, steadily, surely. He knew now—he knew! Not everything, but something. Enough, by the heavens! Enough!

On the sand, twenty yards distant, Griso Zuñiga sat and blew from his lips a calm stream of smoke. The surgeon had finished binding his arm. A torero held the matador's gold-embroidered tan cloak. It was placed gently across his broad shoulders; the tassels of gold braid were knotted together in front, and then Zuñiga got upon his feet and looked slowly around the ring of faces and put out his right hand before him, palm down. The gesture was both severe and solemn.

"Señores!" He spoke in a calm, cold voice, a voice pregnant with solemnity. "Why Trinidad Moncada sought my life you do not know. Of all here, only I share his secret. Señores! I am not like one of those bulls who are hooted from the arena, who are slaughtered by the butchers because they are too cowardly to fight. I am a man; I have entrails; I have a Spanish heart; I am a Cristino Viejo!"

For a bare instant he paused, his face livid, poised, terrible.

"Señores! I shall kill this Trinidad Moncada, and he will not kill me. You have seen me kill bulls. Murder is a matador's work. Of matadores, I, Griso Zuñiga, am the most superb! I take no oath! A man merely says a thing and then he does it. There will be no more words from me. I shall kill this man; me, he cannot kill."

Flamboyant, grandiose, altogether Spanish, but none the less effective. Prick the skin of a Spaniard, and forth flows Moor's blood.

Larry O'Shane heard the words, vaguely realized that Zuñiga had gone. Still the American stared down at the thing in his hand. He realized it now. The walnuts he could not explain; there lay a mystery. But he knew now why Trinidad Moncada had been able to blow up the magazine at Monte Lirio.

The point of the arrow was like no arrow point O'Shane ever had seen previously. It was not a point at all; it was a contrivance. The point itself consisted of two thin razor blades, set edges out, like a V. Within the V was a framework fastened to the wooden shaft of the arrow. The framework was round. At first it had puzzled O'Shane; gradually he had realized its purpose. It was now empty, but it was set there to inclose something.

"That's it!" he muttered. "Devilish clever. Those wide razor blades would cut through the wire netting that covers the air vents of the magazines; they would cut the wire like paper, and the arrow would go through. And in this

round framework would be carried the blazing fire that would set off the powder——"

He frowned suddenly. Earnshaw had seen no fire, had seen no fiery arrow. However, the discrepancy was slight. No matter! Here lay the explanation of all. No, not of *all*, perhaps, but enough. Here lay the key. Trinidad Moncada was the man, and this razor-edged arrow was the means—enough for the present.

O'Shane thrust the arrow and its clumsy-appearing head beneath his shirt, first wrapping the razor edges in his handkerchief. It had been broken short off, and was but a foot in length, the whole fragment.

"Now up to Ancon," he said to himself, a frenzy of haste urging at him. "By George, what a strike! Now up to Ancon and get that fellow Moncada transferred to our authority. Eh? What Captain Kussey won't say when he hears this? Zowie! Luck, sure enough!"

He passed through the gate, and began to make his way through the crowd that was lingering before the chapel. The Panama policemen, the five-foot brown Spiggotics, had now taken charge of things; they had occupied the chapel and were awaiting the dispersal of the crowd.

But the crowd had not dispersed. And now, unexpectedly, something happened. O'Shane came to a halt, staring with incredulous eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

MONCADA MAKES USE OF GARROCHA AND GREGORIANAS.

Of a sudden burst from the closed chapel a wild uproar of voices. The windows rattled; the doors shook and groaned; the stone building seemed about to give birth to some prodigy of violence. It was as if the policemen within the place were throwing a huge and weighty mass from wall to wall of the chapel; dragging that mass across the floor, furiously hurling it at the barricaded door. It was as if there were a bull let loose within that confined chapel, and toreros who sought to slay him there. And then came a single shrill cry in Spanish that pierced like a knife across the crowd.

"Throw him! Trip him! Close in there! Use the butts of your pistols——"

The windows of the chapel continued to rattle, the door to shake and groan, the walls to tremble and detonate. The shouting and cursing grew louder, shriller in pitch. Suddenly came a man's shriek of pain, and then another. Upon that, with frightful violence and instantaneity, the door burst in twain, ripping open from top to bottom, and out from the chapel crashed Trinidad Moncada.

His shirt and jacket hung in shreds at his belt; he was naked to the waist and bleeding from a dozen wounds. His mouth was open, his tongue hung out, and he panted harshly, like an exhausted animal. He staggered blindly toward the outer gate. Men hurled themselves upon him, but he struck to right and left; he lowered his head like a bull and bounded forward. He charged upon the crowd, charged through the crowd, and men reeled from him and fell, bludgeoned by his enormous fists. He was like a mastiff amid a throng of futile terriers. Larry O'Shane, on the edge of the mob, was swept back and away by a swirl of the terrified, maddened mass of bodies.

Near the fence and outer gate of the Plaza of Bulls, the garrocha or lance of a picador had been imbedded point down in the earth. About this upright lance had been looped the reins of the picador's horse. Trinidad Moncada seized the lance, uprooted it from the ground, and freed it from the knotted ropes of leather in three movements that were so swift they seemed but one.

Ordinarily the garrocha of a picador has only one inch of blade, but the sheathing may be pushed back and the blade made longer for ugly bulls. Pushing back the sheath, Trinidad Moncada raised the spear, turned on his heel, and drove the ugly weapon point foremost into the belly of the idle horse.

The horse screamed horribly. It rose in air, squealing with pain, and plunged blindly down upon the closing mob, scattering men to right and left, bowling them over. O'Shane, who had been fighting to reach the picador, leaped out of its path not an ace too soon. It vanished through the horses' gate into the bull ring, squealing pitifully as it dashed madly around the arena.

Trinidad Moncada stood with his back to the outer gate, a cleared space before him, the garrocha raised above his head menacingly. In the splintered and riven doorway of the chapel appeared a corporal of the Panamanian police; he had been one of those from whom Trinidad Moncada had broken free.

He was a shocking sight, this corporal. His left eye had been torn in the hideous scuffle; blood streamed down his face, neck, and white shirt. His blue coat had been torn away, and hung in rags from his right arm, where one blue sleeve still retained a tenacious grip. He raised the right arm, the arm with the sleeve. There was a revolver in his hand, and he leveled it. At Trinidad Moncada, point-blank, he fired.

Not thirty feet separated Moncada from the policeman, yet the latter missed. As the bullet pinged into the wood near his ear, Moncada turned his head and saw his resurrected enemy. He snarled, showing his long, wolfish teeth; he snarled like a wolf at bay.

The corporal dashed the blood from his eyes with his left arm. Again he raised the revolver. Moncada's arm snapped suddenly forward; the spear left his hand, lunged with lightning speed through the air across thirty feet of space. It caught the corporal full in the chest. Zut! He was popped backward into the chapel and out of sight.

As at a signal, though no signal had been given, the crowd made a combined rush for Trinidad Moncada. O'Shane fingered his revolver, then checked the motion. The Zone police had no authority here; besides, a single man could do nothing—except to shoot down Trinidad Moncada. And O'Shane could not do this. Despite the secret which he bore, he could not restrain a secret, wondering admiration for Trinidad Moncada; he felt that this day had set before his eyes the episodes of a homeric tale, an epic in all verity.

Moncada saw the mob smash forward. He turned suddenly about, leaped from the ground, and caught with his hands the top of the gate. The foremost of his pursuers reached the gate just as he raised himself by his arms, threw one iron-harnessed leg over the top, and seated himself astraddle.

The mob lunged and caught at the foot that hung. Moncada bent over and fumbled with the iron-and-leather gregoriana on the other leg, while, with the dangling foot, he kicked out viciously at the nearest fingers and hands.

"You are brave, you hundreds!" he snarled, and added insulting words.

Suddenly he jerked off one of the heavy greaves, and, raising it above his head, hurled it violently down. The mob drew away, one or two of their number freshly cut about the heads; Moncada swung up his other leg, quickly unbuckled the remaining gregoriana, and flung that down after the first into the upraised faces.

Then abruptly he disappeared from view of the crowd. There was a thud as he dropped to earth on the other side the gate; then rapid footsteps that died away.

A dozen pair of hands fought at the locks and bolts of the gate. A moment, and the gate swung inward, the crowd retreating to let it open, then gushing through upon the street. Moncada had turned the corner. He was not in sight; he was gone.

The crowd raced down the street. The fleetest reached the corner and vanished; then the main pack; then the last and lagging. The ringing cry of the leaders lessened, like the farthering cry of a wolf pack. It grew farther, fainter, doleful in tone, discouraged. It told O'Shane that Moncada had escaped his pursuers.

The American hastened to the box office of the arena, rolling a cigarette as he went. There, in a private cubby, where he could not be overheard, he telephoned to Ancon.

"Hello! Police headquarters—this you. O'Brien? No. 51 speaking—O'Shane. May I talk to the captain?"

"Just a moment."

"Yes, this is Captain Kussey."

"O'Shane speaking, sir. I've got the goods on Trinidad Moncada—one of the bullfighters here. He's the man Earnshaw saw on the hill at Monte Lirio——"

"What! How do——"

"Long story, sir. He's the one, right enough. The stick that Earnshaw saw in his hands was a crossbow——"

"A crossbow? See here, what kind of a yarn——"

"He used one here to-day, sir, at the corrida—tried to assassinate Griso Zuñiga, the new matador. I'll explain the whole thing when I get up there. What I want to tell you now is that Moncada has just escaped from the Spiggoty police. They'll get him again; he can't possibly keep clear. He's half naked, covered with blood, acts like a mad dog. You'd better watch out in case he does get out of the city and head through the Zone for the bush, and meanwhile arrange for the Spiggoties here to turn him over to us should they recapture him——"

"I get you," returned Kussey vibrantly.

"Then I'll be right up, sir——"

"Don't come, O'Shane. Stay there in the city and keep me advised of what goes on. Come up this evening. We'll probably have the man by then. You stay there and keep in touch with me."

"Very good, sir."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SIGN OF THE WALNUTS.

Juan de Dios was a tamale butcher. Policeman O'Shane had discovered his shop one evening long since; he liked the way Juan brewed his coffee and steamed his corn husks, even if he did not care for the neighborhood.

Now O'Shane turned into the Avenida Central. He passed half a dozen shops where tamales and enchiladas were sold, and white tablecloths, napkins, and toothpicks served free of charge. He would get none of these frills in the primitive place of Juan de Dios, but he knew for a surety that there would be no comparing the chef-d'œuvre.

He turned at last into the narrow side street of the tamale butcher. It was hardly a street; it was more a dismal, cobbled alley. The time was approaching six o'clock. Already it was falling so dark in the obscure by-street that the dingy hole in the wall of Juan de Dios was lighted up and was throwing a cheery pane of brightness across the narrow way. O'Shane entered, mounted one of the high stools, pulled his hat over his eyes, and ordered a tamale and coffee.

He ate slowly, enjoying every peppery mouthful. The coffee was excellent, and with a sigh he ordered more. He relished the salty oysterettes. Laying another coin on the counter, he ordered more.

Then, as he ate, an odd sensation impinged upon his brain. He had the distinct impression of being eyed, watched, spied upon. Turning quickly, he looked out into the narrow, cobbled way, so well lighted by the gaslights of the shop.

A man was passing through the zone of brightness outside, a burly, slouching figure of a man; he had just swung away from the window as O'Shane glimpsed him, and was hurrying away. But he was not swift enough. He wore blue jeans and a red-striped black sweater such as was worn by the Basque laborers on the canal. But in that one glimpse, O'Shane recognized him. There was no mistaking the great, ragged blue scar on his near cheek, the broad smear of brows above his nose, the uncombed tuft of hair before his ear. He was the murderous picador, Trinidad Moncada.

O'Shane leaped from his high stool, swung open the screen door of the shop, and darted to the street outside.

Too late! He could descry no sign of the man he sought. The burly giant had disappeared.

O'Shane swore under his breath; then, moving away from the door of the shop, turned in the direction whence Moncada had come. The man was newly garbed, disguised, in a fair way to escape all who sought him. Where had Moncada obtained that disguise and help? Had he sought refuge in some hole in the wall farther down this by-street? Had he there been outfitted and furthered?

The policeman walked slowly along the dark alley, observing the low shops and gloomy-galleried adobes. Many times had he passed along this way previously; now he came to a halt, upon his lips a low, startled exclamation of remembrance. He stood gaping at a sign which hung, almost touching his head, from a tiny shop.

Another hole in the wall, this shop of a barber; dingy and dark, with one chair upholstered in what once had been red plush, but which was now a nitric-acid yellow. The windows were barred with discolored green shutters. It was Sunday, and the shop was closed, yet O'Shane vividly remembered that aged plush chair. He remembered, too, the aged barber lolling at the door, a man swarthy and wrinkled of parchment skin, laughing and quizzical and wild of gray eye, with a wealth of carefully combed white hair.

Seeing him in other days, O'Shane had wondered what manner of barber the old man could be. Never had he seen a customer supine and lathered in that old plush chair. The aged artist of the razor had made a distinct impression on O'Shane, but a fanciful and unreal impression like that of a book character on a reader. Here in this murky back street of Panama, O'Shane felt he had found a barber from the "Arabian Nights"—a sixty-year-old coxcomb, exhaustless in talk, envious of his betters, eternally fretful and discontented, and forever up to some knavery. O'Shane felt, too, that the laughing gray eyes were not quite steady, but were somehow crafty, with a childish craftiness like that of a man not truly balanced. Gray eyes to laugh at, to dislike, to wonder at.

And now, standing here before the dark shop, O'Shane remembered something else. This it was which had drawn from his lips the sharp, startled exclamation; this sign which hung almost touching his head. From his pocket the policeman slowly drew forth his electric torch and directed its lean ray of light at the signboard. The sign read, in Spanish:

THE SHOP OF THE WALNUTS
MIGUEL O'DONOJU

The Hair Cut—The Face Shaved—The Beard Trimmed Eternally Jovial

O'Shane drew a sharp breath. "Can it be?" he asked himself. "Can this old barber be the O'Donoju of the walnuts? Can there be some connection here—some connection between Trinidad Moncada, Griso Zuñiga, that wonderful girl I saw—those walnuts—the explosions——"

He broke off suddenly. He had been surveying the sign and the whole shuttered shop front with frowning eyes, and he had suddenly become aware of a tag of paper fastened against the closed green shutters. He stepped toward it, and directed the ray of his torch upon the paper. Upon it there was written in ink, and in English, this bit of poetry:

Over hills, and through dales,
  Have I roamed for your sake;
All yesterday I sailed with sails
  On river and on lake.
The Erne, at its highest flood,
  I dashed across unseen,
For there was lightning in my blood,
  My dark Rosaleen!
  My own Rosaleen!
Oh, there was lightning in my blood,
Red lightning lightened through my blood,
  My dark Rosaleen!

Said a voice in Spanish:

"The señor enjoys the lovely poetry, no? And he would have the face shaved?"

O'Shane swung about, snapping off his torch. He had heard no sound, but

the door of the barber shop had been opened, and now, in the reflection of light from the tamale shop a few doors distant, there was visible a protruding white head.

"The poetry?" repeated O'Shane, quickly marshaling his wits. "Yes, my friend. Every Irishman of the old breed enjoys that poetry. You know what it is?"

The old man laughed softly, yet the laugh had a chill in it. He replied indirectly:

"I know many things, señor. You wish the face shaved?"

O'Shane involuntarily drew his hand over his cheek. He did need a shave, but——

"*Seguramente, si!*" he ejaculated. "But this is a holiday, señor; you do not work——"

"For one who enjoys the lovely poetry, señor, I work always." There was the sudden yellow flare of a gas jet within the shop. The door opened wide. The old barber snapped a white cloth off the arm of the plush chair, and bowed profoundly. "Señor, I serve you!"

O'Shane felt a bit confused, a bit helpless. He knew well enough that there was something queer in the sudden appearance of this barber, in the willingness to work, in the very name of the man and his shop.

"You are Señor O'Donoju?" he asked, as he entered. The old man bowed assent, but spoke not.

The policeman was oddly conscious of the thing that bulged within his shirt. He started to remove his jacket, then desisted. Instead, he merely took off his collar.

"I ought to enjoy that poetry," he said, smiling. "My name's Larry O'Shane, señor. I've just come from dinner and from the corrida, and now I'm surprised and delighted that I can obtain a shave from an Irishman who is a Spaniard."

As the policeman mentioned the corrida of the afternoon, the unsteady gray eyes of O'Donoju flitted toward a rear door of the shop hung with faded red portières. A flitting glance, no more; yet O'Shane caught it and wondered. Then, at the blarney about the Irishman who was a Spaniard, the old man's face lighted up in a quick smile.

"Ah, the señor understands! There are many like me in Spain; most of them fled there in the old days, the Wild Geese. The Wild Geese of Ireland! Yes, señor, I am an O'Donoju, and in the old days it was The O'Donoju who fled to Spain and whom my fathers served——"

O'Shane paused beside the chair. He did not understand all that the old man said, but he tucked the words away in his memory. There was something queer here. He sensed it.

"The O'Donoju?" he repeated. "You mean the head of the clan?"

The barber's face changed slightly, indefinably.

"Señor," he returned, "you will find the name of O'Donoju written often on the rolls of the College for Irish Nobles in Salamanca. An O'Donoju was the last royal viceroy of Spanish Mexico. Señor, the chair is ready."

O'Shane obeyed. But suddenly, as he made to sink into the faded plush, he stuck out his elbows against either chair arm, and for a moment held himself poised. He was now faced toward the fly-specked mirror and pink-papered counter, toward the razors, shears, and the cracked shaving mug. And beside the mug, on that pink paper, O'Shane saw a trio of walnuts.

The old man put a hand on his shoulder to shove him gently down. O'Shane yielded to the touch, sank back, and his feet were raised nearly as high as his head. The old man began to froth his cheek with lather.

O'Shane was puzzled. He was not sure. Those three walnuts on the counter were not brown, round, and wrinkled; they were old and black and shriveled. Why were they here? Why was this shop called the Shop of the Walnuts?

"I have been wondering about your sign," said O'Shane in Spanish. "It says that this is the Shop of the Walnuts. And there on your counter are three walnuts. What does it mean?"

The old man laughed softly; yet the laugh had a chill in it. He turned O'Shane's face to the right so that the left cheek would expose a tight, level surface to the razor.

"Señor, you may have observed that the men of Spain and their American sons are a lean race. When a Spanish barber shaves the flat, swarthy cheek of herder, farm hand, or village Don Juan he first makes that personage take into his mouth one of those walnuts that are always at hand. Thus distended, the flat cheek becomes round and fat; the face of the leanest and most lacking in flesh becomes swollen and rotund, and hence the barber finds it easy to shave. I have merely carried the custom from Spain to America, señor."

O'Shane grunted. "Is it not unsanitary?"

The other shrugged lightly. "Who am I to judge? In Spain the walnuts of the barber are handed down from father to son, with the razors, shears, and other stock of the trade. Walnuts, señor, are the symbol of the barber; as in the old days used to be the brass bowl. You, señor, have read the tale of Don Quixote?"

Deftly he turned the policeman's face to the left. And it struck O'Shane that just as deftly had the old man's tongue run on, turning aside suspicion. Once the old man's arm struck against O'Shane's breast, struck against the foot-long shaft and queer, razor-edged point of the arrow there concealed.

O'Shane closed his eyes. He felt puzzled, confused, a bit helpless. The walnuts of O'Donoju! And the point of that arrow was tipped with two razors, turned edges outward. Did these things hold any suspicion in themselves? Could they have aught to do with this old barber? Absurd, of course. And yet—and yet——

"Now the powder, señor—thus. And it is finished!"

O'Shane swung himself out of the chair. He put on his collar and buttoned up his khaki jacket. The old barber was busy cleaning out the shaving mug, drying his razor, folding his white cloths. As if in mistake, O'Shane caught the curtains at the rear of the shop—they were but a step away, so small was the place—and swung them aside.

"No, no! The door is here, señor ——" The voice of the old barber shrilled high. He started toward the policeman, his extended arms shaking.

O'Shane turned around, feigning a surprised and sheepish look. His hand dropped from the portières, which fell back into place. The barber held open the street door.

"Made a mistake, eh?" commented O'Shane lightly. "And I nearly ran off without paying you."

He handed the barber an American dollar. O'Donoju felt his pocket, shook his head; then, closing the door again, stepped to the counter and drew forth a drawer. Coins jingled as he sought to make the change.

But O'Shane smiled grimly to himself. In the rear room of the shop, behind those faded red hangings, he had seen a torn and blood-soiled yellow costume; the yellow picador's costume of Trinidad Moncada! In this place the man had found refuge!

"Señor, your change." The old barber poured a heap of coins into the hand of O'Shane. "And, señor, if you will honor me by accepting a small token—by the faith, señor, you will find it something out of the ordinary! Taste it, señor. If it be to your taste, then will I send you away with a pocketful. *Por Dios*, señor, are you not of the Irish breed? I would do much for such a man as you, señor!"

While speaking, the barber thrust into the hand of O'Shane an extremely large walnut—not one of the three, this, but a brown, round, and wrinkled nut. Startled by he knew not what, O'Shane looked into the unsteady gray eyes and found them laughing.

"A walnut?" he said, remembering how those nuts had been repeatedly proffered to Griso Zuñiga. "One of the walnuts of O'Donoju?"

The words evoked no response in the barber's face, save an inquiring lift of the shaggy gray brows.

"I know not what you mean, señor," replied O'Donoju, with a graceful gesture of negation. "They are walnuts which I raise myself upon my father's land in Spain. They are sent to me here—a touch with Spain, señor. Men say that such walnuts are unknown elsewhere. Taste it, señor. If it be to your taste, my friendship shall give you others."

O'Shane hesitated. Then he clenched his hand upon the walnut, as he had seen Trinidad Moncada do—but the feat was beyond his strength. A slight smile curving his lips, he unbuckled his revolver, held the nut against the adobe wall, and, tapping it with the butt of the weapon, smashed the shell. He replaced the revolver in its holster.

The meat of the nut astonished him by its taste.

"*Verdamente!*" he exclaimed in pleasure. "Why, O'Donoju, I never tasted such a walnut as this in my life! It's not a walnut at all, is it?"

The old barber smiled, as with gratification.

"What else, my friend? As I tell you, it is unique. Is it to your taste?"

O'Shane carefully picked the meats from the smashed shell.

"You bet it is!" he said in English. Then he halted the words. Something hanging in the corner had caught his eye—a hat, a large, round, heavy Cordoban hat. It was such a hat as he had that afternoon seen flung at Griso Zuñiga; it was such a hat as he had seen filled with walnuts, emptying walnuts upon the yellow sand of the arena!

"You were at the corrida this afternoon, O'Donoju?" O'Shane wondered that he spoke in English, which of course the barber did not understand; he tried to put the words into Spanish, but he seemed unable to control his vocal chords. The words came thickly, strangely.

O'Donoju did not respond for a moment. There was a dull crack. O'Shane felt another smashed nut placed in his hand; his fingers explored the fragments, thrust the meats into his mouth blindly, stumblingly. O'Donoju laughed softly; yet in the laugh was a chill.

"Yes, I was at the corrida," he answered in English. "How like you the walnuts of O'Donoju, my friend? My friend O'Shane, who carries strange things inside his shirt——"

The mocking voice died away into nothingness. O'Shane remembered no more. He gave only a great sigh, and fell limp into the arms of the old barber.

"I said truly," quoth O'Donoju, looking down at the motionless policeman. "Those two nuts were indeed unique—even among the walnuts of O'Donoju."

CHAPTER IX.

A GUEST COMES TO THE HOUSE OF O'DONOJU.

The San Blas Indians, they of the breechclouts and derbies, held their rugged and jungled country a land peculiar unto itself, a terra incognita to white men.

In the ancient days they had tasted of the bloody Alta Cruz of the conquistadores, and the taste had liked them ill. Afterward no more white men penetrated their land. The breed of the conquistadores speedily died out. Although there was gold in the country of the San Blas, the lazy dons had no hearts for the getting it. After the dons, the Creoles and Indians of Panama left the San Blas people severely alone. When the Yanquis came to dig the Big Ditch, a few strayed into the San Blas country and stayed there, each possessing a six-by-two plot. That was all. No whites wanted.

So, cheek by jowl with the canal, the commerce of the world, the ancient stones of Panama, the tribe of San Blas remained unknown and unloved, save for such of them as came down to earn money by work and wore breechclouts and derby hats. They kept their land impenetrable and aloof.

Upon that Sunday night after the famous corrida in Panama City, upon that Sunday night after Trinidad Moncada had performed his famous, terri-

ble, madman's acts, upon that Sunday night after Larry O'Shane had eaten of the walnuts of O'Donoju, the city of Panama and the adjacent Canal Zone were emptied of the little brown San Blas men. There were none to be seen. Not that this fact attracted attention; it did not.

The only fact which attracted the attention of Captain Kussey and the Zone police upon this Sunday night was that nothing happened at or around the Tabernilla magazine. It was not exploded, neither did any soul approach the vicinity. Whereupon Captain Kussey dismissed the note from the unknown "Rosaleen" as a hoax, a fake, a joke played by some one who had previously heard Earnshaw's story, and yet somehow that did not fit the situation. In the general suspense over Tabernilla, the nonreturn of Larry O'Shane to duty was for the moment quite overlooked.

Had any white man, preferably an Irishman of Sinn Fein leanings, been hovering upon a spiritual plane of the fourth dimension over the jungle and hills outside the settled districts of Panama City, he might have heard and seen strange things. He would certainly have recognized a humming, whirringly musical air that lifted over the jungled hills and vales leading toward the San Blas country; an air which had come out of Ireland with the Wild Geese of years gone; an air that lilted and swung with the wildly sweet Celtic touch. The words were perhaps indistinct, yet they were the words of "My Dark Rosaleen," sounding strangely upon the lips of little brown men.

Through these jungles, under the moonlight hour after hour, now losing itself among the deeper shadows, now emerging across some silvern hilltop or open glade, was speeding a file of men. Ever they went forward, never tiring, never ceasing, never resting; they went forward as men with a purposed goal, and behind them the miles slipped away to Panama town, and ahead of them the miles lessened to the undiscovered country of the San Blas tribe.

A strange company of men was this, to be found so traveling. At the head of that long file strode an old man clad in white; an old man whose white, finely combed hair waved freely to the breeze, whose unsteady gray eyes flitted ever roundabout. Behind this old man who tired not, behind this Miguel O'Donoju of the walnuts, like shadows of the jungle, came the San Blas Indians, who had left Panama that night. In their midst they bore a slender litter whereon lay an unconscious man clad in khaki.

Last of all, closing this weird procession, came a huge, burly figure clad in the blue jeans and striped sweater of a Basque worker, the figure of Trinidad Moncada. Hard for the great man to maintain was that swift, untiring pace. Now he staggered, stumbled, fell behind the file that waited not for him; now he lagged with drooping head, his great body weaving from side to side in weariness; but when the humming song ahead of him grew distant he would take from his pocket a walnut and crush it in his huge fist, mouthing the meats in haste, and presently he would catch up again with the file of men ahead. Unique, indeed, these walnuts of O'Donoju!

Hour by hour the file of men went onward, unpausing, untiring, the old barber who led them seeming to know the pathless jungle and hills as well as the brown men who followed him. The burly Trinidad Moncada fell behind more frequently now, yet ever managed to regain what ground he lost; ever managed to come staggering, stumbling, cursing after the rearmost of the San Blas.

Under the dawning, at last, from a hill crest ahead shrilled up a far, high cry, and it was answered by one of the Indians who followed O'Donoju. They were come home. The long march was done.

Larry O'Shane dreamed; he dreamed things from out the past, little things which at the time had seemed of little moment. There recurred to his sleeping brain how a walnut splashed with red paint had saved the life of a negro

worker when a magazine exploded; he vaguely reminisced the tale told him by Fitzgerald, the tale about an anarchist, a Silver Man of Peter M'Gill, a Spanish deportee, a matador; and dwelt within his dormant soul the face of a woman to whom Moncada and Zuñiga had bowed silently, such a face as strikes sharp pain to the heart of a man through sheer beauty and far sweeter purity. And oddly he thought, too, about the queer framework, the framework that made a hollow between the two razors turned edges outward, the hollow in the arrow shaft which seemed made to carry a ball of fire—but which had carried no ball of fire according to Earnshaw. Queer things, these vague dream memories! Queer things, unconnected, unlinked, yet lingering!

As O'Shane dreamed, the voice of the old barber, Miguel O'Donoju, came into his mind. He realized, later, after he wakened and remembered the words, that they were not a fantasy, but actual speech; that he had heard the barber speaking close beside him. And even in his dream he wondered that the barber was speaking English, not Spanish.

"I am an O'Donoju, and, like my fathers before me, I serve The O'Donoju."

Now, these words lingered upon O'Shane's mind when he awakened and found himself lying in absolute darkness. For a little he remembered nothing except that speech. It puzzled him; he felt confused and a bit helpless. *The* O'Donoju! That would mean the head of the O'Donoju clan, according to old Irish usage. But nowadays, and for long years since, such terms as The O'Donoju or The O'Neill or The Geraldine had been no more than a name, a memory, a relic of aforetime. O'Shane concluded that he had misunderstood the words.

Presently he was disagreeably conscious that he was awake, for he felt slightly nauseated, having much ado to conquer the sensation; and his head began to ache. Memory flooded back upon him, and a painful wonder. He remembered the barber shop and the queer faintness which had seized upon him while he ate that second walnut. Fever? No, it was not fever. What it was he could not imagine. Unless, somehow, that barber——

O'Shane groaned lightly. He felt that he was ill, that something had gripped him, and to be impotent at this stage of the game was maddening. It came back to him swiftly. The arrow point beneath his shirt; the bloody clothes of Trinidad Moncada in the back room of the barber shop; the evidences, the proofs which he had stumbled upon.

So grotesque, so unreasonable, so absurd and lacking in motive was the evidence that the policeman mentally cursed the whole affair. That a picador of the bull ring should be allied with a Spanish-Irish barber and the San Blas Indians in a plot to blow up the Canal Zone magazines was like some wild phantasy of a disordered brain. It held no apparent rhyme or reason. Yet there was the evidence. O'Shane put his hand to his shirt.

The broken arrow shaft was gone. His revolver was gone. His binoculars were gone.

At his movement, as though unseen watchers had been awaiting the rustle a flood of light burst upon the prostrate policeman, momentarily blinding him. He closed his eyes against it, struggled to find his feet. A hand touched his shoulder, and he yielded to the pressure, lying back again on soft pillows. Presently he opened his eyes, blinking, and made out the figure of the old barber standing beside him.

"You!" ejaculated O'Shane. "What's happened? It's daylight! Is this your shop?"

"No, it is not my shop." And O'Donoju, speaking English now, uttered a soft, silky laugh. Yet in the laugh was a chill. "You have had a stroke of some kind. Now drink this and lie still until I return. Do not try to move or you will regret it."

A deft hand lifted O'Shane's head; there was a cup at his lips, and he obediently drank. The draft sent a delicious warmth, a languorous, soft-

stealing sensation of pleasant comfort through him. He sighed contentedly, felt all care and wonder and questioning slip from his brain, and lay back on his pillows, facing the large room which was now disclosed to him. O'Donoju had disappeared, and he found himself quite alone.

The policeman no longer wanted to get up; he no longer worried about Trinidad Moncada or anything else; he felt quite clear-headed, yet dreamily content and relaxed. As his eyes grew accustomed to the light and he discovered the details of the strange room in which he lay, his brain seemed to note the facts distinctly, but without any questioning or perplexity. Yet the old Larry O'Shane would have wondered mightily.

The room was large. O'Shane found that he lay on a couch in a bay or recess which was flanked on either hand by windows. To judge from the light, some of these windows appeared to be of stained glass. Thus the other three walls of the room were visible to O'Shane, and queer walls they were. He lay for a long time looking at them, slowly absorbing the varied details which met his gaze.

The wall opposite him was fitted with a long bench which was crowded with retorts, racks of chemist's tubes, and other apparatus of the same sort. High over this bench and hung from the ceiling by wires, which caused it to oscillate in lifelike fashion, was the stuffed figure of a six-foot cayman or alligator, head out into the room, tail upcurled against the wall behind.

The walls to right and left were lined with books from the floor to the eight-foot ceiling. They were not ordinary books. Nothing in this room was ordinary. Great, ponderous tomes they were. His eyes focusing gradually on the titles of those nearest him, O'Shane made out that they were medical works in French and Spanish and English. Hanging partly before the volumes, as if designed to protect them from the strong, tropical sunlight, were ragged curtains; but to the astonishment of O'Shane he saw that these curtains were made from what appeared to be wondrous old tapestries ruthlessly butchered.

The entire furniture of the room consisted of a cabinet at one end of the workbench, one chair, and two tables, with a rug on the floor. With amazement deepening fast into incredulity, O'Shane realized that the cabinet and the two tables were of buhl. Not the flimsy stuff of modern workmanship, but of the old master period; the pedestals and legs heavy with massy, carven brasses, the crimson-black shell flaming in the sunlight like molten fire. None the less, from tables and cabinet stuck out grotesque pendants of brass, and there were gaps in the rich tortoiseshell, as though the princely pieces had been unoiled and uncared for during long years.

The chair resting before one of the tables was a high, claw-foot Chippendale, but it was hacked and stained until only the lines of the master craftsman were left to show what it had been. The rug on the floor was an Oriental, a Keshan of wonderful color and fineness, so eaten by holes and so ragged that only the distinctive blue edging strip was left to tell the original weave.

"The furnishings of a palace gone to seed!" thought O'Shane dreamily. "Wonders from a king's house, abused and wrecked in the hands of ignorant peasants!"

He looked now at the tables, and within his dulled brain a spark of animation stirred feebly, but only for a moment. That drugging draft had spoiled his initiative. He saw that wire baskets stood upon the tables and that each basket was filled with walnuts, filled with brown, round, and wrinkled walnuts. At the corner of the table closest to him was a single walnut by itself; the shell was splashed with scarlet paint. A unique walnut indeed!

O'Shane gazed at his surroundings idly, without questionings, careless of where he lay or of what had happened. Nothing mattered any more. He was content to lie there relaxed, comfortable, untroubled by anything. Idly, as in a dream, he remembered that tre-

mendous epical thing he had witnessed —when? On the yesterday, or in preceding years? At the corrida; that epical fight of Trinidad Moncada against the hundreds, when the giant picador had performed superhuman, homeric deeds. It was pleasant to have witnessed such a thing. Few men had ever seen such a fight or would ever again see its equal.

Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, O'Shane heard a voice from outside the room in which he lay. It was a quietly poised contralto voice, a woman's voice. It made something leap and quiver within his soul. He turned his face, but could see no doorway; it must be near his own recess, he thought, in the same wall with the windows.

He was right. A moment later there was a faint swish of woman's garments, and a white figure entered the room to his left by a door hidden from him. So much he saw, and then no more; nothing except a face, such a face as drives quick, frightening pain to the hearts of men; a face that tortures the soul of man with its loveliness, its inaccessibility, its sweet, poised purity; a face glimpsed but twice in a lifetime, remembered into eternity.

She was looking at him, this woman who had entered. Blue-black of hair and brow, ruddy of lip and cheek, she was gazing at him with startled, wide-frightened eyes. Blue were the eyes of her, blue as deep, glorious sapphires for which men give their lives in the black caves of Lung-tan. Beneath their look, beneath their quick, startled gaze, O'Shane caught his breath sharply. He felt himself trembling.

Those serene Irish blue eyes turned from him. The girl crossed the room swiftly. O'Shane's gaze followed her; he remembered now dimly. He had seen her on the plaza. It was to her that Griso Zuñiga had bowed silently, to her that Trinidad Moncada had bowed silently. He remembered how her eyes had met his after they had departed.

She crossed the room, and he saw her pause before the buhl cabinet. She glanced swiftly about, as if in fear. Her hand was resting upon the doors of the cabinet just above her head; O'Shane saw how delicately tapering was her wrist and arm, how slenderly white her hand and long fingers, bare of jewelry.

Silently, quickly, she plucked open the doors of the cabinet. For a space she stood there, busied with something, her back to O'Shane. He vaguely observed now, as he had at their first meeting, the odd cut of the white, filmy garments that clothed her. With something of a shock he realized why they appeared so odd. It was because they were after a bygone fashion, made after the fashions of ten, twenty years ago. Yet even his man's eye could see that they were made exquisitely, adorably, and the materials were strangely rare and delicate.

Now he saw her turn from the cabinet and come toward him swiftly. As she crossed the room to him, he dimly remembered his Vergil and smiled a little.

"No goddess ever walks, I suppose," he muttered. "They all float—float ——".

"You must drink this—quickly!" The rich contralto voice was vibrant.

She stooped beside him, holding a cup to his lips. O'Shane, childishly obedient, drank the cup empty. She stood up, watching him, a strange anxiety in her eyes. At some sound from without she started nervously, glancing at the door. Her eyes swung back to him.

"Is it helping you?"

"I—I—what was the matter with me?" O'Shane swung his legs to the floor and stared at her. "I must have been doped."

"You were." She nodded gravely. "Be careful! Not too loud!"

CHAPTER X.

THE DAUGHTER OF O'DONOJU.

Larry O'Shane was awake now; he was himself again. He shuddered inwardly at thought of the supine, inert thing he had been a moment previously. That drink swept through him with re-

vivifying force. It shredded the languor from his brain and muscles. It nerved him afresh; it strengthened him; it made a new man of him in a moment.

He sat on the edge of his couch and stared at the glorious creature facing him. She was less woman than girl, he saw. She was frightened, anxious, worried by some obsessing fear. O'Shane forced himself into some measure of poise, and smiled a little.

"Where am I?" he demanded quietly. "How long have I been here?"

"They brought you here this morning." She did not say where, but continued swiftly: "There's no time now to talk; he is coming back in a moment. I can guess why he brought you here. Oh, I've found out many things! It's terrible. You're a policeman from the Canal Zone——"

She broke off at some alarm from outside. A quick glance at the door, and she resumed:

"Lie down! Don't let him see you standing up; he must think that you are still drugged and helpless to his will. That's it—lie down——"

So vibrant with command was her voice that O'Shane obeyed. A smile curved her lips.

"Good! When he comes be careful, careful! Assent to everything he says. You must help me; I need you terribly, terribly. I thought I had been able to get away from him yesterday morning in Panama, but he found me again. They brought me back here. You'll have to help me!"

She drew a deep breath, striving to force herself into calm.

"Madam, I'll help you with all my heart," said O'Shane evenly. "Whom do you mean by 'he?' The old barber, Miguel O'Donoju?"

She shivered slightly, and nodded.

"Yes. I can't talk now; he's coming. Remember, he must not suspect. Assent to all he asks—everything, everything! He must think your brain dulled and deadened. And for the love of Heaven do not eat or drink anything from his hand, as you love life, as you would help me and yourself. Touch not his walnuts——"

"Walnuts!" burst out O'Shane, lifting himself on one elbow. "That was it! I ate two of his walnuts; that is all I remember. The secret——"

"I do not know the secret yet," exclaimed the girl quickly. "I am trying to discover it. I dare not tell you all I fear. But I must go. Remember, eat and drink nothing."

She turned away. O'Shane put forth a hand and caught her filmy dress.

"Wait! Who are you? You know me?"

She looked down at him, and for an instant her eyes smiled on him.

"Yes. You are Larry O'Shane, they said. I am Rosaleen O'Donoju."

His fingers relaxed, and she was gone hastily. The room was empty.

Rosaleen O'Donoju! And she had spoken English, he noted now; no word of Spanish had come from her lips. The barber, too, had spoken English. O'Shane felt cold for a moment. Could she be the daughter of that man? It seemed inevitable that such was the case.

For a time the policeman lay motionless, thinking hard, striving to adjust himself to his situation. Where he now was he had not the faintest idea. He knew very well that he had *not* had a stroke, as Miguel O'Donoju had claimed; he knew very well that somehow he had been drugged. By those walnuts? Impossible.

Rosaleen! That was the name which had been signed to the note received by Captain Kussey, warning him about Tabernilla being next on the list. What the devil could it all mean? O'Shane had already traced the connection between the magazine explosions and Trinidad Moncada, between Moncada and the old barber; those two razors set edges outward on the broken arrow—those, too, pointed to the barber. This much was assured. But what amazing reason could lie behind all the grotesquerie? There must be a reason. Such devil's work never sprouted spontaneously.

"So she wants help?" said O'Shane

to himself. "By gad, she'll get it! She knows something at least. She warned Kussey. I needn't worry about reporting for duty. If I can help her, if I can get to the bottom of this thing by playing her game, Kussey will pin a medal on me. That is, if I ever get back to Ancon."

He heard a footstep, the creak of a board, and swiftly relaxed his muscles. He gazed at the room with vacant eyes, dreamily, as he had a few moments previously been gazing.

With quick, light step Miguel O'Donoju came into the room. His unsteady, smiling gray eyes rested for a moment upon the prostrate figure of O'Shane. His deft hand waved a greeting, but he said no word.

And now Larry O'Shane witnessed an amazing scene.

The barber with one hand brushed his finely combed white hair back from his brow, and advanced to the workbench. For a space he busied himself there, his back to the watcher. Then a tiny bell tinkled very faintly. O'Donoju's voice lifted in Spanish, and he turned.

"Enter, my friend!"

Into the room advanced the lithe, erect, bronze, naked figure of a San Blas—a man of the jungles this, a man who bore himself as a chief and no common Indio. He carried in both hands a bag of skin, which seemed to be very heavy; he set it down with a grunt, and squatted on his heels.

"Señor," he said in fair Spanish, "I bring you what is agreed, upon behalf of my family. But, señor, the magic was not strong the last time; it was like old magic. It was like an old man who has had many wives and has lived long. He is a man still, but he totters on his two feet, and his hair is gray and he waits for death. So was this last magic, señor. It was not strong."

O'Donoju nodded gravely.

"So I heard from others, my friend," he answered. "Yet the magic *was* strong; you had grown used to it, and you thought it weak. However, *no importa!* Here, I promise you that you will find this magic new and of tenfold strength."

He took from a table one of the wire baskets filled with walnuts and gave it to his visitor. The Indian received it with an eager grunt, turned, and departed.

O'Donoju took up the skin bag. He had difficulty in raising it to the nearest table, where he left it for the moment. He glanced toward O'Shane, then laughed softly. The laugh had a chill in it. With another effort the barber lifted the skin bag, bore it over to the couch, and dumped it on the floor beside the policeman.

"There, my friend," said O'Donoju in Spanish. "Look at that, if you like. Then go outside and look around you. I shall be busy for five minutes. Return after that time and we shall have a talk, friend of my soul. There are many things to talk over, *no es?*"

He turned his back on O'Shane and busied himself again at the workbench.

The policeman was tempted to take advantage of the occasion. It was quite evident that O'Donoju regarded him as being helpless, lacking in all energy, drugged into dreamy lethargy and sluggishness. Something checked the temptation, however. O'Shane was not sure of anything yet. He was confused and perplexed; he wanted very much to know where he was.

Being curious, he rose and hauled the skin bag to the couch. Its weight amazed him. Loosing the thongs that clasped its throat, he laid back the skin and glanced at the contents. His eyes widened. He barely checked a sharp ejaculation. The bag was full to the neck—full of yellow dust and nodules and lumps—full of virgin gold! The gold of the San Blas! The gold that men sought and came back nevermore from the finding!

Still the old barber kept his back turned, kept busied at the workbench, as though devoid of all interest in the doings of his prisoner. O'Shane grappled with his excitement and quelled it. He forced himself to play the part of the sluggish, drugged dreamer. With vacuous eyes and drooping, listless

manner he rose to his feet and went to the doorway.

He knew now for a surety. Miguel O'Donoju was something more than a barber. Miguel O'Donoju was somehow responsible, directly responsible, for the powder explosions along the Canal Zone. Miguel O'Donoju was selling to these San Blas Indians something for which they eagerly delivered sacks of raw gold from their river beds—was selling them walnuts! Brown, round, and wrinkled walnuts! It would have been ludicrous had it not been amazing.

"Something more behind it that I don't know," thought O'Shane. "Even the girl doesn't know what's behind those walnuts; she said as much. Walnuts of O'Donoju! I wonder what Griso Zuñiga knows about 'em?"

Ahead of him the policeman discerned a long corridor lighted by a high window. He passed along, in obedience to the directions of his host—or captor—and came out in a large hallway, a wide door and screened veranda just to his right. Not knowing what eyes might be spying upon him, not daring to evince too much curiosity as to the house itself, O'Shane lethargically went out upon the veranda.

Not being altogether a fool, Larry O'Shane began to realize that he was either in the very country of the San Blas itself or uncommonly close to it. From the veranda he could see only a vista of jungled trees, somewhat cleared away from around the house; a group of San Blas men crouching and talking near a grass-thatched Indian hut a hundred yards away; an Indian woman who crossed the clearing and vanished on the other side, a brown baby on her back. There could be no doubt about it, especially after the visit of that chief with the bag of gold. O'Donoju was living among the San Blas.

Yet how could that be? O'Shane knew that this tribe hated whites, refused to allow any whites in their borders. Again mystery. Why did they bring gold by the sack to Miguel O'Donoju? What "magic" lay in those walnuts?

With head bowed in thought, the American turned and retraced his steps along the corridor to the room in which he had awakened. At the doorway, the barber met him and held out a cup half filled with liquid; the cup was of the finest old Sèvres china, chipped and marred and broken. O'Donoju smiled, his laughing, unsteady gray eyes dwelling on the face of O'Shane with the childish craftiness of a man not truly balanced.

"Take this, friend of my soul, and drink. I shall return in a moment."

O'Shane took the cup. O'Donoju passed him and disappeared down the corridor. With the warning of Rosaleen ringing in his mind, the policeman glanced hurriedly about the room; he strode quickly to the couch and emptied the cup behind it against the wall.

A quick idea flashed across his mind. He stepped to the nearest row of books and took down one volume after another. In one flyleaf he found the name "Michael O'Donohue;" in another "Michel O'Donohue;" in a third "Miguel O'Donoju." The signatures were identical, despite the differences in spelling. Each of the books was a medical tome; the volumes that lined the walls were all medical works. O'Shane tried a fourth time, and uttered a low exclamation of satisfaction; here he found the French signature, and beneath it the notation in French, "recently subprofessor of laparotomy, Sorbonne." The date followed—a date in the seventies of the last century.

O'Shane sat down on the couch, wrestling in perplexity with this problem. From the date, O'Donoju must now be at least seventy years old.

"He doesn't look it," O'Shane told himself. "Still, you never can tell. Cunning old devil! Playing the Spanish barber as he does down in Panama! Well, I've got the goods on him now. A doctor, a French-Spanish-Irish fellow; an uncommonly good doctor, too, if he could have held down a job at the Sorbonne."

How O'Donoju could have maintained a position among the San Blas was not difficult to see. Any physician can establish himself, with a bit of luck, among a savage people, and Miguel O'Donoju was certainly a crafty old fox with his drugs and deft ways. Rosaleen, therefore, must be his daughter; Larry O'Shane sighed at the thought. That so glorious a creature should have sprung from this crafty old devil—it was hard for him to swallow the dose. He revolted against it.

O'Donoju came back into the room and laughed softly at sight of the empty cup on the nearest table.

"Well, friend of my soul," he said, rubbing his hands together, "you are ready to have our little talk, eh?"

O'Shane gazed at him a bit vacantly and nodded. O'Donoju dropped into the battered old Chippendale chair and began to roll a cigarette. O'Shane reached forward suddenly, and, laughing again, the older man yielded to him the tobacco and papers.

"As you wish, dear friend. You are Irish, eh, O'Shane? Lawrence O'Shane? You were born on the day of the good St. Laurent, eh?"

O'Shane nodded again, mindful of Rosaleen's instructions. "Yes," he said simply.

"That is good, friend of my soul," beamed the other. "You saw that bag of gold, eh? Well, would you like to have it for your own? It is worth much money, my friend."

The policeman could not quite conceal his amazement.

"Would—would I like it?" he repeated dully. "You are jesting."

"Poof!" O'Donoju waved his lean fingers in the air; a graceful, grandiloquent gesture. "To you it is much; to me nothing. I have dozens more—dozens like it. All in a cupboard upstairs. Tell me, would you like it?"

"Yes."

"Then it shall be yours when you leave here. You know where you are?"

O'Shane looked puzzled. "No," he answered. "No. I cannot understand. Not in Panama?"

The other man laughed his soft, chilly laugh.

"No, not in Panama. You are in the heart of the San Blas country, señor of my soul. And now, look thou!"

A swift, deft movement, and O'Donoju whipped something from his pocket and handed it to O'Shane, who gazed at it in wonderment unconcealed. It was a photograph; a photograph of Rosaleen O'Donoju, revealing to the utmost her strange, sweet grace, her wondrous features, the eyes looking forthright and smilingly. A slow exclamation broke from the policeman:

"Who is this?"

"Your wife, if you would like her. At a price!"

With difficulty O'Shane kept his gaze on the photograph. He felt the blood surging into his face; he felt the hot tide of passion gripping him hard. But he controlled himself.

"At what price?" he asked hoarsely, thickly. "*Dios!* Tell me quickly."

O'Donoju laughed silkily. "So! Love comes swiftly to the Irish blood, eh? And you have seen that face before, my friend; you have seen it in the Plaza of Panama, no?"

So the policeman knew that he had been spied upon, or that Moncada had reported his presence that Sunday morning when Griso Zuñiga had said: "I take what I want!"

"Name the price, for the love of the saints!" cried O'Shane.

"This is it." The older man leaned forward, his unsteady gray eyes fastened upon the face of the man he deemed drugged. "That you tear from your breast that emblem of the police; that you agree to serve me for six months; that you agree to do whatever I command, even if it be to destroy the lives and property of the cursed Yanquis who dig the canal. At the end of six months, the bag of gold and the girl shall be yours."

O'Shane trembled a little. This devil of a father was bartering his own flesh and blood! For the hire of a man!

"I need you," pursued O'Donoju quickly. "You are of the Irish breed. You give not a curse for government, for authority, for oppression, for autocracy. You desire gold and this woman more than all besides, eh? And you shall have them, if you accept. Do you?"

"I'm Irish," said O'Shane, his voice slow. "Yes, that's right enough."

"Then you accept?" O'Donoju leaned forward, his gray eyes intent, compellent.

O'Shane fingered his policeman's badge, unpinned it, dropped it to the floor.

"Yes."

CHAPTER XI.

LARRY O'SHANE LUNCHES WITH BEAUTY.

Came swift and sudden interruption. The little bell tinkled faintly, then a rush of heavy footfalls sounded down the corridor, fairly shaking the house. O'Donoju leaped to his feet and turned to the door. An instant later O'Shane saw the burly figure of Trinidad Moncada enter the room.

"What do you want?" O'Donoju snapped out the words sharply, angrily.

Moncada stood leering about from beneath his heavy smear of black brows. He blinked sleepily; he seemed white and shaken, trembling in his huge frame. He stretched out his great arms toward the old man.

"I want—I want what is my due!" he cried thickly. "You cannot play longer with me. The time is up, and more than up——"

With catlike swiftness, O'Donoju turned to the nearer of the two tables, seized a handful of walnuts from one of the wire baskets, and thrust the round, brown, and wrinkled nuts into the outstretched hands of Moncada.

"Take them and go! I am not yet ready to talk with you. To-night is the time."

The picador growled wordlessly. He gripped the walnuts to his breast convulsively, fumbled them all into his left hand. In his right hand he caught two nuts, crushed them like paper, and thrust the débris into his mouth. Growling still, he turned and stumbled back down the corridor.

"*Diantre!*" O'Donoju made a gesture of contempt. Then, standing in the doorway, he lifted his voice until it shrilled vibrantly throughout the building: "Rosaleen! Rosaleen!"

He stepped again to the table, seized a double handful of the walnuts, and came to O'Shane, extending them.

"Here! Put these in your pocket, friend of my soul. Eat one from time to time, yes? You like the walnuts of O'Donoju? They are to your taste?"

O'Shane nodded silently and put them into his pocket. He fumbled with one and set it under his heel, cracking it. As he lifted the fragments in his hand, Rosaleen came into the room.

"Well?" she said, looking at her father.

O'Donoju went to her and spoke quickly in English, lowering his voice almost to a whisper. Yet O'Shane caught snatches of his speech, and guessed the rest.

"Take this man—Larry O'Shane—talk to him—something to eat, if you will."

The girl lifted her head, anger in her blue eyes.

"You are giving me orders?" Her rich contralto voice vibrated.

"I? By the saints, no!" O'Donoju answered with strange deference, humility. "It is only what you can do to help me. There is a crisis—much to do before night—get rid of this fool Moncada—take O'Shane off my hands——"

"Very well." Rosaleen turned toward O'Shane, who rose. Her glance fell on the crushed walnut in his hand, her eyes lifted to his face, to his vacuous, dull gaze; he saw her go white, as if with swift fear. "Señor O'Shane, will you come with me?"

The policeman nodded eagerly, smiled, and with purposely stumbling feet followed her down the corridor. He sensed that O'Donoju was gazing after them, smiling with the crafty smile of a man not truly balanced; a childish, terrible smile.

In the empty hallway beyond the corridor, Rosaleen turned and caught O'Shane's hand, the hand that held the crushed walnut. Her whisper struck him fiercely:

"You—you have not eaten——"

O'Shane opened his hand and let the fragments of walnut fall to the floor. He wiped the assumed expression from his face, and laughed into her eyes.

"No, thanks to your warning! But he thinks I am drugged."

"Of course." She drew a deep breath and loosed her fingers from his wrist, taking a step back. "That is why he turned you over to my care. Come now, and say nothing until I tell you to speak. I am watched. You also."

The policeman found himself following her in dumb obedience. What a woman! he thought. By gad, what a woman! Carrying herself like a queen! How could such a woman have sprung from such a man as Miguel O'Donoju? And he must be seventy, despite his looks; she could be no more than twenty, thought O'Shane. He was confused, puzzled.

They passed through two large rooms which were somewhat after the fashion of O'Donoju's workroom. They were furnished after the manner of a bygone generation. Here was a whatnot bearing knickknacks. There was a carved rosewood napoleon upholstered in tattered haircloth. Oriental rugs on the floor and Debussy carpets; Chippendale and buhl of the rarest; portières such as a king might envy; everything worn · and abused, torn and battered, stained and richly shabby.

So they came to a room, half veranda and half dining room, where a table was set with old, battered silver and chipped china of the finest. An Indian woman stood waiting. Rosaleen seated herself, and Larry O'Shane glanced at his hands.

"If I might wash——"

"There is no time," said the girl brusquely, then turned to the Indian servant and spoke in a tongue O'Shane did not know. He sat down opposite her, resigned to his fate.

The Indian woman left the room. To an inquiring glance Rosaleen shook her head slightly. She gave a smiling nod of approbation, however, when O'Shane took three walnuts from his pocket and laid them upon the table beside his plate. The cloth was of finest damask linen, worn threadbare and shredding at the edges.

While they waited, O'Shane thrust a knife edge into the soft jointure of the walnut shells and examined the interior of a nut. It told him little, except that it was unlike any walnut he had ever seen before; the meat was undoubtedly milky and the nut smelled oddly. He glanced again at the girl inquiringly. She looked at the walnuts and shrugged her shoulders in a significant fashion. Plainly she knew nothing of this mystery.

The Indian woman returned. Before them she set dishes of food, well cooked and appetizing. O'Shane realized that it was past noon, that he was very hungry. He devoted himself to making a good meal, not knowing when he might get another. There was no table talk. A glass of wine followed the dinner. Rosaleen shook her head slightly, and O'Shane waited until the Indian woman was gone, then ruthlessly emptied his glass upon the carpet.

"Come," said Rosaleen, rising from the table.

She led the way back into the room of the whatnot, and motioned him to sit beside her on the napoleon. They were in full view of the dining room, whence the Indian woman was removing the dishes.

"We may talk here, but speak English," said the girl quietly.

O'Shane found himself quieted, controlled by her attitude; she seemed now to be perfectly poised, unhurried, no longer nervous and frightened. Yet in her manner he sensed a cold desperation.

"We are in the San Blas country?" he said calmly. "But I do not understand how you came to be here, how your father——"

"Listen! We cannot discuss *my* position, Mr. O'Shane," she said with finality. "Our time is limited to min-

utes. My duty is to talk with you until you fall asleep, which presumably should take place in ten minutes or less. I am supposed to infatuate you—a living bait," she added bitterly; "an involuntary Circe!"

She was very pale. Her deep blue eyes held steadily to his.

"You see," she pursued, "I have discovered many things which I did not know until recently——"

"You sent that note to Captain Kussey?"

"Yes. I meant to see him personally and tell him what I feared and knew, but Moncada had seen me there on the plaza, and I knew that I should have no more liberty. No, I am not here under restraint, Mr. O'Shane. This is my home—but never mind all that now."

"You know what proposition Miguel O'Donoju made to me?" O'Shane asked quietly.

"Yes. I—I might be ashamed, yet I know that you understand, or that you will understand when you learn everything. He wants you because you are a policeman who knows the Canal Zone thoroughly; because you are Irish and because you had already discovered so much that he was afraid of you, and because he believes that through drugs and—and seduction you can be made to help him in his task of destroying the canal work."

O'Shane's eyes widened; then he smiled. "Does he really imagine that he can effect such a thing?"

She nodded gravely. "Yes. Please do not think him crazy, for he is not. He is very close to the line, I admit, and the line between sanity and madness is very shadowy; but what he does is done through love of me, and for no other reason."

"For love of *you?*" ejaculated O'Shane. "Why, he offered——"

She laughed, this time with real, unaffected amusement.

"He offered me to you in marriage, if you would serve him for six months?" she said. "Yes. He made the same offer to Moncada and to others—but, believe me, Mr. O'Shane, you are quite safe. As I say, his love and devotion to me forms the great driving force of his life; whether it has warped his judgment or not is another matter. He has not the slightest intention of abiding by his bargain with you or with any one else, I assure you."

O'Shane was staggered. He stared at her, astounded.

"You say he made the same proposals to Moncada, Trinidad Moncada? Then that explains why the picador was concerned in blowing up the powder houses——"

She nodded in silent assent. O'Shane laughed suddenly as he realized the truth.

"And he has the unmitigated nerve to make the same proposals to different men—without the slightest intention of keeping his promises? By gad, I begin to admire the man! He begins to loom up like a real human being. And—say!" O'Shane's eyes lightened quickly. "Was he after Griso Zuñiga with the same intent?"

The girl frowned in puzzled fashion.

"Griso Zuñiga? Who is he?"

"Why," exclaimed O'Shane wonderingly, "you seemed to know him there on the plaza. He bowed to you before he went off——"

"Oh! You mean that—that terrible man—Juan Griso!" Rosaleen seemed to shrink suddenly; she went white to the lips. "Yes. Juan Griso had been an anarchist in Spain; he was working on the canal and ran away. Some of the Indians found him half dead in the jungle and—and——"

Her voice failed.

O'Shane began to see light. He remembered the story told him by Fitzgerald about the Silver Man of Pedro Miguel, 993; the deported anarchist; the man with the Jesuit's face.

"And your"—he balked at saying "your father"—"and Miguel O'Donoju found out his past and wanted to use the man? Was that it?"

"Yes. He knew that Juan Griso was a terrible man and tried to make use of him; he brought him here and tried to make an ally of him, but for some reason failed. Juan Griso ran away

from here, and I had heard nothing of him until I encountered him on the plaza——"

"He's a bullfighter now, a famous man," said O'Shane. "So that explains it! He, too, had learned too much. That is why Moncada tried to kill him at the corrida yesterday——"

He told the girl swiftly what had happened. This explained why no attempt had been made on the Tabernilla magazine, as planned by Miguel O'Donoju. He did not, however, tell her what Griso Zuñiga had replied to the evident proposals of Trinidad Moncada: "What I desire, that thing I take; aye, and no payment do I give to man or devil!"

What "thing" was this? O'Shane could guess. Mingled anger and amusement shot through him at the thought. Old O'Donoju had struck a stronger man than himself in Griso Zuñiga. The matador, who boasted that he served no man, had refused the proffered bribes, and not without implied threats of his own. Small wonder that the childishly crafty O'Donoju had set Moncada to murder him! To O'Shane's mind the situation was grotesque, improbable, utterly without reason, utterly absurd.

"But why," he turned to Rosaleen perplexedly, "why on earth is Miguel O'Donoju so determined to destroy the canal work—something that no power could accomplish?"

The girl rose.

"There is no more time," she exclaimed, facing him determinedly. "Will you help me?"

"Of course." O'Shane came to his feet. "What shall I do?"

"Wait here. Pretend to sleep; pretend to have been eating those walnuts. To-night—to-night will come the crisis. I am afraid of this Trinidad Moncada!"

"But why? He——"

"He has come for his payment," cried the girl desperately. "Don't you see? His six months of servitude are finished; that is why he is here. I am afraid of what he may do. I can call in some of the Indians to help me, but they are unreliable; they might murder him before I could stop them. I—I am afraid. There is so little that I can do, there is so much that must be done——"

"Do you want me to put a quietus on this scheme of wrecking the canal?" said O'Shane quietly. "I can take care of Miguel O'Donoju in half a jiffy——"

"Oh, you must not hurt him!" she exclaimed, her eyes wide. "You must not let Trinidad Moncada hurt him. And we don't know everything yet, remember; there are things we must find out——"

O'Shane resigned himself, difficult though it was for his man's mind to see consistency in her words and actions. After all, she was right. There were still mysteries to be solved; the walnuts, for example.

"Then give me your directions; tell me what plan you have," he said. "I am at your service."

Her face softened. Her deep sapphire eyes warmed to him—warmed until the man felt himself trembling beneath their kindness, felt a thrill of pain sweep across his soul at the very beauty, the sheer loveliness of her. For a moment her fingers touched his, as she impulsively caught his hand, then released it.

"You are very good, Larry O'Shane!" she exclaimed softly, her rich contralto voice deepening in earnestness until it was like some wonderful, low chord struck from a wind harp. "You are very good. I have no plan, yet. We must wait until to-night. If possible, I shall find a place for you in the library; we must wait for what turns up. If *he* goes out this afternoon, I may be able to manage. Quick, now! Lie down and sleep!"

She turned away and was gone, as though at some alarm.

O'Shane obeyed her warning, stretched himself out upon the napoleon, waited. Quickly he heard a light, firm tread; he heard the soft, chilling laugh of Miguel O'Donoju; he did not open his eyes, but lay motionless. The

light, rapid tread passed on and was gone.

The policeman did not move. As he lay there, where he would have to pretend sleep during most of the afternoon, he remembered how Trinidad Moncada had come blundering into the doctor's workroom, the library; he remembered how Trinidad Moncada had demanded "his due," and had gone off satisfied for the moment. Walnuts! What devil's magic lay in those brown, round, and wrinkled walnuts, unlike any O'Shane had ever tasted? Were they indeed grown in Spain, as O'Donoju had claimed?

"I think there's going to be trouble to-night," thought O'Shane to himself. "Wolf against bull! O'Donoju against Moncada! I'm in over my head. I don't understand. How the devil am I ever going to get away from here?"

CHAPTER XII.

TRINIDAD MONCADA DENIES HIS MASTER.

Miguel O'Donoju was hard at work in his combination of library and laboratory.

Darkness had fallen. The room was illuminated by two large oil lamps, set on brackets against the wall, at either end of the workbench. It was a warm night. One of the casement windows with small, leaded panes of colored glass, the window between the single doorway of the room and the couch in the recess, stood slightly ajar.

At one end of the workbench stood a large metal urn, above an alcohol lamp which was burning. The urn gave off a faint steam; a steam that filled the room with a penetrating odor, slightly sweet.

Miguel O'Donoju took two walnuts, carefully separated the shells, and with a scalpel scraped the shells clean of meat. From the buhl cabinet he took a large earthenware jar, placed it upon the workbench, and carefully scooped out enough of its contents to fill the walnut shells; these he then placed together again, holding the shells in place by means of rubber bands. Replacing the jar in the cabinet, he took down a brush and small tin of red paint, with which he smeared the two apparently sound walnuts. Then he laid the two scarlet walnuts to one side carefully, and wiped his brow.

"The right temperature—the right temperature always!" he said softly, with his chill laugh. "The temperature is the thing!"

He turned to the metal urn, sniffed its steam, shook his head slightly. Then he opened a door in the front of the workbench and took out a nearly emptied burlap sack. From the sack he dumped upon the workbench a rolling heap of brown, round, and wrinkled walnuts.

Upon the top face of the bench were placed upright strips of wood set in parallel lines. In between each pair of these strips, Miguel O'Donoju began to arrange his walnuts. He arranged them carefully but swiftly, crowding in between each pair of strips, as though between the jaws of a vise, as many nuts as would go. He arranged them close, side by side, the points down and the flat rear ends upward.

Now from the buhl cabinet he took two flat plush cases, much torn and tattered, and extracted from these certain shining instruments which he laid down beside the rows of walnuts. He went to the metal urn, a cup in his hand; from the tap at the bottom of the urn he drew off a small quantity of steaming fluid, which he sniffed. His unsteady gray eyes regarded the cup frowningly for a moment; then he reached in beneath the bench and drew forth handful after handful of leaves. These he bruised with his fingers, and, removing the cover of the urn, dropped them inside.

At this instant the little bell tinkled faintly. Miguel O'Donoju turned and faced the door. He leaned against the bench negligently and began to roll a cigarette.

A heavy tread sounded from the corridor. Then, in the single doorway of the room, loomed the burly figure of Trinidad Moncada. He stood there motionless, huge, ungainly. From beneath the solid black smear of his brows

his eyes were fastened upon Miguel O'Donoju with ominous intentness. The ragged blue scar stood out startlingly against his cheek, for his face was very white. He held out one hand, and it shook a little in the air.

"I am come!" he said, his Basque tone hoarse and guttural. "I am come for my pay!"

Miguel O'Donoju calmly leaned down, held his cigarette to the blue alcohol flame, lighted it, then turned off the lamp beneath the urn. He rose and surveyed Moncada with his shifty gray eyes.

"I see that you are here, Trinidad Moncada," he said softly. "We shall have a talk, eh? But yes, we shall have a talk. Sit down; take that chair, and help yourself to my walnuts, Trinidad Moncada."

The burly picador took two steps forward, but he did not sit down. He reached forth and plucked one of the walnuts from the nearest wire basket, but he did not eat. Instead, he held up the walnut before O'Donoju's eyes, he closed his great fist upon it, and slowly crushed it to a pulp—crushed it as an apple in a cider mill, crushing it so that from the nut spurted milk upon his hand.

Then violently he threw the crushed pulp upon the floor at the feet of O'Donoju.

"I eat no more of your walnuts, Miguel O'Donoju!" he cried out passionately. "These six months have I done your bidding; these six months have I eaten of your cursed walnuts until my soul is ready for hell and my body tormented by devils. Now the time is up. Give me the hire that was agreed upon between us. Give me the bag of gold that was promised and the woman for my wife. Do not think to play with me, Miguel O'Donoju. I am not a man to be played with."

O'Donoju's shaggy gray brows lifted as if in surprise.

"Play with you, friend of my soul? I do not understand you. Certainly, I am ready to give you payment; you are a great man, Trinidad Moncada, and you have served me well. Now look you! I wish you to observe something."

While the picador watched him with lowering gaze, O'Donoju took from his pocket that same broken arrow shaft which Larry O'Shane had borne from the corrida. In one hand he held it forth. In the other hand he held forth one of the scarlet walnuts, bound about with a rubber band.

"It is quite true that the six months expired to-day, Trinidad Moncada," he said smoothly. "But observe! Yesterday you failed in the task I set you. Yesterday you did not kill Griso Zuñiga; you hardly even injured him. Now you shall give this broken point to one of the Indians in the village and have it set upon a straight, fair shaft, and I shall have a new crossbow made for you. You shall take this walnut and set it within the framework, and to-morrow night you shall visit the powder magazine at Tabernilla, as we had planned for last night. It is your fault that this plan went amiss; therefore it is but just that you should repair the fault. When that is done, to-morrow night, come back here and you shall have the payment agreed upon."

The picador took the scarlet walnut somewhat gingerly and set it down upon the table beside him. Then he took the broken arrow shaft, and with a swift gesture flung it on the floor at the feet of O'Donoju. His ungainly features were convulsed with passion; the ragged scar stood out redly against his face.

"You cannot play with me, Miguel O'Donoju!" he cried hoarsely, advancing a step. "I tell you the time is up, and I am come for my pay. Give it to me here and now, or by the living God I will take you in my hands as I took that walnut, and crush you between my fingers as I crushed it! I am through with you. Give me what is my due!"

The older man sighed gently, waved his deft fingers as if in mild resignation. He laughed softly, but in the laugh was a chill.

"*Que lastima!* What a pity!" he repeated. "What a pity, my friend, that you are so hasty! We should be

friends, you and I. Why should we be enemies, Trinidad Moncada? But tell me this: Where is your priest? How do you expect to marry Señorita O'Donoju without a priest? It would not be fitting for her to depart alone with you at night."

Moncada somewhat relaxed his black scowl, but his eyes glittered still with suspicion.

"There is truth in that," he assented grudgingly. "So you do not refuse my pay?"

"Refuse? Of course not! You shall start for Panama in the morning, my friend. We shall all go together, you and I and the señorita. Eh? Will not that content you?"

The picador growled surly assent. "I suppose it will have to. But what of the gold? Surely," he added with a sneer, "surely you can trust my gold to my care at night, dear, careful old man. Surely you need no priest to pay me the bag of gold."

O'Donoju's gray eyes flicked for a moment. "Oh, of course not! My gold is in the cupboard upstairs, dear friend. Wait and I will fetch your bag here——"

He started toward the door, but Moncada blocked the way.

"Not without me, Miguel O'Donoju. Where you go, there go I also this night."

O'Donoju laughed softly and waved his cigarette in deft fingers. "Come, then."

The two men passed from the room, passed down the corridor together.

The library was deserted, empty, silent. Before one section of the huge bookcases that lined the walls the tattered tapestry hangings had been drawn close. Now, although no breeze lifted through the room, that tapestry moved, rippled with motion.

Suddenly the tapesty was jerked aside, and from behind it stepped Larry O'Shane, and darted across the room to the workbench. That section of the built-in bookcase whence he came showed blank, bare, vacant. The volumes which had occupied that section had been lifted out, moved to other places. The shelves had been lifted out. Behind the tapestry remained only a species of cupboard to the height of a man and eighteen inches deep.

"Be careful! They will not be long away."

The rich contralto voice of Rosaleen O'Donoju thrilled softly upon the room. She had been standing beside the policeman, concealed within that species of cupboard, behind the tapestry. Now she looked out, her face set in anxious lines.

O'Shane, leaning over the workbench, examined the second of the scarlet walnuts prepared by O'Donoju; he pulled the shells apart, sniffed at it, set it down again. His quick glance swept over the shining instruments, the rows of walnuts made ready as if for some operation. Swiftly he stooped, and, reaching inside the open door in the front of the bench, drew out one of the leaves like those which O'Donoju had put into the urn. He gave it a look, nodded, and replaced it.

The little bell tinkled faintly. In a flash O'Shane was back at the hiding place.

"I've got it now!" he cried under his breath, his eyes blazing with excitement, as the girl rearranged the hanging tapestry. "Those instruments—hypodermic syringes! He cooks up cacao leaves—dopes the walnuts with the cocaine solution—inserts the needle through the soft jointure at the rear of the shells——"

His voice ceased. Through the interstices of the tattered tapestry he saw Miguel O'Donoju appear in the doorway.

Behind the old man appeared the bulk of Trinidad Moncada. In his arms the picador carried a skin bag similar to that which O'Shane had seen delivered by the San Blas chief in the morning. With visible eagerness, with the gold lust slavering at his mouth, with the glint of desire in his eyes, with hotly panting breath, Trinidad Moncada rushed forward to the nearest table, swept aside the wire baskets of walnuts, and plumped down the skin

bag. He tore at its closed throat frantically, mad for the sight of gold.

Miguel O'Donoju busied himself in picking up the walnuts which the picador had swept to the floor. But as he retrieved them, his unsteady gray eyes dwelt sidelong upon Moncada; they were laughing were those eyes, and in them was a childish craftiness like that of a man not truly balanced. They watched the picador slyly, constantly.

Trinidad Moncada was not conscious of the scrutiny. He had opened the skin bag, and now was lifting up handfuls of the soft yellow dust and nuggets, allowing the gold to trickle through his fingers. A low mutter of growling laughter issued from his lips; oaths and disjointed words came from him as he played with the yellow stuff.

Quietly Miguel O'Donoju went to the buhl cabinet. A moment later he came back to the table beside Moncada, bearing two filled wineglasses. He set one on the table and upraised the other in his hand. Then he spoke suavely, softly:

"A glass of wine with you, Trinidad Moncada! A glass of wine to your marriage on the morrow! We are friends, *no es verdad?* You know that I intend to keep my obligations to you, eh? Then, my friend, let us drink to the marriage."

Trinidad Moncada lifted his head and gazed at the speaker. He gazed at Miguel O'Donoju like a wild beast disturbed at his kill. Slowly the suspicion, the lowering hatred, died out of his eyes. His hand went out to the wineglass.

"Would you like another bag of gold like that one?" said O'Donoju softly.

Moncada's hand fell. He straightened up a little as he stared at O'Donoju.

"Yes!" The word was a quick, savage snarl. "You—mean it?"

"Of course I mean it." O'Donoju sipped placidly at his wine. "If you will do the thing I ask, you shall have a second bag of gold like that one, my friend. If you will take this arrow and this walnut, if you will go to Tabernilla to-morrow night and finish our work there, you shall have the second bag of gold. Think! One night's work! One day of delay in your marriage, my friend—and another bag of gold! Eh? So drink to your marriage, Trinidad Moncada! Whether you want the second bag or not, drink to your future bride!"

O'Donoju lifted his glass urgingly, his gray eyes alight with whimsical laughter.

The gaze of Trinidad Moncada never shifted from those gray eyes. His hand went out, went out and gripped the wineglass, closed around it. He raised his hand before the eyes of O'Donoju. With a quick, convulsive movement his fingers crushed the glass and flung the dripping particles at Miguel O'Donoju!

"Bah!" Moncada spat like a cat, vindictively, snarlingly, his head thrust out. "Bah! You cannot play with me, Miguel O'Donoju! You think I am a child, eh? I know you. As if I would drink your wine, the wine of O'Donoju! No. I know that you have brought this cursed Americano here and drugged him; you want to get rid of me now; you want to play with him as you played with me!"

Trinidad Moncada took a step forward, his great hands outstretched.

"Well, Miguel O'Donoju, I shall take you in my hands and crush you like a walnut! You cannot play with me, old he-devil! I shall crush you——"

Miguel O'Donoju laughed softly, and lifted his hand to stay the flow of speech.

"You will do nothing of the sort, Trinidad Moncada," he said, his voice like steel. "Perhaps you know—yes, how the San Blas men use that little blowpipe, with the poisoned thorn that kills on the instant? Yes? Then look behind you, Trinidad Moncada—look at the window behind you! One single word from me and you shall die!"

The picador turned clumsily. From his lips dropped a venomous, bestial, blasphemous oath. For framed in the open casement window was the torso of a San Blas Indian, who grinned at him with murderous, blood-lusting eyes.

In that moment Trinidad Moncada

realized that he was at the mercy of O'Donoju. The latter continued to speak evenly, softly.

"I shall tell you what to do, my friend. You may take your bag of gold and go home. Fool! The señorita is not destined for such a brute as you, Trinidad Moncada. Take your gold and depart, and take some walnuts, if you desire them. You get no wife here."

The burly picador slowly turned him again to Miguel O'Donoju. His lips were drawn back over his teeth in a snarl, but when he found his voice it was steady enough.

"So! You never intended to give me the wife you promised me? Well, I understand too late. I understand too late. And now you have this cursed Yanqui, and you will set him in my place—and him you will fool as you fooled me."

"Exactly," said Miguel O'Donoju, sipping his wine with relish and smiling a little.

The two men looked each at the other, silent, motionless. The burly figure of Moncada slowly drooped, crushed into defeat. No more words, no more explanations were needed. The grinning torso of that San Blas framed in the window had told the whole tale to Moncada, who well knew that before he could lay hands on O'Donoju he would be a dead man.

As the two stood there and regarded each the other, Moncada in the realization of bitter vanquishment, O'Donoju in blandly smiling craftiness, the bronze torso of the San Blas suddenly and silently vanished from the window. A slight noise was heard. It was a peculiar noise, such a noise as might have been made by the bones and cartilage of a man's neck being wrenched asunder in the grip of silent, terrible hands of steel.

The torso of the Indian did not reappear at the window.

An instant later a face flitted across the opening for a brief fraction of a second; flitted across and was gone. A lean face it was, sharply chiseled, its ascetic lines like graven steel, and of an almost ashy bloodlessness. It was the cold, austere face of a Jesuit.

It was the face of Griso Zuñiga.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEATH COMES TO THE HOUSE OF O'DONOJU.

Neither O'Donoju nor Moncada saw that flitting face at the window. They were still watching each other, these twain.

Trinidad Moncada slowly turned toward the bag of gold on the table. He shrugged his massive shoulders. He threw out his hands in an expressive Latin gesture; he was defeated, helpless. He stood over the skin bag, leaned forward as if to grip it.

But instead of taking his gold and departing, Trinidad Moncada suddenly hurled his great body forward; his foot shot out, reached the open casement window; the window was slammed shut with such force that one of the upper squares of colored glass shivered on the floor.

"*Now!*" Snarling, the giant picador whirled about, faced Miguel O'Donoju. "Now! You thought to let me go, to kill me before I reached Panama, old devil! You cannot play with me. Now, old walnut, come to my hands!"

He took a step forward, his trembling, straining hands outstretched, a wild ferocity gleaming in his eyes. Miguel O'Donoju stood silent, one hand fallen to his pocket.

But at this instant, when it seemed that the two men would inevitably come together in a death grapple, a tiny bell tinkled very faintly. O'Donoju started violently. His gray eyes leaped to the doorway. He flung up an arresting hand.

"Wait!" he cried swiftly. "Some one is coming——"

"No," said a cold, terrible voice. "Some one has come! *Buenos noches, señores!*"

Trinidad Moncada snapped his great bulk around. In the doorway stood Griso Zuñiga, and upon his lean, austere face was a deadly smile, a smile of greeting and death.

A moment of dread silence enveloped the room. Trinidad Moncada stared at the visitor, his jaw fallen, his body paralyzed with amazement. Miguel O'Donoju went livid, and caught at the workbench for support; his eyes seemed starting from his head, and upon his face was the stamp of fear and incredulity.

"Juan Griso!" he cried out thickly. "Juan Griso!"

"Señor, allow me to correct you," said the matador politely. "Not Juan Griso, but Griso Zuñiga, the killer of bulls, at your service."

O'Donoju's tongue moistened his lips nervously.

"How—how did you come here?" he exclaimed. "The Indios; the guards of the trails; the watchers on the hills ——"

His voice failed him as Griso Zuñiga laughed lightly. In the matador's ashen face, in his cold manner, there was a frightful air of irony, of virile mockery.

"You forget, Miguel O'Donoju, that as Juan Griso I was known to these Indios. You forget that in former days it was you yourself who brought me here. You forget that it was you yourself who showed me the trails by jungle and hill. So, señor, why should the Indios prevent my coming to visit you? Why, indeed? Did I not bring the tokens which showed them that I was your man, your friend and theirs?"

Zuñiga was clad in his neat American suit of light gray. He put one hand into his coat pocket and drew forth some walnuts. Laughing, he threw them on the floor. At the clatter, Miguel O'Donoju shrank back farther.

His great hands clutching the bag of gold, drawing it in to his breast, Trinidad Moncada crouched beside the table. His lowering, intent gaze never moved from the face of Griso Zuñiga, who appeared not to observe him at all. There was now no fear in the manner of Trinidad Moncada. He watched Zuñiga with tense expectation. He watched him as a bull in the arena watches the matador approaching, watches the master of the sword, watches the espada of death, and waits the waving of the muleta before his eyes. Yet Griso Zuñiga did not so much as look at him.

Now Miguel O'Donoju plucked up his courage in some measure, no doubt at sight of those walnuts. True, the air of Griso Zuñiga held a terrible and indescribable menace, but the words of Griso Zuñiga had been smooth and without threat.

"Well, I bid you welcome to the house of O'Donoju, Señor Zuñiga!" O'Donoju attempted to retrieve his old, jaunty smile, although terror lingered in his eyes. "You have come to eat of the walnuts, *no es?* You have come to serve the señorita, yes? Señor, I kiss your hands. This poor house and all that it contains pray consider as your own."

Zuñiga bowed slightly. "I assure you, señor, that I so consider them."

The significant irony of that response could not be mistaken. O'Donoju whitened again, lost his feeble smile. His nerves broke like a rotten stick.

"What do you want?" he cried shrilly. "Why are you here?"

Griso Zuñiga smiled with his lips, but not with his eyes. He held up his left hand, and upon its fingers began to ticket off his desires, the while he voiced them calmly.

"I am here, señor, upon various and sundry errands. You will observe, señor, that I am a man of science, of method; I am a matador who does not kill his bulls by chance, an espada who does not direct his sword with closed eyes and a prayer to the saints.

"So, then, let us see what I want and why I am here. First you brought from Panama an Americano, one of the Canal Zone policemen. No doubt you brought him to eat of your cursed walnuts, to serve you as Trinidad Moncada has served you. This Americano, therefore, must be removed, for he might stand in my way.

"Second, there are Trinidad Moncada and you yourself, Señor O'Donoju. But we will come back to you later, you two. Third, there are the bags of gold

which you keep in the cupboard upstairs; the gold of the San Blas, the rich yellow gold of the river beds. This I am going to take away with me.

"Last, and most important, señor, is the lady whom you once offered me as my bride, on condition that I serve you. Señor, I serve no man! I, Griso Zuñiga, take that thing which I desire, and I pay neither man nor devil. And since I have many times seen the Señorita Resaleen O'Donoju, and since I desire her, I have come to take her. No doubt you will give her freely to me, Señor O'Donoju?"

There was a little movement of the tapestry drawn over the hidden cupboard; but none of the three men saw it, so tensely were they watching each the other.

Trinidad Moncada drew gradually away from his position between Zuñiga and O'Donoju. He drew back, crouching, holding against his breast the bag of gold, his eyes glowering immovably upon the matador. O'Donoju seemed for the moment quite speechless.

Standing there in the doorway, without sign of violence, his voice not lifted loud, no tremor of passion about him, Griso Zuñiga dominated his auditors by sheer force of personality. His very lack of menace was a potent threat. His very silence was loud with fury. His icy coldness was like the flame in an iceberg's heart. His very calmness was frightful.

"You will give her freely, Señor O'Donoju?" he repeated mockingly.

Miguel O'Donoju shrank back against the workbench, not answering. If there were a weapon in his pocket, he had forgotten it, for his two hands were outspread, clutching the edge of the bench. He stood there motionless, like a fly pinned against the wall. He was staring at Zuñiga, sweat streaming down his lean old face. He was fascinated, as a rabbit is fascinated by the terrible, deathly beauty of the weaving snake's eyes.

Not so Trinidad Moncada, however. As a bull watches the torero, so he had been eying Griso Zuñiga steadily and unflinchingly. Emboldened by Zuñiga's apparent neglect of him, he had slowly and imperceptibly lifted his arms.

Now, with a swift, violent motion, he threw out his hands; that bag of gold, so heavy that a man could with difficulty carry it, hurtled from him like a feather. Straight for the head of Griso Zuñiga it hurtled, a missile sufficient to crush as an eggshell the skull of a man.

Griso Zuñiga made a slight movement with his hands, as though he were flaunting the *muleta* before the eyes of a bull. He leaned slightly to the side. The hurtling skin of gold brushed past his ear, a murderous projectile, a projectile that had missed its mark. It struck the top panel of the back-fastened door behind Zuñiga. With such force had it been hurled, it splintered the wood, shivered it like a pane of glass.

The picador had not dreamed that this projectile could miss. Trinidad Moncada had not recovered from the effort of hurling it. He was still rocking on his feet, striving to retrieve his balance, when Griso Zuñiga took two swift steps forward and caught his outflung wrists.

For a moment he looked down into the eyes of Moncada, his face livid, poised, cold.

"Perro!" he said without emotion. "Dog! A man merely says a thing and then he does it. Me you cannot kill. But I shall kill you, Trinidad Moncada!"

Although the way to the door was now clear, Miguel O'Donoju did not move to leave the room. Instead, he stayed where he was against the workbench, still like a fly pinned to the wall, and watched the two men before him with terribly fascinated eyes.

Now Griso Zuñiga stepped a pace back into the room, away from the tables, and with him came the picador. Moncada made a writhing effort to free his wrists. He flung out his arms, strove to take advantage of his superior height and reach. Blood purpled his face, blackened the ragged scar on his cheek, distended his eyes. He shook

himself like a dog, attempting to shake off the steel fingers that clung to his wrists.

Zuñiga merely laughed a little. His grip was not shaken off. He stood motionless, only the corded muscles of his thick neck betraying what strength he was expending. There was something frightful in his very immobility, in the strength that emanated from him; the strength that was not of the body, the primitive, silurian, reptilian strength which alone revealed what manner of soul lay within the body of this man.

He braced his feet wide. His ashen face, the face of a Jesuit, slowly suffused with blood. There was a slight movement of his body, a rippling movement from his hips to his neck. The two arms of Trinidad Moncada slowly moved upward, came together above his head, remained motionless, each wrist gripped in a steel hand. Then swiftly Griso Zuñiga released his right hand and took the two wrists of Trinidid Moncada in the fingers of his left hand. He lowered his right arm and smiled.

A hoarse, wordless cry burst from the picador.

Trinidad Moncada was quite helpless, held thus with both wrists gripped in the left hand of Griso Zuñiga, held high above his head. For all his great strength, he seemed as a child in the hands of this terrible man with the Jesuit's face; he writhed helplessly, frantically.

Griso Zuñiga took a step backward, and drew the picador after him, resisting vainly. He gave absolutely no warning of his intention, but turned about until Moncada's back was to the doorway and window. Trinidad Moncada could not resist him; the picador had deprived himself of O'Donoju's drugged walnuts, and the force was gone out of him. He stood trembling in the grasp of his enemy.

With reptilian deliberation, Zuñiga paused for a fleeting instant, his lips curving cruelly. Then, without warning, with reptilian swiftness and deadliness, he struck. His right hand darted beneath his coat, and, almost too swiftly for the eye to follow, lunged out at Moncada, drove a knife into the man's heart, drove it home to the hilt. And before Moncada could collapse, before Moncada was yet dead, Griso Zuñiga shifted his grip, took the dying body by neck and waist and flung Moncada backward through the casement window.

Trinidad Moncada was gone; so, too, was most of the casement window.

Now Griso Zuñiga turned about and faced Miguel O'Donoju, and calmly produced smoking materials. He smiled and began to roll a cigarette with precision.

"Well, Señor O'Donoju," he spoke softly, "do you not owe me thanks? I have ridded you of a very troublesome person, eh? Yes? But I am still waiting for you to answer my question, Señor O'Donoju. You will give the señorita to me freely?"

Miguel O'Donoju shivered, as a rabbit shivers and palpitates when it gazes into the charming, fascinating eyes of a snake. Then, his old face quivering strangely, he drew himself erect.

"No!" he cried, fierceness in his voice. "No! You are a devil, Juan Griso! Kill me if you will, you devil unleashed. Never shall you touch her with my consent or while I live. Unless," he added, with a desperate, pitifully futile return of his inborn craftiness, "unless you will serve me for one day and one night, Juan Griso——"

Griso Zuñiga laughed, trailed a match across his thigh, and lighted his cigarette.

"What was it Moncada said—that you could not play with him, Señor O'Donoju? Well, your cunning has come to its end, and you cannot play with me, either. Make a quick prayer to the saints, my friend, for before this cigarette is burned out you shall die. I have said it; I, Griso Zuñiga, the superb!"

The flicker of defiance died from O'Donoju's figure. The old man shrank back against the workbench, and one hand slipped into his coat pocket.

Neither man saw the tapestry over

the hidden cupboard flicker a little, as if in a draft from the smashed and open window. But, an instant later, the tapestry was altogether pulled away from the concealed space in the wall. Larry O'Shane advanced a step, in his hand the hand of Rosaleen.

"Good evening, Señor Zuñiga!" he exclaimed. "You were looking for me? I suggest that you stand aside so that Señorita O'Donoju may leave the room while we converse together, you and I."

CHAPTER XIV.

O'SHANE CONVERSES WITH GRISO ZUNIGA.

Griso Zuñiga, despite his astounded surprise, showed himself in that moment the very embodiment of the storied courtesy of Spain. He bowed low to Rosaleen and spoke swifty, grave deference in his tone:

"Señorita, I kiss your hands and feet. Pray regard me, señorita, as your humble servant to whom the good God has intrusted your protection. *Vaya con Dios*, señorita; go with God, and presently I shall seek the happiness of your presence, when this our little conversation has been finished——"

To O'Shane, who was entirely forceful and direct by nature, there was something perverted, something of the speaker's alien birth and blood in Zuñiga's fine courtesy. True, Larry himself had made an effort at that very manner but a moment since. This, however, was to enable Rosaleen to get away from the room—to get away upon other and important business. And it seemed that Griso Zuñiga suspected nothing of what that business might be, else he would have prevented her leaving. As it was, he attempted to improve the occasion by a display of his Latin nature, his striving for theatrical effect.

It got him nothing except chagrin. Rosaleen slipped past him while he was bowing effusively, and before his proudly significant speech was finished the girl was gone. Griso Zuñiga straightened up and looked rather blank.

Larry O'Shane lost no time in taking the situation into his own hands. He swiftly strode across the room to Miguel O'Donoju, who stared at him in stupefied wonder, and, tearing the old man's hand from the pocket in which it was concealed, wrenched away his own service automatic.

"Now," he declared coolly, "there will be a slight readjustment here. Señor O'Donoju, I have promised Rosaleen not to harm you, for she realizes that despite your criminal actions you love her and are devoted to her. Therefore I advise you not to resist arrest; you are my prisoner, señor, under arrest for conspiracy against the United States government."

O'Donoju's head drooped on his breast. He said nothing, but yielded dumbly to the circumstances which enveloped him. His cunning had indeed come to its end, and the cosmos with which he had surrounded himself had been shattered and wrecked within an hour. He was an old man, and broken. And yet, despite all this, his fading life was destined to encompass one more brief moment of futile action, of vain endeavor. For no man's day is done until the last grain of sand be trickled through the neck of the hourglass.

O'Shane turned to Griso Zuñiga.

"Beat it!" he ordered. Then smiling at his own command, he relapsed into more elegant Spanish: "You may retire, señor, and I would advise you to do it *pronto*. So far I have nothing against you. In killing Moncada you've rather done me a service, in fact; so go on and get out of here. *Vamos!*"

The Spaniard tossed his cigarette through the shattered window.

"You are mad," he declared. "You have no authority here——"

"I'm making my own authority now," broke in O'Shane.

"Very well, señor, I shall depart at once." Zuñiga bowed smilingly. "A brief delay will be necessary, until the señorita shall be ready and a number of Indios to carry the gold. If you desire to accompany us with your prisoner yonder——"

O'Shane blinked. He saw that the

matador was speaking not in mockery, but in deadly earnest. Incredible as it seemed, the man's warped viewpoint could see nothing aright.

"Hold on a minute," said O'Shane. "I think you are a bit hasty, Zuñiga. You're not going to take any gold or any señorita, either, *sabe?* You're mighty lucky to take your own skin away in safety, my friend. You need not get sudden in your movements, now—no, stay right where you are. Just realize that you are not the master here and that I *am*. You may go as soon as you are ready, Zuñiga. No one is keeping you."

The Spaniard understood now. There was no doubt whatever of that.

The surprise in his amber eyes had deepened into incredulous wonder and had passed into comprehension. Suddenly a tide of dark blood crept up the column of his neck, crept up his lean face. His eyes became shot with blood. The irises contracted to mere pinheads; they blazed like pinheads of glass. The frown that had knotted itself in his forehead was now smoothed out, and he began to smile, a strange, stiff, hungry smile.

His thick, muscular body seemed to shrink into itself, to contract upon itself; as though each muscle were of its own volition flexing, coiling, tightening. The man's hands flexed and reflexed. The bloodshot eyes looked at the upraised automatic, looked into the steel throat, and Zuñiga drew himself erect, to his full height. As suddenly as it had become suffused, his face became pale again, sucked of all blood.

O'Shane did not miss those danger signals. Once more it struck him that this man seemed to possess an oddly reptilian vital force, a tenacity to life. But it appeared manifest that not even Griso Zuñiga, the killer of bulls, would throw himself upon the muzzle of an automatic.

"You deny me everything, señor?" asked the Spaniard coldly. "I have no weapon; I am not armed; I cannot force you to do me justice. But if you would take the gold and give me the señorita——"

Then O'Shane, smiling, followed a most unhappy impulse.

"What I desire, that thing I take," he said slowly, using the very words of Zuñiga himself, throwing back at the man his own proud speech. "I have said it! And I pay neither man nor devil!"

Miguel O'Donoju, crouching, forgotten, against the workbench, cackled in shrill, vituperative mirth. A great rush of blood reddened the mortally pale face of Griso Zuñiga. Without an instant's warning, as he had flung himself at the great, chocolate-hued bull in the arena, so the matador flung himself forward now, flung himself bodily at the policeman; flung himself, barehanded and unarmed, upon the automatic's muzzle.

O'Shane pressed the trigger. With the shattering explosion, Zuñiga seemed to be caught and lifted back in his headlong rush, caught and lifted back by the bullet which smashed squarely into his breast; then, before O'Shane could again fire, before he could realize the effect of his shot, Griso Zuñiga was upon him. A hard man to kill, indeed, was Griso Zuñiga!

Astounded by the incredible vitality of the Spaniard, O'Shane felt himself wrapped in arms of steel, felt himself overborne and lifted off his feet, felt the automatic torn from his grasp and hurled away.

The two men went to the floor together. The policeman found himself encircled by terrible, gripping arms which sank into him like bands of steel, bound him to Zuñiga despite all his efforts, held him cheek to jowl with the other man. They seemed to hug into him with a constantly increasing pressure, those arms; they seemed to draw ever closer around him, ever tighter, as though the sole intent of their owner were to press the very life out of him.

It was a new style of fighting to Larry O'Shane. His right arm was free, and he strove vainly but desperately to hammer his enemy; he could reach no vital spot. Their bodies closely wrapped, inextricably clinched,

the two writhed across the floor, struck against one of the buhl tables, and sent it crashing down. It was a blind, frantic mêlée, and as it endured O'Shane was conscious ever of that horrible, pale face grinning into his an inch distant; he was conscious that the arms about him were steadily tightening until the breath began to drive from his lungs, until the very life seemed to be slowly squeezing from his body.

Like some great reptile coiled about a panther, stricken and clawed to ribbons yet ever tightening its coils in a crushing grip of death, so Griso Zuñiga drew his arms ever closer about the policeman, their interlaced bodies thrashing madly. They rolled against the buhl cabinet, and seemed to hang there. O'Shane had got his free hand to the throat of the Spaniard, and slowly was forcing back the deathly face, his fingers sinking deep into the stoutly muscled neck. The pressure told. O'Shane felt a momentary slackening of the steely arms, and gasped new air into his lungs. But he had forgotten the third man.

As the two hung there across the bottom of the buhl cabinet, fast grappled, Miguel O'Donoju looked down at them and laughed softly. Into the hoarse, panting breaths of the fighters bit his cackling tones:

"I have you now, Juan Griso!"

Swiftly his deft hands reached forth and seized upon the metal urn that stood upon the workbench directly over the prostrate men. Zuñiga was uppermost, O'Shane's free hand gradually forcing back his pallid face until now he was staring upward, his eyes distended in their sockets. Zuñiga saw the great metal urn totter beneath the clutch of O'Donoju. A gasping cry was wrenched from him, and he tore himself loose from O'Shane, yet not quite swiftly enough. For, as the metal urn came crashing down, the top was knocked off. The body of the urn struck O'Shane and knocked him senseless, and over the writhing figure of Griso Zuñiga poured the steaming, scalding contents of the urn.

The Spaniard arose, a terrible figure. His shattered chest streamed blood, his head and shoulders were matted with the dripping cacao leaves. He reached out and caught Miguel O'Donoju in his two hands. Blinded, he swung up the old man above his head, swung him up like a doll and launched him bodily through the air. Miguel O'Donoju screamed, but the scream was quenched midway by a dull, thudding crunch as the old man struck the wall headfirst.

Griso Zuñiga stretched out his hands. He was blinded. He could see nothing. He could not see the motionless form of O'Shane at his feet; he could not see the neck-broken body of Miguel O'Donoju across the room. Nor could he see the figure of Rosaleen O'Donoju in the doorway, with naked, bronze San Blas Indios crowding at her back.

"I, Griso Zuñiga, am the most superb! I am a man; I have a Spanish heart; I am a Cristino Viejo—*Dios! Dios!*"

And thus calling upon the name of his Maker died Griso Zuñiga ere the Indian barbs could touch his heart.

CHAPTER XV.

FIFTY-ONE MAKES REPORT.

Upon the morning after these events, upon a Tuesday morning, Larry O'Shane sat before a bruised and battered old Sheraton desk. His head was bandaged, but in his eyes sat love and amazement and a great wonder. Before him upon the desk were outspread old yellow newspaper clippings and documents which Rosaleen O'Donoju herself had laid there under his gaze.

In an adjoining room was Rosaleen. Beneath her orders, mildly subservient to her lightest wish, half a dozen naked, bronze San Blas warriors were making ready certain packs and bundles.

And out beneath the drooping, wide fronds of a banana tree, beside another and more ancient grave, beside a third and still more ancient grave, Miguel O'Donoju was being laid to his last rest. Trinidad Moncada and Griso Zuñiga, however, were elsewhere; the San Blas do not bother to bury the

enemies of those whom they love. And the San Blas loved Rosaleen O'Donoju. Already a chant of mourning was arising from the village because of her approaching departure.

Now the swift tropic days ran their course, and in the time thereof many things came to pass.

On the following Sunday morning Captain Kussey, of the Zone police, sat in his cubby at the Administration Building in Ancon, busily running over reports. A knock sounded at the door, and he leaned back.

"Come in!"

In the doorway appeared Policeman Flynn, from Las Cascadas. Flynn was uneasily grinning and was twirling his hat in his fingers.

"Hello, Flynn! Everything all right?" Captain Kussey smiled genially. He was manifestly in a remarkably good humor.

"Why, pretty good, sir. I—I came down to ask you about that new man you sent up to Las Cascadas. I guess I've been out of touch with things lately, but I knew if I could see you this morning it'd be all right, just between ourselves——"

"Shut the door and sit down. Well, Flynn, what's the trouble? Isn't Johnson up to his job?"

"He's all right, sir. It ain't that exactly. You see, Larry O'Shane and I got along pretty swell, and—and I wondered if I could get transferred to where he's working, or if he could be shifted back to Las Cascadas. I haven't heard a word from him, I don't know where he is, and I didn't like to ask questions over the phone——"

Captain Kussey threw back his head and laughed silently.

"O'Shane's gone."

"Gone!" Flynn blankly repeated the word. "Not—say—not *dead?*"

Captain Kussey chuckled. "Not he! Not by a long shot, Flynn! He's out of the service, that's all. Got badly scrimmaged up; got married; got some money, too—some of that San Blas gold we've been hearing tales about."

Flynn looked decidedly dazed. Captain Kussey took some papers from his desk and ran over them. He selected one that was typewritten, and extended it to Flynn.

"Here; we just got this typed and in shape yesterday. It'll explain things about your late partner. It will also explain a few other things that have had us all on the jump lately; those explosions notably. It's not to be made public yet, remember."

Flynn nodded and took the paper. It was the final report of Policeman 51.

After succinctly detailing the events which had brought him to the house of O'Donoju and which had culminated in the death of Griso Zuñiga, O'Shane had dictated as follows:

The papers in the Sheraton desk disclosed the following facts: Michel or Miguel O'Donoju had been a French-Spanish surgeon, quite wealthy, in charge of the hospitals here when the French were tackling the Big Job. He was a more or less prominent man. He was supposed to be The O'Donoju, or head of the old exiled Irish house of that name.

When the De Lesseps people crashed, O'Donoju was made one of the scapegoats, and was publicly disgraced. He could not stand the strain, partly because he had just married. Through his surgery he had made firm friends of the San Blas Indians; so, after the smash, unable to face the shame that had been loaded on him, he took his wife and household goods and went up into the San Blas country. He took, also, a Spanish-Irish retainer of the family, also named Miguel O'Donoju.

The San Blas turned over to Doctor O'Donoju no end of gold which they had washed from their streams. He was, I gather, embittered against civilization. After the death of his wife he devoted himself to educating his daughter. Although he was himself something of a hermit, he gave her what opportunities Panama City afforded.

He died last year. The man Miguel O'Donoju, the retainer, was utterly devoted to the family, but this devotion had warped his brain. He had picked up odd sorts of medical knowledge from his master. He had also developed a keen sense of injury against the Panama Canal; a queerly impersonal sense of injury, I take it. After the death of Doctor O'Donoju, Miguel set to work to destroy the Big Job. He thought it was for the sake of Rosaleen; he thought it meant peril and disgrace to her, as it had to her father.

The powder magazines were destroyed by the arrows I have described; each arrow, in the framework, carried walnuts filled with phosphorus—the walnuts were painted red.

Released upon contact, the walnuts fell apart, and the high temperature of the stone powder houses ignited the phosphorus.

That devil of a man had spent all his time impregnating walnuts with some concoction which he cooked up from cacao leaves. You know what it does to the natives—makes them impervious to all fatigue, makes them superhuman! His concoction was very strong, and the natives thought the walnuts were some kind of magic; he has made drug fiends of half the San Blas. Also, any man who ate them was as good as lost. Miguel O'Donoju got Moncada and others to serve him in this fashion. After they had gotten used to the drug they were under his thumb.

Zuñiga fooled him. Zuñiga was an anarchist, and also wanted Rosaleen—but was too wise to touch the walnuts. Miguel O'Donoju was leading up to some infernal big scheme that he thought would wreck the canal; but he went too far. His feet got tangled in his own snares.

That concludes my report. But it might go on record that Rosaleen O'Donoju was until very recently ignorant of the schemes of her nominal servant. When she did manage to discover what was going on, she took measures to defeat the schemes, and I came along in the nick of time to be in at the finish. However, she is out of it now; she's an American citizen. By marriage.

Captain Kussey looked up as Flynn slowly lowered the paper.

"Some report, eh? Your partner certainly had a hair-raising time up there, eh?"

Flynn grunted. "Poor old O'Shane!" he said slowly.

"Eh?" Kussey looked at him in keen surprise. "Why the pity?"

"Well," retorted Flynn defensively, "well, he's married, ain't he?"

A REAL FRENCH SCHOLAR

WHEN Marshal Joffre, the great French commander, visited the House of Representatives last May, "Red" Purnell, a new member of Congress from Indiana, was one of the first to grasp the hero's hand in token of this government's undying admiration of Joffre. That afternoon Mr. Purnell encountered Bert St. Clair, a newspaper man and fellow Indianian, and boasted loud and long about the fluency with which he had greeted the warrior of the Marne in the French tongue.

St. Clair, who is an old friend of Purnell, was dubious. In fact, his attitude suggested total disbelief of the prowess of Red as a French scholar.

"Tell me," he demanded, "exactly what did you say to Joffre?"

"I didn't hesitate a second," bragged the gentleman from Indiana. "I marched right up to him, took him by the hand, and said, 'Table dee hot, old man.'"

"And what did Joffre say?" pursued St. Clair relentlessly.

"Oh, he was right there with the come-back," admitted Purnell. "He didn't hesitate, either. He said, 'A la carte.'"

HE WANTED NO COMPETITION

WHEN the president's pet bill for the creation of a mammoth aërial squadron to "drive the Germans from the air" got to the Senate last July, Mr. La Follette was reported to be opposed to some of its provisions. This caused surprise, because it had been thought that everybody realized the importance of having the United States troops in Europe supreme in the air.

"I wonder," said Senator John Sharp Williams, "why La Follette is opposed to this bill."

"Doubtless," suggested a Republican senator who has no love for the Wisconsin man, "La Follette has been so long the king of wind that he hates to have his title turned over to a lot of mere soldiers."

Chicago Bound

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "According to the Rules," "Almanzar Evarts, Hero," Etc.

Continuing the irresponsible and joyous doings of Almanzar, with a little music and an inharmonious note or two among cullud folks

RUFUS R. D. FARNSWORTH lay in a sunny corner of the screened-in back gallery, licked his paws, and followed the brisk movements of Almanzar Evarts with reproachful brown eyes. Almanzar, cook and general house boy at the Farnsworth home, had just given Rufus a bath, with a dash of bluing in the rinsing water. Rufus therefore looked very beautiful and sad and unappreciative.

Almanzar, moving with unwonted celerity about the task of luncheon getting because he had plans for the afternoon, caught this look as he turned from the ice box on one of his trips.

"Don't you cast no aspersin' looks on me, Rufus Ahdee," he said earnestly. "You know well nuff *I* di'n' p'opose washin' you. But now I got you nice an' clean, maybe ef you good dawg maybe I tek you foh a ni-i-ice walk this evenin'. But not ef you look at me that-a-way, nossuh! Wag you' tail, li'l' white dawg, ef you want to go erlong with 'Manzar. Maybe he tek you oveh to his mamma's house, an' maybe she give you er bone."

At this last word, the end of Rufus R. D.'s tail vibrated slightly, although he still viewed Almanzar without enthusiasm.

Rufus R. D., Spitz of excellent ancestry, was pure white from pointed muzzle to curling tail, and quite the prettiest dog in town. The "R. D." in his name had to do with the manner in which the Farnsworths originally came into possession of him. When first they rented their house, the owner, about to leave for a vacation in the North, asked them if they would keep the dog pending his return. The Farnsworths afterward acquired him by purchase, but the two initials that Mr. Farnsworth added to his name when first they had him as an incident of their lease still stuck.

"R. D." stood for "Rent Dog."

Baths for Rufus R. D., whose hair was long, were no light task, and neither Almanzar nor Rufus himself favored them. An honorarium of fifteen cents for the servant went with each bath, but he never was able to see that the work and trouble and dampness and frank hostility on the dog's part that each washing aroused were quite worth it. Notwithstanding this, once cleanliness was accomplished—Mr. Farnsworth was able, by three days' urging, to get it done about once a fortnight—Almanzar was very proud of Rufus' looks. He liked to hold the spotlessly clean dog up so his whiteness was contrasted with his own dark bronze. He was not unaware that his own tinting was about the handsomest shade vouchsafed to members of the negro race, and nothing showed it off to better advantage than Rufus. Girls had mentioned this to him—three or four of them. Miss Derisette Boody—she was the third or fourth girl back in his love affairs—had once stated it most succinctly; her words lingered often in his memory:

"W'en you got 'at li'l' white dawg in you' ahms, 'Manzar, you sho is a tantalizin' shade of brown."

Rufus, being not only a democratic

dog, but sometimes a combative one, was frequently badly soiled. At such times Almanzar shunned him and spoke words of reproach. But when he was freshly laundered the boy sought intimate association with him. His request to Mrs. Farnsworth, made that noon while she was at lunch, was therefore not a surprise.

"Miz Fahnswo'th," Almanzar said, draping himself against the door to the little butler's pantry that intervened between dining room and kitchen, "kin I please, ma'am, take Rufus Ahdee with me oveh to my mamma's house this evenin'?"

"You'll probably let him get all dirty again," Mrs. Farnsworth said. She really had not an objection in the world, but favors must not be granted too easily.

"No, ma'am. I'll tek good care of him. I'll tek him on leash all the way oveh an' all the way back. Mamma ain' see 'at dawg for awful long time. My folks says 'at's prettiest li'l' dawg in San 'Ntonio. They sho like 'at Rufus Ahdee, Miz Fahnswo'th."

"Will you keep him from fighting?"

"Yassum. Yas, *ma'am.* He'll be on leash, an' kain't get at otheh dawgs, an' you know he always comes when I call him, anyway."

"All right. Don't be late for dinner. Half past four is the time to get back, you know; not quarter of five, as it was yesterday."

"Yassum." Almanzar started contentedly toward the kitchen. "Could I go now an' leave my lunch dishes ontwel dinneh time?" he turned back to ask. "They ain't many, an' I'll be sho to get back early."

"All right," she again agreed. "Don't let him chase cats."

"No, ma'am. He kain't. I'll have him on *leash,* Miz Fahnswo'th."

Mrs. Farnsworth's eyes returned to a magazine that was propped up before her, and she did not answer. Almanzar slid into the kitchen noiselessly and out through the back door to his little house in the yard. A few minutes later she heard him locking his door and calling Rufus. She noted, through a side window, as they departed, that Almanzar was attired in his very best clothes.

An exceedingly good-looking young man was Almanzar when he was attired in his best, and a prime favorite among young ladies of the social set in which he moved, as well as in the African M. E. Zion church, of which he was a devout pillar and leading tenor in the choir. He was twenty-two years old, five feet eleven inches in height, with broad shoulders, a weight of a hundred and eighty pounds, and a smile that glistened on the smallest provocation against the bronze duskiness of a good-natured face. Add to this a suit of stylishly cut clothes of an extremely late model, modish tan shoes, a shirt with purple stripes, a handkerchief projecting from the breast pocket with ditto border, and nifty panama hat, and the ensemble was something worth looking at.

At the car line, Almanzar, who never walked across the city when he had a nickel that he didn't see any immediate use for, picked up Rufus in his arms and climbed aboard. He transferred downtown to a car that ran to the colored quarter in which his parents lived, and sauntered elegantly down their street, leading the immaculate Rufus by a leather leash.

He was on the point of turning in at his father's residence—a comparatively neat and well-kept four-room house—when a flash of bright pink in the doorway of the next house up the street caught his eye and held it. That was old Deacon Miller's house, and neither the deacon nor his withered wife was likely to flash pinkly. Almanzar seemed to remember that somebody has remarked, a week or so ago, that the Millers were going to have company. He hardly waited for his mother to pass the time of day with him and comment admiringly on Rufus before demanding that the matter be straightened out in his mind.

"Did I see strange lady oveh in do'way of Mista' Miller's?" he asked.

"Hey, you, Rufus Ahdee, git down off'm my lap; I ain' got no bone fo'

you. Leastways, ef I has, I aim to git it w'en I gets ready. Git down! Ain't he the cutes' dawg, 'Manzar? Wait ontwel I go get him a bone. I got nice li'l' bone, Rufus, good fo' li'l' dawgs. What's 'at you say? New lady? Oh, 'at's Miss Minnie Hurtle. She done come thisya mawnin'. She's Miz Miller's niece f'om oveh Houston. Huh pa—he's Pullman poteh—he's done been transferred f'om Houston to Chicago. She's jes' visitin' heah two, three days befo' she goes on up theah."

While Rufus secured his promised bone—not such a much of a bone, after all, his eyes seemed to say as he finished it—Almanzar asked more questions about Miss Minnie Hurtle. His information totaled the facts that she was twenty years old and "kinda pernicketty." As his mother finished the information, he noted, through the window, that Miss Hurtle had dragged a rocking-chair out on the front gallery of the Millers' house and taken a seat. Miss Hurtle, from that distance, looked attractive.

Almanzar had removed the dog's leash on entering the house, and put it in his pocket. Now, remarking that he reckoned he would go over and call on the new company, he took Rufus in his arms, carefully adjusting him so the picture would be satisfying, and strode out through the front door. As he turned toward the next house, Miss Hurtle met him more than halfway by springing to her feet, clasping her hands, and exclaiming ecstatically:

"Ain' 'at the prettiest li'l' ol' white dawg I eveh did see!"

Almanzar achieved the feat of taking off his panama hat and bowing without dropping or even disarranging the dog.

"Good evenin'," he said. "I don' guess you an' me eveh met, but my name is Evarts. My mamma said I ought to call on you-all, an' it certain'y gives me the deepes' pleasure."

"Go 'way, Mista' Evarts," Miss Hurtle cried. "You' one of those flatterer gen'lemen, I kin plainly see 'at. Won't you come up on the gallery, an' I'll get another chair? He certain'y is the handsomes' dawg. What name's he got? What do you call him?"

"Well, he's got quite a lot of names," Almanzar replied, settling himself gracefully and putting the dog down. "Mista' Fahnswo'th—'at's my white folks—he mos'ly calls him Rufo. An' Miz Fahnswo'th, excep' when he's been fightin' or is awful dirty, she calls him 'snow-white lamb.' But I always calls him by his regular name, which is Rufus Ahdee."

"What's Ahdee?"

"White folks' name—family name, I guess. Isn't it er pretty evenin'? I'm ve'y glad to help welcome you, Miss Hurtle. How long you plannin' to remain in our midst?"

Her reply, that she was to leave on the following Sunday morning—it now being Wednesday afternoon—gave him immediate grief, which he did not attempt to conceal. Miss Hurtle was even more attractive at close sight than at a distance.

Her dark-mulatto skin was of the shade that colored people themselves describe as "bright." Her hair, which was comparatively long and straight, was becomingly arranged. Her mouth smiled easily, and showed even, white teeth. Her eyes were large and brown, and she had a fascinating trick of raising them, looking one full in the face for a second with a glance that was admiring rather than bold, and then dropping them quickly to her lap.

Almanzar had been girl-less for nearly three weeks. His heart, ever swift to respond to new emotions, went out to this stranger. Within ten minutes they were chatting as if they had known each other a month; before a half hour had passed, Miss Hurtle had agreed to go to a picture show with him that night. Back in his mind were plans, as yet unspoken, for the other evenings of the girl's too short stay. Never before had he been smitten quite so violently by love at first sight, and love at first sight was his specialty. He told himself that at last he was definitely and finally snared by Cupid. And when Almanzar, being in love, set out to make a conquest, he lost no

time. Before he arose to go, suddenly realizing that it was already four-thirty, he and Minnie were calling each other by their first names.

Some five minutes after they had begun to talk, Rufus, wearying of lying unheeded at Almanzar's feet, rose, stretched, and wandered aimlessly around the corner of the house. Investigation of two garbage cans proving unsatisfactory, he continued his journeyings until he fell in with a scraggy, one-eared cat, which he happily pursued through six yards. The cat finally dived under a house, and he tried to follow, barking madly. Out of the house eventually came a rheumatic black woman, who reviled him and threw firewood in his direction. When one of the sticks broke the window over his head, he went away.

By now he had forgotten that Almanzar was over on the next street, and he set out, in desultory dog fashion, in the general direction of home. After a time he came around a corner into view of a lovely three-cornered dog fight, and proceeded to mingle therewith.

Not more than an hour before, a street-sprinkling cart of loose habits had stopped for twenty minutes while its Mexican driver climbed down, borrowed cigarette makin's from a passing compatriot, and squatted in the shade to smoke and gossip at the city's expense. During this twenty minutes, much water escaped from the sprinkler, and just as Rufus bounded merrily into the bickering that was in progress, the fight had reached the extensive mud puddle thus caused.

Rufus' technique, upon entering a fight that was already three-cornered, was to dive quickly under the pile and bite all three dogs in the stomach, seriatim. This conduct had been known to have a most surprising effect; not infrequently it sent all the other dogs running and yelping in shocked protest.

It happened to-day, however, that one of the trio was a collie and another an Airedale, so they did not run, and a good fight was enjoyed by all. And as the battle occurred approximately in the center of the mud puddle, and Rufus was under the other three dogs his share of the time from round one until the final bell, he was not a pretty dog when they all knocked off and called it a day. He limped a little as he trotted toward home, but his expression was one of entire satisfaction, for he had been the last dog to quit.

Almanzar left Miss Minnie Hurtle hastily when he realized what time it was, and hurried to his car. There was dinner to be got and the dishes to be washed, and then—— His mind was on the picture show that night and his plans for the morrow and what he would do Friday and how he and Minnie would spend Saturday evening. He was walking fast as he turned into the Farnsworth yard, hoping Mrs. Farnsworth had gone out for the afternoon and would not know how late he was. He observed regretfully that she was standing on the back gallery.

"Where is Rufus?" she demanded.

Almanzar's jaw dropped and his eyes bulged. For one second he stood motionless, trying to recollect. He slipped his hand into his side pocket; the leash was there. As will overcame paralysis, he turned, in a panic, and started toward the gate.

"Where are you going?" Mrs. Farnsworth called.

"Back to mamma's. I done lef' him theah. I d'clar' to goodness, Miz Fahnswo'th, I fohget 'at li'l' dawg completely."

"You needn't go back; he's at home." Her voice was accusing. "Come right here and look at him, you good-for-nothing boy! Look at that dog! And I trusted you to take him out."

Almanzar saw, then, in a corner of the gallery, a mud-colored dog with a look of ineffable content in one eye and a half-inch-long cut over the other, systematically licking a larger gash on his foreleg. Rufus paused in his first aid for a moment to glance cheerfully at Almanzar and thump his tail in pleased recognition.

The darky looked from Rufus to Mrs. Farnsworth blankly. Then he took the leash out of his pocket and

looked hard at that, as though it might throw some light on this mystery. A thought came to him at last, and he remarked brightly:

"He must've done come home."

"He must have," Mrs. Farnsworth agreed. "And to-morrow morning you will wash him again—and you won't get a single cent for it. The idea—letting him get away and get in a fight like that! Now wash his cuts and then hurry and get dinner; you're late enough as it it."

"Rufus Ahdee," said Almanzar severely, as Mrs. Farnsworth disappeared toward the front of the house, "you certainly done got me in trouble. When did you *leave*, li'l' white dawg?"

He skimped the washing of Rufus' wounds, which were quite superficial, and went about his dinner preparations with his mind on Minnie and little else. Considering how far removed from the Farnsworth home his thoughts were as he got that meal, it was really surprising that, when he rang the dinner chimes, there was nothing missing from the table furniture except the salt and pepper, the butter spreaders, the soup spoons, and the napkins. These he supplied one at a time, at Mrs. Farnsworth's demand.

He began to wash the first-course dishes while the second course was being eaten, and made such a clatter about it that Mrs. Farnsworth had to ring for him three times to bring the coffee. He climaxed his efforts by putting peach shortcake before his mistress minus anything with which to serve it, and absent-mindedly bringing a teaspoon when she mentioned the omission.

"Gracious, Almanzar!" she cried impatiently. "What's the matter with you to-night? Haven't you any head at all?"

"No, ma'am. Yassum," he replied, and endeavored to take away Mr. Farnsworth's coffee cup, although it was only half emptied.

"Now, stop!" said Mrs. Farnsworth. "I can plainly see you're anxious to get away, but we'd like to finish our dinner without being hurried. Go out into the kitchen now, and when we're finished I'll ring."

"Yassum," Almanzar said, and slid through the door. When Mrs. Farnsworth did ring, however, he was out in his house putting on a clean collar. He finished his dish washing with surprising speed, and was going out of the back door when Mrs. Farnsworth called to him.

"You remember you are to wash Rufus first thing after breakfast to-morrow," she said in a voice he knew he would not dare disobey. "You are not going to tell me along in the middle of the forenoon that you forgot it and got started on something else."

"No, ma'am. Firs' thing aftch breakfas'," he repeated. "Yassum. I *want* 'at li'l' dawg to look clean."

He took Minnie to a picture show, and on their way home he confessed to her that he couldn't remember when a lady had made such a hit with him the first day they met.

On Thursday night, leaving choir rehearsal early, he hastened to her side, and they took a moonlit walk.

On Friday, having wheedled a dollar on account of his week's wages out of Mrs. Farnsworth, he escorted the girl to a vaudeville theater, where they sat in the front row of the gallery reserved for negroes, and afterward ate ice cream in the very leading colored restaurant.

On Saturday evening they became engaged, and he promised to meet her in Chicago within a month or two to get married. It would be impossible for him to go to the train to see her off on Sunday, owing to the unfortunate circumstance that its departure and the Farnsworth breakfast came at the same hour, but he said he would surely be thinking of her, and he was—so deeply that he burned up two ovenfuls of toast before he finally succeeded in getting his mind on what he was doing sufficiently to barely rescue the third. Happily the door to the dining room was closed, and the Farnsworths were busy with the morning papers, so they did not smell the accident, and he suc-

ceeded in getting the débris concealed in the garbage can without discovery.

He sang in the choir as usual that day, but without his usual enthusiasm. After church he set out to find a Pullman porter of his acquaintance, with a view to making inquiries as to how colored folks set about it to get to Chicago. He had heard that, under certain circumstances, a Pullman employee can work a pull to get a colored friend carried along with him as helper, and it was important that he should now ascertain just the procedure that would bring about this desirable arrangement.

He could not find the man he was looking for, but in some subterranean Afro-American way he learned of another colored man that could perhaps fix him up, if he could be located. Nobody seemed to know where this man lived, and by now it was time for Almanzar to get home for dinner.

On Monday afternoon, as soon as the luncheon dishes were washed, he resumed his quest. He visited a barber shop, a pool room in the negro quarter, a third-rate hotel near one of the railroad stations, and a servant's house in the back yard of a mansion on a hill. At all these places he conversed with colored people casually. Then he walked many blocks and accosted a tall negro who was standing on a street corner doing nothing and whom he recognized only by description, and they retired to a doorway to talk it over. He was entirely satisfied with the progress he had made when he arrived at home.

Mrs. Farnsworth was reading a letter that had just come in a belated afternoon delivery. She looked up as he came through from the kitchen, with its contents uppermost in her mind, and said:

"I told you Mr. Farnsworth's aunt from Illinois, Mrs. Selwyn, was coming to visit us, didn't I, Almanzar? She will arrive Thursday. I want you to be a good boy while she is here."

"Yassum. 'At's A'nt Carrie, ain't it, Miz Fahnswo'th?"

"Yes. She is quite an old lady, and she's never been South before, and I want you to be very nice to her. It may mean some extra work, and I think I will pay you a little more money a week while she's here—fifty cents."

Almanzar grinned. "Yassum. An', Miz Fahnswo'th, will you please hold out two dollahs er week f'om my pay foh three weeks an' er half, an' 'en give it to me all at once?"

She looked at him curiously. "What are you planning to buy now?" she asked.

"I'm goin' to Chicago," he replied simply.

"Chicago! You're going to—— How much do you think it costs to get to Chicago?"

"Seven dollahs. I know er cullud man—he's potch on Pullman cah—he'll get me to Chicago with him as 'sistant if I give him five dollahs. An' he says it cost me erbout two dollahs to eat while I'm on my way. Yassum. Maybe I betteh have eight dollars," he added, as though making a concession.

"But what has put that notion into your head? Why do you want to go to Chicago?"

"Man tol' me—cullud man, friend of papa's—man tol' me they's lots of good jobs foh cullud boys in Chicago now, Miz Fahnswo'th. Says they get ten, twelve dollahs er week."

Almanzar clearly was in earnest.

"How far have you ever been away from San Antonio in your life?" she asked.

"Which is farthest, Miz Fahnswo'th—New Braunfels or Seguin?"

"Seguin. Thirty-eight miles."

"Yassum. I been theah—to big cullud picnic."

"Do you know how far Chicago is? Fifteen hundred miles."

"Yassum. I knew it was a right smaht."

Four weeks was four weeks, and Mrs. Farnsworth knew that many things could happen in that time, but she could see that Almanzar, at the moment, intended to go, and regarded this as a quite fitting form of notice. A sudden fear smote her.

"You can't leave while Aunt Carrie is here," she exclaimed.

"How long she goin' to stay, Miz Fahnswo'th?"

"A month. That will be at least five weeks from now."

Almanzar sighed. "All right, Miz Fahnswo'th; I wouldn't want put you-all out any," he conceded. "An' ef I wait five weeks I'll have ten dollahs saved, won't I?"

Mr. Farnsworth came home not long afterward, and while they awaited dinner his wife told him Almanzar's sudden resolution. "Could he do it?" she asked. "Could a Pullman porter get him to Chicago?"

"Search me!" Mr. Farnsworth replied. "There's a story to that effect; I've heard darkies talk about it more than once. But whether it is really so, or only nigger talk, the Lord only knows. If he was threatening to go to-morrow, I'd be inclined to worry about losing him. But five weeks! I don't think, if I were you, I should get excited about it at all."

"I shan't," she agreed. "I don't believe he could leave his wages with me until they amounted to ten dollars to save his life."

Mrs. Selwyn, from Illinois, arrived on schedule, and for several days nothing more was heard of Almanzar's plan to go North. It was on the following Monday forenoon that he himself introduced the subject indirectly in conversation with the guest.

Mrs. Farnsworth had gone down to the Woman's Club to a committee meeting, and Mrs. Selwyn was knitting placidly in the living room, while Almanzar did some odds and ends of dusting in her vicinity. She did not realize he was making the work in order to be within conversational distance of her; she knew very little about the ways of his race.

He talked as he worked; it was always his habit to talk when he was alone with his white people, unless they were reading or writing. This talk did not seem to lead anywhere in particular; it was just a series of rambling remarks of no consequence that went on and on in the boy's soft, pleasant drawl. Mrs. Farnsworth would have answered his questions without half hearing them; Mrs. Selwyn did not find it so easy.

Presently he came to the subject that was in his mind most of the time.

"You live in Illinoy, don't you, Miz Selwyn?"

"Yes."

"Chicago is near Illinoy, ain't it?"

"Chicago is *in* Illinois."

"Yassum." Almanzar dusted the keys of the piano and moved over to the shelf above the fireplace. "About cullud folks in Illinoy, Miz Selwn. Do cullud folks do pretty well up theah?"

Mrs. Selwyn did not live in Chicago, nor in any other large center of population. The little Illinois village that had been her home for almost seventy years was nearly a hundred miles from Chicago, and its population, even as tabulated and announced by the local board of trade, was only a trifle over three thousand. In that village resided exactly three negroes. One conducted a small tailoring establishment; one was a steady-going, reliable house carpenter; the third took charge each spring of the town's carpet beating, and, at other seasons, whitewashed fences. Mrs. Selwyn had never exchanged a word on any subject other than strict business with any one of them, but she vaguely knew they were self-respecting persons and not bad citizens.

Up to four days previously, she had never seen a street car with separate seats for negroes, and some reflection of this, superimposed on the thought that the colored people in her village were quite different from Almanzar, dictated the form of her answer.

"Yes," she said. "Colored people do very well indeed there. Colored people up where I live are regarded as entitled to just as much consideration as white people."

"Yassum," said Almanzar. "Well, I got to go out in kitchen. Miz Fahnswo'th be home pretty soon, an' I ain't stahted lunch yet. Anything I kin do foh you, Miz Selwyn, befo' I get lunch?"

"No, thank you, Almanzar." The boy faded toward the rear of the house,

and Aunt Carrie sighed with relief. He made her uncomfortable, fussing around and talking so much. Privately she thought servants ought not to be encouraged to do it.

Three nights later, pursuant to his invariable Thursday-night custom, Almanzar, strikingly attired, arrived betimes at the African M. E. Zion church for choir rehearsal. He was usually prompt; this night he was unusually so. The choir master had informed him on Sunday that he would be expected to rehearse a new duet for the following Sabbath with Mrs. William Johnson, who was the leading contralto of the choir.

Mrs. Johnson as an individual did not interest Almanzar—she was married and stout and not pretty and of uncertain temper and middle-aged, thirty-two or thirty-three years old at least—but rehearsing a duet with anybody was something he would be almost willing to go barefoot and alone to do at any time. The only thing about his church work that interested him more than singing a duet was singing a solo.

Mrs. Johnson was not present when he arrived, and when the choir practice was ready to begin, still she had not appeared. A little girl came breathlessly in, just as they were getting down to work, with word that Mrs. Johnson could not come and probably would not be on hand the next Sunday, being ill of some mysterious malady that was believed to be "brek-bone fever." Apparently the duet would have to be postponed, and Almanzar continued his participation in the rehearsal with no attempt to conceal his gloom.

They had just finished a choral rendition of a hymn in which they were to lead the congregation when two people entered the door of the church. One of them Almanzar instantly identified as Hop Peebles, a youth about his own age, whose occupation was "divinity student"—a classification which, without entailing any real study on his part, allowed him to wear black clothes, a derby hat, and gold-bowed spectacles, and entirely to avoid work. With Peebles was a girl; a stranger. In the dim light back by the door, Almanzar could make out only that she was much taller than Hop, quite dark, with a graceful figure and the quick movements of youth.

Hop introduced her to the choir master, and the three had a little talk, after the next hymn, during which conversation Almanzar got a good look at the girl in a better light. The impression he had received of her at first was greatly strengthened; she was positively handsome. He observed, too, an attractive coquetry in her manner, and his heart increased its beat to four above normal. The divinity student, after a moment, sank languidly into a seat fairly well back in the church, and the choir master led the new girl toward the singers.

"Ladies an' gen'lemen," he announced unctuously, "allow me toe interjuce Sist' Lucindy Fisk, who has recen'ly arrive' f'om Yoakum, wheah Misto' Peebles infohms me she was leadin' contralto soloist singeh in the church of ouah d'nomination. Sist' Fisk has kin'ly consented toe join out with ouah choir, an' we is gre'tly please' toe welcome huh. Will you kin'ly move erlong, ladies an' gen'lemen, an' mek room foh huh in the contralto section? We will now go thoo the las' selection again—number fifty-fo' in the hymnal, Sist' Fisk—omittin' the six' stanza."

Almanzar already had reached forward to pass the new sister his hymn book, open at the place, and she thanked him with a brilliant smile. Her nose, he observed, was of a most adorable shape, and her lips were very red and easily given to laughter, and there was a twinkle in her eye.

"This is sholy ve'y kind of you, Mista'——"

"Evarts," he supplied. "Evarts. I sing leadin' tenoh. I hope we get chance, here in choir or othehwise, to become betteh acquainted."

"The pleasure, Mista' Evarts, will certain'y be mutual," she sighed ravishingly.

Almanzar's heart action went up five

beats more, and he scowled in the direction of Hop Peebles, who obviously expected to take Miss Fisk home. They rehearsed the choral selection.

At its end, the choir master, who had been listening with increasing pleasure to the deep notes of the new singer's contralto, made an announcement:

"We had feahed, owin' toe the unfortunate absence of Sist' Johnson, that the duet we had planned foh the comin' Sabbath would have toe be omitted, but the arrival of Sist' Fisk meks it possible toe restore it to ouah program. An' we will bring the practice toe an end foh this evenin' with this numbeh. Sist' Fisk, would you-all be willin' to sing this duet to which I refuh with Br'er Evarts?"

The girl flashed a look into Almanzar's imploring eyes, and nodded brightly. "I be chahmed to attempt it," she replied.

As they fussed with the music, and the choir master went over to give some instructions to the organist, an idea that had been forming in Almanzar's mind coalesced into an inspiration.

"Please excuse me fuh moment," he apologized. "I want to get drink of watch; my throat is er little husky."

He hurried through the door into the back part of the church, where was located the kitchen for the use of sociables and festivals, and running water. But he did not stop to drink. Instead, he let himself out through a back door to the street, and hastily cast his eye in both directions. Not fifty feet away, sitting on a curbstone with his back against a tree, he saw a black boy of ten years or thereabouts, whom he approached cautiously but swiftly.

"You, boy!" he demanded. "You want to mek er nickel?"

"How?" demanded the child, without changing his position.

"Do li'l' erran' fuh me. Li'l' erran' only to the do' of the chuhch. I give you five cents."

The small boy appraised Almanzar's raiment, and showed interest. "Ten cents," he countered.

Time was flying. "Five cents now an' maybe five cents aftch choir practice," said Almanzar. "'At depen's how well you do erran'."

The black boy rose and held out his hand. "Awri," he said. "Name it."

"They got telefoam pay station down to that cuilud drug stoah three, fo' blocks down the street, ain't they?"

The child nodded. "Buffum's drug sto'," he supplied.

"That's it. Now listen, boy. Heah's you' nickel. Pay 'tention to what I say. When I go back you wait ontwel——" He gave hasty but complete directions. "An' don't fohget the sign. When I tek handkerchief outah my breas' pocket an' wave it."

"I gotcha," the small boy said. "I'll be waitin' foh the otheh nickel when you come out."

Almanzar had been gone so short a period that, as he resumed his place beside Miss Lucinda Fisk, the organist had only had time to run through the piece once. Apparently his absence had not delayed them at all. He and she rose while the introduction was played, and he noted with pleasure that the top of her head was level with his eyes. He hadn't had a tall girl for a long time.

They sang the verse of the duet together very well indeed, considering their lack of previous practice. Their voices harmonized beautifully.

> "While we tarry yet a while
> In this worl' of sin an' guile,
> Snares of evil an' deceit
> Shall not trap our cautious feet."

"Let us have that verse once mo', an' then we'll perceed toe the chorus," the choir master said. "It is ve'y nice; ve'y satisfacto'y indeed."

Back through the main doorway of the church, from where he stood, Almanzar could see a little darky boy waiting in the shadow on the sidewalk and watching him. Again Almanzar sang with the girl. Along in the middle of this second rendition, without interfering with his singing, he drew from his breast pocket with a flourish his purple-bordered handkerchief and wiped his forehead. Promptly he saw the small boy detach himself from the

shadows and come in through the door. As the verse ended, the boy called:

"Is Mista' Hopper Peebles heah?"

Mr. Peebles sprang to his feet, removing his spectacles so as to see better.

"You is wanted, please, suh, to come to the telefoam down at Buffum's drug sto'," the child shrilled. "Man sent me said it was a impohtant call."

The divinity student swelled visibly; not often was it given to a member of the A. M. E. Zion church to be called to a telephone pay station on important business. The small boy disappeared. Mr. Peebles, not waiting to make any arrangements for the future, passed out through the main door behind him.

"We will resoom," the choir master said. "Now the chorus, please."

With ardor and expression, Almanzar joined the girl in the refrain:

"Oh, believe us!
Oh, receive us!
In the peahly gates at last;
How we are yeahnin',
Bran's f'om the buhnin',
All our sin an' guile is past."

He turned to the girl as the choir master dismissed the rehearsal.

"Miss Fisk," he said, "I'm sho glad you is come to town. I trus' you' stay is goin' to be long."

"Oh, yes," she replied. "I'm fixin' to live heah steady; my papa he's come heah to wuk."

Almanzar looked ostentatiously at his gold watch.

"I do d'clar'!" he cried. "Ef we was to hurry, you an' me has got time to see the big picture that's oveh to Gaines' Palace Theayter. I bet it's awful good picture. Name of it is 'A Desperate Destiny.' Soun's lak it would be er peach. May I esco't you, Miss Fisk?"

"Why, that would be nice, Mista' Evarts," she hesitated, "but——"

They were already at the door of the church, and a small boy plucked Almanzar's sleeve.

"Gimme nickel," he said in a stage whisper. And, as Almanzar tried to ignore him and pass on, he raised his voice. "Gimme that otheh nickel, you, or I go tell him how you did it, an' which way you has went."

Almanzar lost no time whatever in responding. Miss Fisk looked at him curiously as the small boy disappeared.

"Wasn't it funny," she said, "the way Mista' Peebles happen' to get call' away jes' befo' end of choir practice?"

"Funny!" Almanzar echoed, gazing ardently. "Lucky, *I'd* say."

"Do you know, Mista' Evarts, I reckon I'm goin' like San 'Ntonio," she murmured, as they headed briskly toward the leading picture theater of the colored quarter.

"You kain't help it," he assured her. "Ain't no city *nowheh,* way I figure it, 'at's bettch place to live. I'm goin' try to mek it right pleasant foh you, Miss Fisk—right pleasant."

"I could tell 'at, jes' to look at you," she sighed.

Mrs. Farnsworth's mind, which, for all her familiarity with racial characteristics, had not been entirely easy since Almanzar's announcement that she was about to lose a good servant after three years' training, was set at rest after breakfast the following day.

"Miz Fahnswo'th," he said, "you got two dollahs you saved out on me las' Sat'day. Will you let me have it bimeby, afteh lunch, please, ma'am?"

"All right. What are you going to do with it?"

"I need new shirt an' paih er socks, an' pretty handkerchief I see yest'day down in sto' window."

She went and got him the money at once. After he had stowed it away in his pocket, and gone singing about his work, curiosity overcame her.

"I thought you were going to save your money and go to Chicago," she said.

"Mamma di'n' want me to go," he replied without hesitation, "an' when I got to thinkin' 'bout leavin' you an' Mista' Fahnswo'th I jes' natchully di'n' want to go. I sho like to wuk foh you, Miz Fahnswo'th. You an' Mista' Fahnswo'th certain'y awful good to me."

"So you didn't find out, after all," Mr. Farnsworth said, when she re-

peated this conversation to him that night.

"No," she replied regretfully. "And I'm afraid I'm never going to."

On his way to keep an engagement with Lucinda a day or two later, Almanzar stopped for a few moments to visit his mother. She observed, with proper admiration, the new socks and shirt and handkerchief, and added shrewdly:

"Somebody tellin' me, 'Manzar, you is payin' some 'tention to 'at tall new Fisk girl f'om Yoakum."

Almanzar grinned complacently.

"Guess you give up 'at idea of goin' Chicago, ain't you?" she said, after a moment.

"Yassum," he said. "No Chicago foh me! I don't want to live in no place with the kind o' white folks they got up theah."

"What you mean the kind o' white folks they got up theah, 'Manzar? Is they diff'unt f'om our white folks?"

"Mean what I say," Almanzar replied positively. "They ain't no such kind of white folks as you an' me 'sociates with, mamma. No such kind of white folks er-tall. Miz Selwyn—'at's Mista' Fahnswo'th's a'nty—she lives up in Illinoy, an' she tol' me only otheh day huh ownself 'at white folks up theah ain't regahded as bein' entitle' to any mo' consideration than niggehs."

WHEN "TAY PAY" SAW WOODROW

WHEN Thomas Power ("Tay Pay") O'Connor, the great Irish nationalist leader, called on President Wilson last June, he expressed surprise, after the interview, at the intimate knowledge Mr. Wilson had exhibited concerning the troubles and internal affairs of Ireland.

"Tay Pay" is not the only man who has been surprised recently by the president's marvelous fund of information on all subjects of national and international importance.

For instance, Mr. Denman, formerly chairman of the shipping board, discovered that Wilson had at his fingers' ends all the details and intricacies of shipbuilding; Senator Chamberlain, of the military affairs committee, that he was learned in all army lore; railroad men that he was an authority on transportation problems; and the missions from the Allies that he was thoroughly conversant with the most minute details of European diplomacy.

Old political observers in Washington say that Wilson is the most rapid and most thorough student who ever occupied the White House.

PREPARED FOR THE WORST

LIGE JACKSON had been drafted for the army. The recruiting sergeant, seeking to have some fun with him, said:

"Well, Lige, what branch of the service would you like to enter?"

"Whut you mean?" countered Lige.

"The artillery, the infantry, or the cavalry. In the cavalry you have a horse, but in the infantry you have to get along on foot."

Lige reflected for a moment.

"Boss," he decided, "I b'lieves I'll go in de infantry."

"That's funny," commented the sergeant. "The cavalry is mighty easy work."

"Maybe so, maybe so," agreed Lige; "but when we gits in action, an' dat bugle blows a retreat, I don't want no hoss impeding my footsteps."

Money and Mollusks

By William H. Hamby

Author of "Bumping the Molly Wheel," "Springs of Youth," Etc.

A fresh proposition put up to Trenlo, the man whose sign, "Ideas for Sale," attracts all sorts of impossible business problems. On this occasion he has to grapple with the "Sunray Diamond" scheme which threatens to bedazzle the public

TRENLO'S feet were in the window, his hands locked behind his head, his face toward the bay. The water was very blue this morning, and a dozen aëroplanes buzzed like angry dragon flies over the war camp at North Island.

Down the hall came a raucous but rollicking whistle—a sort of cross between a mocking bird and a jay. It was Sammy Tucker, chief billposter for E. Benjamin Warren's advertising agency.

The door opened blithely.

"Hello, son of cogitation. How is the idea shop this morning?" Sammy sauntered in, sat down on the corner of Trenlo's writing table, and lighted a cigarette.

"The idea builder is not working this morning," replied Trenlo without changing his position. "He is playing with the aëroplanes. But he can afford a vacation."

"Well, believe me, my insomnical friend," remarked Sammy admiringly, "you sure gave the old man one jolt when you bumped his Molly Wheel. But"—and the billposter shook his head warningly—"the rooster that crows too early is the first one into the pot. When old E. B. gets through shooting at you your hide will be perforated like the top of a salt shaker."

"A brag," commented Trenlo, "is like a gun that backfires; it is dangerous at both ends."

"Well, then," remarked Sammy, getting up, "I'll stay in the middle. Did you see that new stuff I put on the boards yesterday about 'Sunray Diamonds—the California Gems?'

"The old man has opened a store on Crown Street and is going to turn the light of publicity pure and undefiled on the gem business—about ninety volts strong. 'Keep your eye on Sunray Diamonds, and watch them go up!'" The billposter quoted from the ad. He went out whistling, and a moment later banged the door at the end of the hall that opened into the spacious offices of E. Benjamin Warren. Sammy was the only employee who dared slam the door or talk back to E. B., and he worked his privilege.

Trenlo continued to look at the bay for a few minutes, but the smile had given place to three wrinkles between the eyes. The vacation was over. He was busy thinking again. Warren was vindictive. He would never rest until he had put his new and unfinanced rival out of business. Since his first victory, Trenlo felt sure of himself. But the fight was going to be long and bitter. He must have capital. Very well, he would get it—and he would carry the fight into the enemies' lines.

He turned back to the table and took up the telephone, and called the society editor of the *Daily Luminary*.

"Is this Miss Henderson?"

"This is Peggy Henderson, Mr. Molly Wheel," the girl answered brightly.

Trenlo laughed. "We did have some fun with the Molly Wheel, didn't we? By the way, you notice our friend E. B. is starting a new gem store. Whom

is he intending to put out of business?"

"Henry Mills."

"Does he sell gems, too?"

"Yes, the same sort."

"When passing, would you mind suggesting it might be a good plan for him to come see me?"

"Sure I will," said Peggy. "I'll be down there within an hour, and I'll be glad to send him up. He needs help!"

Just before noon a large man with light curly hair stopped before the door marked "Ideas for Sale" and hesitated as though not sure he was at the right place.

"Come in," called Trenlo, who had seen his shadow on the glass door.

"Do you know," said the big man without introduction as he entered the room, "I am down and out." His blue eyes, innocent as a second reader, were very mournful.

"Not a bad experience." The young man at the table smiled. "That is the only way some people's brains can get exercise—being kicked down and out. Have a chair."

"I have sat down so much I'd rather stand up," said Mills. "Haven't had a pair of shoes half soled in two years."

"Business been that slack?" Trenlo was studying the fellow; he looked like a great big enthusiastic boy who had lost all his marbles and could not find his pocketknife.

"Yes," confessed Mills gloomily, "business has been bad, but that is not the worst of it. I haven't any business at all now."

Trenlo got him to sit down and tell his story straight.

"You see," began the big fellow earnestly, "I had the exclusive sale of this ornamental stone we call the California Gem. It is found in abundance in a cliff on one of the Coronado Islands. A fellow named Dysart had the mining concession from the Mexican government. I bought the stones from him and made them into all sorts of ornaments and souvenirs.

"Last winter business was dull and I contracted with Warren to push the advertising. I ran up a bill of about seventeen hundred dollars, and did not get enough returns to pay it. He did not crowd me, but the other day came in and offered to take what stones I had on hand to satisfy the debt. The stuff would retail at about four thousand dollars, but it cost me only about eleven hundred, not counting my work, and I knew I could soon get another stock, so I let him have them."

The big fellow's blue eyes grew angry.

"Three days later he opened a gem store next door to mine, and the following morning the papers announced that the Mexican government had canceled Dysart's mining concession, which meant I could get no more stock.

"So there I am."

"So there you are," replied Trenlo, nodding, "and now 'watch California Gems go up.'

"Do you know any Mexicans?"

"Yes," said Mills. "A photographer named Bogardos has made a number of trips to the islands with me."

"Send Dysart to me at eight tonight, and Bogardos at nine," directed Trenlo.

II.

Dysart came in at the appointed hour. He was an honest, unimaginative chap who had been making a good living getting out stones for Mills' souvenir store.

"What are these California Gems or Sunray Diamonds?" asked Trenlo.

"They are neither gems nor diamonds," explained the miner. "There is a valuable mine of semiprecious stones in the mountains east of here. But these stones I have been getting are not of that sort. It is merely a clear, smooth stone that works easily and makes pretty souvenirs.

"I discovered it while hunting birds' eggs on the north island of the Coronado group. On the report of the Mexican state geologist that they were not precious stones, the governor of Lower California gave me a concession to mine them for fifty dollars a month."

"But," Dysart concluded fatalistically, "it's all up now. The other day

a Mexican with a gun rowed over there from the mainland and ordered me out."

Soon after Dysart was gone, Bogardos, the photographer, came in.

"Meester Mells say you wish to see me."

"Yes—my name is Trenlo." They shook hands. "Have a seat."

Bogardos had black hair and brown eyes and spoke with the softness of the cultured Latin. Trenlo knew at once he was a good Mexican. Oh, yes, there are lots of them.

"You are acquainted with the governor of the northern province of Lower California?" Trenlo asked after they had discussed pictures, boats, and South America and other things in which they were both interested.

"Yes, I know him veery well," replied Bogardos. "I make many pectures for him."

"I want to employ you for a few days—if I can," proposed Trenlo. "I want you to undertake a commission for me."

"I'm always ready to undertake a trep," smiled the Mexican.

"All right. Start for Ensenada tomorrow on the Gryme," directed Trenlo. "See the governor there—and find out, if possible, why he canceled Dysart's concession. And give him this communication." The communication was a long, brown, official-looking envelope, and as Bogardos took it there dropped into his hand two twenty-dollar gold pieces.

"*Usted esta muy bueno, señor.*" Bogardos smiled and pleasantly showed his white teeth. "It shall be done."

Next morning, Trenlo had Mills up to his office.

"Who is running Warren's store?" he inquired.

"Smith—one of his son-in-laws."

"Is there much in the gem business—that sort of gems?"

"Not a great deal, but they are getting four times what I charged for the same things. Warren is making a big hullabaloo over the mine being closed, and is advertising all over the city on billboards and in windows and everywhere that this is the last chance to get a Sunray Diamond, as the price is going sky high."

Trenlo sat with his brows wrinkled and his lips puckered for a few minutes.

"You are going out of the gem business," announced the Idea Man positively.

"I'm already out," said Mills lugubriously. "If a fellow hasn't any stock and can't get any more—he is not in business, is he?"

"You are going into the curio business," informed Trenlo.

The big, curly-headed fellow had the doubtful look of the boy who is made to work this Saturday afternoon on the promise of a holiday next week.

"It's pretty badly overdone." He shook his head.

"We won't have a 'badly' sort of store. Do you know why people buy souvenirs?"

"To remind them of places they have been, I suppose."

"No, to remind other people of where they have been. A souvenir is an excuse for connecting oneself with something interesting. It is a mere conversational pointer, and the more chance it gives its owner to talk about where he got it, the more valuable it is. A souvenir that is only good for an 'I got that at Coronado' is worth only twenty-five cents. The same souvenir, if good for a five minutes' description, is worth a dollar. If it will guarantee a good story that will be listened to for ten minutes, it is good for five dollars.

"Your job is to get a souvenir upon which will hang a story that will hold even a guest's eyes away from his hat in the hall."

"I don't know what it would be," said Mills, rubbing his pink face as though to raise ideas by friction.

"Don't know of a shell, or something of that sort, with a story connected with it?"

"There is the Juan Bautiste shell," said Mills, brightening. "It has a mark exactly like the thumb of a man, and

the old legend says it was the shell Christ used to dip water with which to baptize John the Baptist—and his thumb prints are still on it."

"That is a starter," said Trenlo. "Where do you find them?"

"On the Coronado Island where the gems come from."

"Get a boat and we will go out there this afternoon."

III.

People do not usually land at North Coronado Island. It is too inaccessible. There is no pier, no landing place. The island is really a very steep little mountain rising out of the sea, with the waves beating against broken cliffs, and its sides sloping up fifteen hundred feet as steeply as Pike's Peak. The only vegetation is sea moss and rusty chaparral. The only inhabitants birds and rattlesnakes.

The captain anchored the excursion boat fifty yards out, and took Trenlo and Mills in a rowboat, and with skill managed on the second attempt to land them on a rock. The captain promised to pick them up on his return, and took his boat on to South Island, where the tourists were bound.

"Now," said Trenlo, turning to his fellow exile, "produce the shells."

Mills, with all his unsophisticated boyishness, was something of a scientist. He knew a lot about the birds and the fish and the shells, and had been over the island many times.

"And this is the Juan Bautiste?" Trenlo was examining a shell which Mills picked up. "It has possibilities," decided the advertising expert. "It might be made into an ash tray or pin holder—yet ash trays and pin holders are not exactly scarce.

"It won't do for the leader. Produce something else."

"Let me see." Mills stopped and ran the ends of his fingers through his curly hair as though picking banjo strings. "There is the Owl Limpet."

"Get it," said Trenlo.

Mills worked his way down to a small, rocky bit of beach and picked up a half dozen shells and returned with them to where the advertising man sat on a rock looking down into the blue water.

It was an open, well-formed shell that the curio man handed him—about two inches across and three inches long, with almost a perfect image of an owl shadowed in its smooth, silvery bowl.

"That is it exactly," said Trenlo quickly. "That would make a good spoon."

"Yes." Mills nodded, "I've made spoons out of them—used abalone for the handles."

"Good!" exclaimed the advertising man. "Now find all the other shells that might have possibilities."

It was sunset as they came into San Diego Bay on their return. Trenlo sat in the stern of the boat alone, his eyes following the trail of light upon the water beyond the point. He had been in a brown study all the way.

"Well," Mills rambled up and sat down beside him, ran his fingers with that strumming motion through his curly hair over his temples; "what next?"

"Do you know," and Trenlo seemed merely continuing his thinking aloud, "the only things that have primary universal intrinsic value are food and protection. The last includes clothes for warmth and shelter and weapons. All other values are created by pride, fancy, or sentiment. People who buy curios of any sort must possess one—and usually have all three of these qualities. We will take the shells deserted by their mollusk owners and thrown up as useless by the sea, and put enough brains into them to make them interesting—and therefore valuable. Anything that is interesting is valuable—if you only know how to sell it. We'll call your shop the 'Legend Store.'"

"But where will we get the legends?" asked Mills.

"You get the shells, and I will tend to the legends."

Trenlo called Peggy Henderson, of the *Luminary*, on the phone from the wharf and asked her to take dinner with him at the President Café.

"I have another job for you," said

Trenlo, smiling at the girl across the table when the waiter had retired with their order to await the convenience of the chef.

"Any job that will give me 'rest and peace from care,' " intoned Peggy, "will be as welcome as beans in a Mexican camp."

"Did you ever make any legends?" Trenlo's gray eyes looked humorously at the girl.

"Legends? Make legends?" Peggy gasped.

"Yes," Trenlo nodded as he picked up the salt shaker and seemed to be examining it seriously. "A legend has to start some time. Why not now? We have got used to taking our legends like jokes, very old. But really it would not hurt either to be young. A legend, like a family tree, may be interesting from the day it is planted, if it is a good one."

The society editor laughed. "Well, I have been picking dead-sea fruit off the family trees so long for my column that something new would not be positively distasteful. On with the dunce; let ideas be unconfined."

"The Legend Store," explained Trenlo, "is to handle souvenirs that will be conversation openers. Each article will carry a story; you are to unearth the legend, where there is one, and invent it where there is none. These will be printed in dainty little booklets to go with the souvenirs. You will be paid two cents a word."

"Fine!" Peggy Henderson's brown eyes lighted with enthusiasm. "That is two hundred per cent more than I get for inventing legends about Mrs. Cornelius Husk's social importance."

"It is a pleasure to work with you." Trenlo's eyes looked warmly at the girl. "You have such a responsive mind. Now the best legend must be about a spoon." He picked up a smooth silver one of the café variety. "A spoon has such possibilities. Our spoon is to be made of the shell of the Owl Limpet. It is a pretty shell—already the shape of a spoon—and has the shadow of an owl in it. The handle will be of abalone. This spoon will be our main asset. We will work with the boat company and encourage tourists to go pick up their own shells, and Mills will make spoons for them. The chance to sell spoons multiplies with the chance to give them as favors and explain where you got them.

" 'Oh, what a lovely spoon!' " Trenlo imitated the exclamation of a feminine guest waiting for her soup.

" 'Oh, aren't they dear!' " from the other guests.

" 'I got those shells'—it was the host speaking now—'on one of the islands off the coast of Mexico.

" 'It is a wild, dangerous spot. I had gone down there with a scientist, looking for birds' eggs——

" 'There is a story connected with the Owl shell.' "

"Good!" Peggy clapped her hands. "I see, and I'm to write the story he will tell."

"Exactly. How bright you are!" Trenlo laughed.

Then the head waiter, who had been hovering near, touched Trenlo on the shoulder, and said in an undertone:

"A man out there insists on seeing you—a Mexican. Shall I send him away?"

IV.

E. Benjamin Warren settled himself at his big, glossy desk, scowled with disapproval at a film of dust on one edge, mentally pigeonholed a resolution to have the janitor for the office building fired, and reached for the first letter in the stack of mail at his left.

E. B. tore open the letter in a bad humor. He had been as fussy as a sitting hen caught out in the rain ever since he had lost three thousand dollars on the amusement device called the Molly Wheel.

As he scanned the four lines on the letter, his massive face grew ugly with wrinkles and twisted lines. He wadded up the letter, slammed it into the wastepaper basket, and rang for Sammy Tucker.

The chief billposter sauntered in as indifferently as a man who has bad news and is glad of it.

"Sit down!" ordered Warren.

Sammy put one leg over the shiny desk, and shoved himself up on the edge, locked his hands about his knees, and pointed his cigarette toward a brass electrolier.

"I gather," said E. B., in his most annoyed tone, "that piking freebooter up the hall is backing Mills in some sort of scheme to buck my gem store."

"Oh, most plump and stable worshipfulness, you gather truly." Sammy's eyes were on the ceiling.

"Talk sense," snarled E. B., almost ready to fire even his right-hand man.

"A man like that"—he referred, of course, to Trenlo—"a man who has no capital, nothing at stake, but merely pirates other men's ideas and poaches on their territory, may become a public menace."

"May," said Sammy in sad gayety; "nay, already is. Listen!" And Sammy suddenly bent warning eyes on his boss. "That sleepy thinking machine, that man who keeps grass from growing under his feet by propping them in the window, that archenemy of billboards and business precepts has a scythe up his sleeve and is already plotting to garner in about three thousand more of your good shekels."

E. Benjamin's teeth rubbed so hard against each other it threatened four gold fillings, and his red face turned almost black.

"Watch him! Watch him, Sammy, like a hawk," he ordered. "We'll get rid of him, and we won't be long about it."

Sammy sauntered back toward his own workroom, whistling mournfully, "Oh, bury me not on the lone prairee."

"Yes," Warren began to nod approvingly to himself, "in one way or another I'll get rid of him soon. In the meantime Mills' supply is shut off. I'll push the gem business to the limit at a big profit, and when they start on something else and get Trenlo's money tied up I'll jump in on the same thing and smash them."

He resumed his mail in a better humor.

The same morning, Trenlo had an interview in his office with Mills.

"Get busy now," said Trenlo. "Get shells; get the owl shells first and make a lot of spoons as fast as you can. I've chartered a boat for a week. We'll take out ten Mexican kids and turn them loose—give them two cents apiece for every shell they pick up. They will make a half dollar an hour, but it will save us a lot of time."

The big fellow drummed the ends of his finger through the curls over his left ear, and his blue eyes looked troubled.

"Before we go any further I want to know what this is going to cost me. If I was sold out clear down to my collar buttons, I could not raise four hundred dollars."

"Suppose," offered Trenlo, "I furnish the capital and the idea and you do the work, and we will split fifty-fifty."

"Fine!" assented Mills, his boyish enthusiasm coming back. "I can't lose—and you may win. It is a great proposition."

"I know I will," said Trenlo quietly. "Go down to the wharf and gather in the little Mexicans, and we'll start for the island at eleven o'clock."

Trenlo turned back to his window when Mills was gone and looked thoughtfully out upon the bay.

"I'm in new water," he thought. "The curio business was one I missed in gathering experience. But it is a mighty poor idea that won't work until it is broke."

There was an unusually noisy chugging on the street below. Trenlo glanced down. It was the Warren motor truck and Sammy starting off to post a few thousand more feet of "Sunray Diamond" bills.

Trenlo's brows wrinkled between his eyes, and he puckered his lips.

"Warren's head works slowly, but mathematically," thought Trenlo, "but it is as vicious as a rattlesnake. If it ever does happen to strike when my leggings are off—it will be farewell 'good green earth—and Peggy.'"

Mills had a noisy bunch of Mexican boys from ten to fourteen at the wharf.

As Trenlo got into the boat, he saw a new sign on the large billboard facing the boathouse—one of Warren's advertisements. It read:

> Take a dose of Sure-prevent Seasick Remedy before you start.
> The sea is seldom rough, but the small gasoline boats that make the trip rock easily. Many passengers do get seasick in the two hours' ride.

"That is a good idea," said Trenlo. "It is a good place for the ad. Wonder how E. B. thought of it."

"Hello, what is that?" exclaimed Mills as they came near the island where landing was to be made. "A billboard, by thunder—and right over there where my mine was!"

Trenlo took out a pair of glasses.

"That is what it is—and placed where the tourist boats going to the other island will pass in sight of it. He laughed as he read the sign through the glasses. "That is good. It reads: 'Now don't you wish you had?' That will be a clincher to the seasick."

Then Trenlo shifted the glasses back and forth, changed the focus, and studied the billboard still more closely. When he put the glasses back in his pocket, Mills noticed a speculative look in his eyes, and his lips were closely shut.

"Mills"—Trenlo turned to the big fellow who stood with his curly head bare to sea wind—"if Bogardos comes to the store at any time of the day or night asking for me, see that he finds me. They nearly sent him away the other night when I was at dinner before I got to see him."

V.

"We'll be ready for the opening by the twenty-fourth all right," said Mills as he deftly fastened the abalone handle on the owl shell. "I've got six hundred of these spoons done; I can make a dozen an hour. What shall we sell them for—twenty-five cents each?"

"Not much," replied Trenlo. "Ideas don't sell for two bits apiece. A dollar a spoon; seventy-five cents where the tourist picks up his own shells. I've arranged for a rebate from the boat company on all tourists we send to the islands.

"Keep Anderson and his Mexican boys gathering the shells—so you will have as big a stock as possible ready for the twenty-fourth.

"We have the legends written and printed for all the curios except the spoon. It is the main thing, and Miss Henderson has not invented a story that satisfies her.

"I'm going out with her again tomorrow afternoon to the island looking for an inspiration. Engaged a boat this morning.

"When Bogardos comes in send him to my office at once."

Trenlo and Peggy Henderson were just boarding the small gasoline boat at two o'clock when Mills came rushing down to the wharf bareheaded.

"Say," he panted, grabbing Trenlo by the arm, "it is all up again. They have stopped us from getting shells. Anderson just got in and said when he landed this morning he was met by a Mexican with a gun and ordered off."

"Is that so?" Trenlo looked serious, but not scared. "I'll look into it while I'm out there."

"You got a gun?" the big fellow tried to whisper, but it easily carried to the girl in the boat. "They may be ugly."

Trenlo smiled and nodded.

"I think I can manage."

"Do you know," said Peggy Henderson as the boat took the bend of the bay around the aviation field, "I suspicion E. B. Warren has something to do with that."

"You are a good suspicioner." Trenlo smiled. They were alone in the boat, save for the man at the wheel. Peggy could not get off until two o'clock, and that was too late for the excursion boat. Trenlo had hired this boat twice before for special trips.

"Do you suppose," Peggy asked wtih concern, "it will spoil your venture?"

"I hope not," said Trenlo. "We've put a lot of brains and some money—

about fifteen hundred dollars altogether —into it."

"Don't you suppose," speculated the girl, "that Warren had something to do with Dysart losing his mining concession?"

"Of course," answered Trenlo. "Isn't that a stirring view yonder?" He changed the subject by pointing to the breakers at the foot of the lighthouse at the end of the point.

It was after four when they landed on the rocks of the North Coronado Island.

"Come back for us at six," directed Trenlo. The boatman had asked to be allowed to go on to the South Island while he waited.

It was a steep climb—a real rough mountain climb to the top, but the scene was worth it. The island here, scarcely a quarter of a mile wide, was nearly a thousand feet high. Sitting on the narrow ledge at the top, they could look down at the great green waves breaking on either side.

"Alone on a desert island," sighed Peggy in mock romantics.

"With a man," added Trenlo, "and not afraid."

"Not afraid," repeated Peggy seriously. "Now we must get the owl legend going to-day."

They followed the ridge of the island south for a mile. It was very wild and steep and barren. Birds were the only life in sight. It is the nesting place of thousands and thousands of birds.

"They have the right of ownership pretty definitely settled," said Trenlo. "The pelican has the center of the island, the cormorant the right-hand side, and the sea gulls the left."

Under their feet were strewn hundreds of broken eggshells, from which young pelicans had come. And even around their heads now circled closer and closer, with raucous cries, scores of these huge birds.

"They might be dangerous," said the girl, a little alarmed.

"Yes," agreed Trenlo, "I have heard of their attacking at nesting time. But they won't come closer now."

They rested, looking down the west side at the rocks, where seals were clambering and playing and bellowing.

"We haven't seen the Mexican with a gun yet," said Peggy.

Trenlo turned and looked down the other slope, so steep the sea seemed almost beneath them.

"That is Warren's seasick billboard." He pointed below.

Peggy gasped, and instantly caught Trenlo's arm.

"I thought I saw a man—two men—down there."

"Probably the Mexican guard with a gun," remarked Trenlo lightly, and got up to return to their landing place.

"There is a rude shelter built down here that I want you to see. It looks liks a refuge for pirates. Maybe it will give you an inspiration for the owl legend."

The girl had noticed Trenlo look at his watch three times in ten minutes.

"Is our boat late?" she asked.

"A little," he answered; "it is only six-twenty."

Twenty minutes more passed, and no sign of the boat. The sun was already down. A grayness crept over the blue water. From over the island came the cry of curlews, and occasionally the bellow of a seal. The island, in the first premonition of dusk, grew remote in its barrenness, desolate, inimical.

Peggy shuddered perceptibly and edged a little nearer the young man.

Trenlo was visibly puzzled—and growing angry.

Directly there came over the subdued boom, boom! of an easy sea the pep, pep! of a motor.

Trenlo sprang upon a rock and looked out to the northeast.

It was his boat a mile out, headed for the bay.

"What will we do?" The girl's tone was anxious.

"We can live until a boat comes tomorrow," answered Trenlo, shrugging his shoulder, but biting his lip savagely as his eyes followed the speck of a boat.

"But I'm hungry," wailed Peggy, en-

deavoring to put a trivial face on a serious predicament.

"We won't starve in fifteen hours," reassured Trenlo. "People have gone much longer and still lived."

Peggy tried to laugh, but she was looking at the steep, rocky ledges, the barren, wild-island crest outlined high above them against a graying sky.

"But there is no wood for fire--no place to sleep." She shivered. "And it gets chilly."

"We can even live without sleep," comforted Trenlo.

"And the Mexican with a gun," added Peggy.

"Let us make the legend and forget him."

"Oh, I have it now!" Peggy clapped her hands. They were sitting close together on a rock fifty feet above the sea, watching the moon come up. "Here is just the ribs of the plot:

"'Once, long ago, a holy father and a company of the defenders of the Cross landed on this island almost famished.

"They caught a great turtle, and found a huge kettle from a wrecked boat. They built a fire down there in that pirate room and made delicious soup.

"They had no cup, no spoon—no way to eat the soup. But one of them picked up a light shell the shape of a spoon. There was a delighted cry, and all grabbed shells.

"The Indians from the mainland had seen them come to the island, and followed in a boat and landed on the other side. They climbed over the steep crest and were stealthily slipping down on the holy father and the faithful warriors. But just as the father stooped to dip into the soup he saw a shadow fall on the bright bowl of his spoon. He looked up to see whence the shadow came. It was an owl, scared from his perch on the rocks, flying away. And as he looked, the holy father saw the slipping head of an Indian over the rock.

"Giving the warning to his warriors, they routed the enemy and were saved.

"Ever afterward the shadow of the owl has been seen in the bowl of the limpet shell.'"

"Fine!" exclaimed Trenlo. "That is just what we wanted. It pays to be lost on a desert island."

"What is that?" Peggy clutched his arm with sudden terror. "Look there!"

Trenlo looked, and a boat was beating up to the rocks, and in it were seven men with guns.

VI.

E. Benjamin Warren looked at his watch as he got out of the elevator. It was exactly nine o'clock. It was not probable the young man would be in yet, but he stopped at the door marked "Ideas for Sale," and knocked his knuckles on the word "Ideas."

The young man was working at his writing table, his back to the door. A quicker observer than Warren would have seen he was expecting the call.

"Well, young man," said E. B. in his stiffest effort at veiled sarcasm, "has the demand for ideas outrun the supply?"

"A good idea," remarked Trenlo, laying down his pencil, "not only makes the supply, but creates the demand. Have a chair."

Warren sat down, crossed his legs, laid his hat on the table, and took the lapels of his coat in his hands.

"I'm always sorry"—he tried to put commiseration into his tone—"when a new man gets in bad."

"Yes?"

"I've built up a good business here by sane methods; I can't afford to have you pirating my ideas and getting the benefit of my prestige.

"Of course you may not care about your moral character, but you will find this is a moral community, and it will hurt you badly in a business way. But the main thing, of course, is the girl."

"For instance," said Trenlo, his eyes narrowing, "what is the drift of your rambling remarks?"

"That you and the Henderson girl spent the night alone on North Coronado Island. The man who runs the boat will swear you ordered him to

leave you there and return in the morning.

"When it becomes known, it will not only ruin the girl's reputation and lose her her job, but her relatives will make is very hot for you.

"Now I happen to be the only person except the boatman who knows, and out of consideration for her, if you will leave town—and stay—I'll see that not a word of it gets out.

"Also, if you will pay me five hundred dollars for the shells already taken, I'll not cause you and Mills to be prosecuted for stealing shells from the island."

"You own the island?" Trenlo's tone was lightly ironic, but in his eyes was smoldering wrath at Warren's attempt at blackmail.

Warren backed his chair a little and cleared his throat.

"I have—have concessions."

"From whom?" The question sounded a little too direct to be comfortable.

"I—I have an understanding with the governor."

"But he hasn't with you," said Trenlo.

"Warren, I sold you a good idea cheap the first time you came in here. I'll give you a better one: 'It is mighty poor business to try to get for nothing what other men are willing to pay money for.'

"You used your business standing to deceive the governor of Lower California. You led him to believe if he canceled Dysart's mining concession you would organize a company that would pay five thousand dollars a year instead of five hundred.

"You had no intention of paying anything for the concession. You used the closing of the mine as a chance to boost the price of those gems by fake advertising, and while you were delaying the parley with the governor you erected that billboard to screen the mine from passing boats and put five men back there stealing the stones.

"Now, as to your blackmail: Miss Henderson and I did not spend the night on the island. We got in last night, and she knows, and the *Daily Luminary* knows, that you bribed the owner of that boat to leave us there.

"I guess I will stay here. I love this town, and am going to start a real advertising agency. Mills and I are sure to make big money on our shells. Besides we are putting in a side line. I've just been lettering a sign for it."

He picked up a cardboard from the table and held it out for Warren to read. The massive face grew blacker and blacker until the skin seemed about to break.

The Mine Is Now Open—Sunray Diamonds At One-fourth the Former Price.

"You can't put that over." E. B. arose wrathfully. "I'll smash you."

"Mr. Warren," Trenlo called evenly as the angry billboard man started for the door, "since the twelfth I have had all the mining concessions of North Coronado Island. I have here a fairly accurate estimate of the number of stones your son-in-law, Smith, and helpers stole since then. At one dollar apiece, your retail price, they come to three thousand dollars. You can send a check in this morning for that."

"Never!" roared E. B., now alarmed as well as angry. "I'll law you to the supreme court; I'll see you die of starvation first."

"Very well." Trenlo turned back to the table. "But I might mention that Smith and your other four men were arrested under my direction last night stealing gems on the island by Mexican officials, and are now in jail at Tia Juana, awaiting my orders.

"I suppose we will just leave them there until we can settle this three-thousand-dollar claim in court."

Trenlo was sitting, his feet in the window, looking out at the bay, when he heard Sammy Tucker coming up the hall, and knew Sammy had a check for three thousand dollars for him.

"This is a nice town," said Trenlo, smiling. "I must take Peggy to dinner and a show to-night to make up for the scare she got on the island. But to capture a legend and five thieves in one evening was worth it."

The Orphan of Amoy

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "A Smokeless Watch Astern," "Record Overboard," Etc.

Josh adopted the poor little motherless piggy at sight, and the baby porker adopted him just as quick, and then there were rare sights and sounds aboard the U. S. S. *Kankakee*. "A shoat makes a good pet," says Josh to his matie, Spud McGlone. "A good pot, ye mean!" retorts the other

"A SHOAT," says me shipmate, this big Hoosier hawbuck, shifting the heft of his pig from one arm to the other, "makes a good pet."

"A good pot, ye mean," says I, "boiled with spuds and onions. And, baked with yams, he's still better."

"It's the low Irish of ye to be always thinking about your belly," says me hayseed matey, holding his pig tighter in his arms, maybe for fear I'll grab it and eat it alive. "A shoat," he goes on, "can be learned tricks liks a dog. When I was a pup, back home on the Indiany farm, I had a shoat that I learned to cry when I played 'The Suwanee River' on the mouth organ."

"That shoat," says I, "had the right idea. I know a whole ship's company that feels like jumping into the Suwanee River when you play the mouth organ."

I'm on shore liberty in Amoy, China, with me shipmate Joshua when he gets this pet pig of his. Our ship has dropped her mudhook in Amoy harbor two days before, on the heels of a typhoon that has made Amoy look as if a peeved army has passed through there whilst making a strategic retreat. Amoy, being, as ye might say, a kind of natural I. W. W. headquarters, or rallying point for all the wind devils of the world, has been blowed down and washed away for the seven thousandth time. Amoy is still knuckling the typhoon splinters and the tidal-wave mud out of her eyes and wondering if the big wind is going to stage a return engagement, when me and Josh gets beach leave and trudges around the town looking at the wreck.

We're squatting on the jagged edge of a blowed-down farmhouse roof, a little back of the town, and Josh, who's farm bred, is trying to figure how these Chinee farmers gets a living off a patch of ground that's the size of a dog blanket when something brushes against me leg and makes me jump. There's something about the size of a woodchuck standing on me shoe and resting its head against me pants as if it has known me from me birth and is crazy about me. Without looking close at it I'm about to give it the toe when Josh grabs it up in his arms.

"Ye can have the bubonic plague if ye like," says I, edging back from him, "but sheer off from me with that——"

"Bubonic me eye, ye pavement-raised shellback," says he. "Ye're a fine mick, that can't tell a pig from a rat."

A pig it is. There's just enough of him for me to identify him as a pig by standing close to him. He has a pig's round pink nose, that needs a handkerchief, and a pig's restless, inquiring eyes and piggy ears and hoofs and kinked tail. But he's the wispiest half-portion pig I ever sees. He's about the size of a pig that ye might get on your meat card in Baden-Baden if ye had a pull with the burgomaster and a few thousand dollars to blow in on one meal. But he's pork. His squeal alone

proves that. It's a squeal about the size of a katydid's, but it's a pork noise. He's nuzzling alongside Josh's jaw as nice as you please. He's also asking for a meal—and please hurry up with it, says he—with his whimpering baby porker's cry.

"This here poor little son of a swab ain't been on earth long enough to learn to hustle for hisself," says Josh. "He ain't been weaned yet, and he's as hungry as a bow-legged burro. I wonder where his maw is."

Something tells me right then that this pig is going to join the crew for'ard of the U. S. S. *Kankakee.* No four-legged, hungry thing, particular if it's a little thing, ever gets past Josh without being fed up, and after that, if it wants to, it becomes a member of the ship's company on regular mess rations. This pig has already adopted Josh. When it finds that Josh ain't offering to feed it some favorite delicacy right away, it rests its head against Josh's neck, heaves a sigh of content like the breeze among the cypresses, and goes to sleep. That, I know, settles it. Anything that acts as helpless as that with Josh has just as good as shipped for the rest of the cruise.

There's the scampering of bare feet, and a wizened chink farm hand patters up from behind us and makes excited noises out of his face. It's plain that it's this pig of Josh's he wants. But he ain't brought any wild horses with him, and that's what it's going to take to pry Josh loose from his pig.

It's the queer-sounding argument they have. Josh talks his Hoosier dialect that fifteen years of man-o'-war cruising hasn't salted the flavor out of, and the farm hired man splutters the Amoy brand of Chinee. The chaw is not getting them anywheres, and the pig is still slumbering peaceful on Josh's neck when a bent old American missionary, recognized as such because he's got his collar on hindside foremost, comes along and listens in. He can talk Chinee, and he straightens things out.

The mother of Josh's pig, it appears, and all of the pig's little brothers and sisters besides, was blowed into the crick alongside the farm and drowned during the typhoon. And that ain't all. So was the farmer of this here cabinet-size patch of ground lifted into the crick by the big wind and drowned. And Josh's pig, that was saved because the wind held him in the forked roots of a tree till the storm was over, is the only eatable piece of live stock left on the wrecked farm. So now the hired man is going to roast him to make a meal for the dead farmer in the Chinee heaven. The farmer's funeral is to be held this afternoon, and the roasted pig is to be placed on top of his grave, with yellow tissue paper scattered around to scare the devils away.

Josh solves this problem by planting an American ten-dollar gold piece in the hired man's claw. When you give a chink coolie gold money he either thinks that you are crazy or that he is. This one figures that Josh is the nut, and takes it on the run, with the gold piece pouched in his cheek. Then, for acting as interpreter, me and Josh each eases the old missionary, whose blowed-down shack he points out to us up the road apiece, a U. S. ten-dollar disk, and in a little book he writes down our names as mission contributors—meself, Spud McGlone, bos'n's mate, and Joshua New, cox'n, U. S. S. *Kankakee.*

The pig is still snoring happy on Josh's neck when we get back into the typhoon-smeared business section. At the hospital dispensary, Josh buys a baby's milk bottle, with a extra supply of rubber nipples. Him having the pig and the bottle to carry, I packs aboard the *Kankakee* the big box of canned condensed milk that Josh blows in the rest of his shore-liberty money for.

"Have ye christened him yet?" the officer of the deck, pinching the pig's pink nose, that needs a handkerchief worse than ever, asks Josh as we step over the side.

Josh says that he hasn't, but that he's thinking of naming him Typhoon, sort of souvenirlike.

"Typhoon is a happy thought as a name for him," says this young rogue

of an officer, with never a blink, "except," he goes on, "that Typhoon is the feminine gender. Typhus," says he, "is the masculine form of the word, and your pig is a male."

So Josh's pig ships under the name of Typhus.

It happens that the *Kankakee* is without a mascot when Typhus signs articles, the paid-off men taking with them, one after the other, our long line of spike-horned billy goats, razor-clawed panthers, flame-eyed hooded cobras, and suchlike ship's pets, leaving the crew for'ard desolate for something to butt, bite, rip, or sting them. So Typhus, with his June bug's imitation of a grunt, is a immediate hit with all hands, even if he's handicapped by not being the kind of a pet that pounces on them and tears them apart when they ain't looking, like regular man-o'-war mascots that keeps the surgeon and the sick-bay people busy.

Typhus, The Orphan of Amoy, as the ship's writer registers him official, is kept scrubbed, swabbed, and brushed by all hands for'ard until he looks like a ham-advertising picture on a stock-yards New Year's calendar. He's bottle fed, spoon fed, hand fed, after the handkerchief's been used on him careful, until, pig as he is, Typhus turns away cloyed and trots off and hunts up Josh's neck to go to sleep against.

His education ain't neglected. With a crew of three hundred for professors, Typhus becomes a scholar that will roll over, play dead, walk on his front or hind hoofs, sneeze, or spit through his teeth upon request, stand at hoof salute when the colors goes up or comes down, squeal, sing if anybody plays even a jew's-harp within a deck's length of him, and perform other brainy feats that makes good Josh's claims about shoats being as easy learned as dogs.

But there's one thing that Typhus can't be bullied or bunked into doing, and that's to be won or weaned away from Josh. He's a one-man pig, is this here Orphan of Amoy, and Josh is his man, once and for all, now and forever, *e pluribus unum*, all hands bury the dead.

He'll humor the rest of us by letting us feed him the biggest part of our plum duff that we've denied ourselves to save for him, and he'll cater to our lowbrow instincts for horseplay by going through his stunts for us, though this bores him a lot at times, it's plain. But the minute we begins whispering into Typhus' ear what a rube and a lubber this here Hoosier boss of his, Josh, is, and hint around that he'd better ditch that fresh-water skate from the Wabash and pick out one of us regular deep-sea people for his padrone, that's the minute that Typhus squirms out of our grasp and leaves us flat, and about thirty seconds later we sees him coiled up under Josh's chin, telling the cox'n all about our knocks before he takes a little snooze for himself. I'm bound to say that, while many hearts rages with jealousy of Josh, all hands admires this trait of Typhus'.

So, for two months, until we up anchors from China waters and skims down to Honolulu, the Orphan of Amoy stands about on a level with the skipper. He has the run of the whole ship, alow and aloft, from cathead to mizzen rail, but he don't overwork his privilege. The comings and goings of Typhus about the ship can be heard, for he wears, rigged to the under side of a narrow emerald leather collar, a little tinkly silver bell that comes from the anklet of a nautch girl that the pay clerk has met in Delhi. So he always signals himself in advance, and all hands learns to like the tink-tink of the Orphan's silver bell.

Then, three months from the time he ships as shoat mascot, the Orphan's world turns dark sudden and he's in bad. It ain't any fault of his, but just the way things breaks.

Asiatic cholera, dropping off a coolie-loaded steamer from China, appears in Honolulu for the first and last time in her history. The cholera sneaks aboard the *Kankakee*. We lose one hand from it before it's fumigated over the side. But the yellow flag flies at our truck.

We're ordered out of Honolulu harbor by the Hawaiian board of health. We're forbid to anchor close to any

Hawaiian port for a quarter of a year. San Francisco has heard about our cholera, and we can't go up there. All we can do is to prowl among the Hawaiian Islands, standing far offshore in heavy-rolling roadsteads that keeps us beam-ended most of the time, and stare over the side and think about things to eat.

That's where the Orphan comes in—for the ship goes shy on grub during this long quarantine cruise. There's a shotgun quarantine against us in every Hawaiian port, so we can't get any grub ashore. For three months there's no fresh meat at all, and, after the first month, even the salt horse, that in the tropics tastes like a motorman's glove, anyhow, gives out.

If you can't see why the Orphan is in Dutch when these things happens, look it over again this way: How would you like to be a pudgy, swabbed-looking, pinkie-winkie three-months-old pig, about twenty pounds of appetizing milk-fed pork on the hoof, on board a man-o'war with a crew of three hundred healthy men that's hungry all the time, that never gets the smell much less the taste of meat, and that has to live on cracker hash made of ship's tack and canned-soup stock? When you're pulling your belt in one notch a day there's as much wallop to that kind of hash as there is to a plate of this here Waldorf salad. But in the eyes of starved men there was a terrible lot of wallop in the very looks of the Orphan of Amoy as he tinkle-tinkled around the ship, creased with pleasant folds of lard, as pink as a baby's mitt and as slick as a wet kidney.

So Typhus begins to look like what the insurance sharps calls a bad risk. The Orphan himself don't know anything about this. He goes right on behaving as if he hasn't found himself hooked up sudden with a crew of cannibals. Nobody stops loving the Orphan for what a sky pilot would call his fine qualities of heart and mind. But all hands aboard the *Kankakee* is famished, and the Orphan is the sweetest-looking mess of pork that ever tink-tinks over a deck with a nautch girl's bell at his throat. So, as the lean weeks glides by, and nothing doing on any kind of grub from the beach, life takes on what the papers calls a dubious and tragic aspect for Typhus of Amoy.

He can't help being in the crew's eye, with his bell advertising him. And the hands can't help looking him over when they hear his tinkle. Looking him over helps a little, though it ain't very filling. But it gets their mouths to watering for pork. There ain't no ship's pork. But there's Typhus! The ship's company tries hard to banish this base thought, but it ain't easy to do, seeing that base thoughts and close-buckled belts goes together. And here's the Orphan, just at the moment when you're praying for strength not to lay murderous mitts on him, coming tinkling up to you and resting his head in your lap so's you'll scratch his ears, and, with his pink mouth open, you can see him with a winter apple in his jaws as he squats, baked brown, on the platter, and then, stroking his head, you have to pray all the harder that this here wicked pork passion of your evil heart may be swabbed clean.

"It's the good little Typhie, so it is," says the gaunt man that's tickling the Orphan's fat jowls and using pet words. Then he takes the pipe out of his teeth and mumbles, hoarse, to the matey alongside him: "May the Powers of Heaven lay off of me for me sins, but me teeth is dribbling for the taste of this fat son of a scuttle butt, swimming in brown gravy and with a bushel or two of pan-baked Irish potatoes to go with him!"

"It's what I'm just after thinking meself," says this black-hearted man's matey, reaching down and rubbing the Orphan's nose; "only, being modest, all I'm asking is three or four of the chops of him, breaded or not, as may suit the taste, but whichever way's the quickest—and may I have forgiveness in me last hours for the depravity of me soul!"

Josh, seeing the dark drift of his shipmates' minds, falls to neglecting his work to keep an eye on Typhus. Ex-

cept when the Orphan wanders aft to the officers' quarters, which Typhus has the run of, but the cox'n hasn't, Josh manages to cruise on close convoy of the shoat during the daylight hours.

Then one night at turning-in time, he finds a knot of wolf-eyed firemen and coal heavers standing looking at the Orphan where the pig lays stretched out, snoring cozy on the corking mat that Josh fixes for him in the cathead. Typhus from that night sleeps with Josh in Josh's hammock. There's comfortabler things, Josh tells me at that time, than lying on the flat of your back in a man-o'-war hammock all night with a twenty-pound shoat that snores like a lumberjack curled up in the hollow of your stomach, but the cannibal gleam in them black gangers' eyes as they stands over the slumbering Orphan is a lesson to him, says Josh, and he's taking no more chances.

He keeps a particular sharp eye on the Chinee stewards of the officers' messes, seeing that a chink has about the same size soft spot for fresh pork as a dinge has for chicken, and the stewards and mess cooks of the *Kankakee* was getting no more or better grub than the rest of the hands.

So, with Josh guarding him night and day like a sea soldier on brig watch, the Orphan weathers these perils of his pig life till the very last day of the *Kankakee's* three months' quarantine prowl. Then the blow-off comes sudden and makes the ship a worse madhouse than hunger has ever made it.

The ship is rocking in the roadstead off the town of Hilo. It's mid-morning of the last day of the quarantine. To-morrow the three months' huddled-up misery on short grub will be over; there's even a chance that the skipper will give all hands for'ard a shore liberty in Hilo. All hands is licking their chops savage and thinking of the eighteen dollars' worth of ham and eggs that every man jack is going to order as soon as he hits the beach.

The board-of-health man from Hilo comes aboard early to look the ship over and maybe give her her out-of-quarantine ticket. The skipper goes over the ship with him. When the board-of-health inspector quits the ship the captain goes ashore with him, which is the first time any man of the *Kankakee's* ship's company has stepped a foot off the ship for three months. All hands cheers up and gets hungrier than ever from thinking of grub that's only around the corner of to-morrow.

I'm on duty as gangway bos'n's mate when, ten minutes after the skipper has gone ashore, Josh bears down on me with his Hoosier chart crinkled with worry.

"Have ye seen me shoat?" he asks me, his pipes husky.

"Not," says I, "since he was breathing on your neck, asleep, the half hour ago."

"Well, I can't find him anywheres," says Josh. "I'm on the job with the gang that's breaking out the after magazine. I took him aft with me, so's I could watch him, and when I came out of the magazine he was gone. I've searched the ship high and low for him. If any of these here man-o'-war gluttons that's dreaming of their insides day and night——"

"Maybe," says I, "the skipper took the Orphan ashore with him to have him made into a pork pie by one of them Kanaka cooks that knows how. Or maybe the board-of-health man sneaks him under his coat and——"

"I'll have the life," Josh cuts in on me, "of the man that's laid a finger on me shoat."

He's gritting his teeth like a man in a alcoholic ward, though he's never tasted a drink in his life, and his features is working like them of Jo-Jo the Dog-faced Boy. So, seeing how hard he's taking it, and knowing what a terrible mash there's been from the start between the cox'n and the Orphan, I pipes down on me frivolousness.

"Wait till I get somebody to take me gangway watch," says I, "and I'll help ye look for him again."

So, together, we rakes the ship for Typhus. We might as well rake the ocean for a bottle lost overboard on the last cruise. The Orphan's tinkle

bell, that always places him even when he's turning over in his sleep, is nowheres to be heard. We searches down below for him, through bunkers, firerooms, boiler rooms, engine rooms, and we even take up the bilge covers. But not a bristle of Typhus is to be found.

We ask permission of the officer of the deck to peek into the wardroom and the wardroom officers' mess room, hoping to hear the tinkle of the nautch girl's bell somewheres aft. There's no tinkle, and we have to give it up. Typhus, it seems, either has got tired of the quarantine and jumped ship by going over the side when nobody's looking, or there's been murder done aboard by some hunger-crazed hand that can't wait till to-morrow to get filled up ashore and that thinks he'll be able to cook a pig in the ship's galley without the smell of it reaching Josh's nose.

Josh, by this time, is one of them wordless, dead-calm madmen that you think acts too quiet to be natural when you see them at the movies. He's not letting a cheep out of him, but he's pale under his sea red and the skin is drawed tight over his jaws. When we comes back onto the main deck, after having to pass up the Orphan, Josh, with his chin sticking out, walks up in front of every man he sees and glares wild into his face. His idea is to eye pin the guilt out of the murderer by glaring that way at all hands. But, while a lot of them looks hangdog when they thinks of how often they've hankered for a chunk of Typhus dripping in his own basting juice, none of them caves under Josh's glares.

As a matter of fact, all hands is sorry, and shows it. Men-o'-war's men can't live for three months alongside of a well-behaved, pink-nosed pig, or any other kind of a four-legged buddy that means well, without getting sewed up with the pet under the fronts of their shirts. So the ship's in a commotion over the clean-vanished Orphan.

"The roly-poly sides of him is an aggravation to me scandalous, pork-loving nature when I'm patting his head and starving at the same time," a lean-faced machinist's mate says to Josh when the cox'n is looking the eyes out of him for signs of guilt; "but, man, I'd as soon eat me sister's young one, if it comes to a show-down, as lip me face in the grease of that trusting, foolish-faced pig that ye're mourning!"

I'm standing alongside of Josh in the gangway, which is only ten foot abaft the ship's galley, when I notices that a lot of the men around me are sniffing at the air and looking at each other with screwed-up, wondering eyes. Then I catches a whiff from the galley, and I watches Josh's face, waiting for him to get it.

It's the sweet, nutty smell of pork—young pork roasting.

Josh turns to me sudden, with his eyeballs rolling. Then, with something coming out of him that sounds like the night bark of a wolf, he makes the galley in two bounds, before I can reach out a hand to hold him.

The young chink cook of the wardroom officers' mess is alone in the galley. He whirls around from the galley range when he hears Josh's bark at the galley door. Then this Chinaman makes the mistake of grinning. Maybe he thinks that because he's an officers' mess cook he can grin in a case like this. Josh soon shows him different. He leaps into the galley, clasps the chink about the waist, and yanks him through the galley door as if he's a rag doll, and is carrying him, packed over his shoulder like a sack of bran, to the break of the gangway to chuck him into the sea, when I catches the gleam of a long knife in the Chinee's loose hand that's been groping under his blouse.

I'm there in time to grab the wrist of that hand and twist the knife loose. Then the master-at-arms and two sea soldiers on guard jumps in and does the rest. Josh, frothing at the mouth by now, is tore loose from the Chinaman, though it takes the three men to do it, and the two of them, Josh for jumping the chink and the chink for pulling the knife, are put in double irons in separate brigs.

The ship, as I'm telling ye, is a mad-

house. The smell of the roasting fresh young pork is now wafting over the whole ship in clouds of fragrance that ye might suppose would set all hands of this starved ship's company wild with hankering. But it does not. Instead of that, all hands looks ugly. Their belts is pulled tight, but then again this here Orphan of Amoy has tinkled his way into the good will, and something stronger than that, of his shipmates.

There's a move, with a hundred haggard, quarantine-sore men in the mob, toward the galley. The only man in the galley now is Jack Tivanan, the ship's cook in general, who is in charge of all the mess cooks. Jack is looking puzzled and glum.

"Have ye the Orphan in the stove?" the gang demands of him.

"There's a pig roasting," says the ship's cook, throwing the range oven wide open, "but I don't know who put him in here. I've been below for half an hour, straightening me locker, and here now, when I comes back, I finds ——"

He gets no further. Noon mess gear is piped just then, and, just as the clatter of the tables coming down from the hooks begins, the old Chinaman who's the captain's cook steps through the mob. The door of the oven is still open, and, seeing that the pig is well browned, he lifts the pan out. This, of course, is as good as a confession. This old chink, who's been a skipper's cook aboard American men-o'-war for twenty years, is the guilty man. He has put the pig in the oven, and here he is taking him out, done to a turn.

"It's the Orphan!" the mob howls. "And it's old Fang Ying that's croaked and cooked the Orphan!"

The old Chinaman, who's pretty deaf, looks around at this mob at the galley door.

"Wha's malla?" he asks, blinking.

The matter! Fang Ying is a Chinaman who's always had the respect of his shipmates, but now, for the first time in his long sea life, he's in danger.

But the captain himself puts an end to that danger. The skipper has just come over the side from his shore trip with the board-of-health man, and, hearing the roar around the galley, he comes for'ard to see what's the trouble. He brushes through the crowd to the galley door. The men fall silent, of course, in the captain's presence. As usual in a tight pinch for'ard, there's no spokesman. I'm as dumb as the rest when it comes to laying even a good case before a skipper. So the captain doesn't get even the gist of the situation. It's plain that he imagines the hungry men of his crew for'ard are gathered about the galley only because they've smelled roast pork and are wild for some of the meat.

"I won't be wanting any dinner today, Fang," says the captain to his old chink cook. "I dined ashore," he goes on, smiling around at the mob. "So you can give that meat," says he, pointing to the browned pig in the pan, "to one of the for'ard messes for their dinner—to the chief petty officers' mess, if you like."

And with that the skipper walks aft to his cabin, without an idea in his fine old dome what all this riot around the galley is about.

Fang Ying, muttering himself because all of his plans for a fine feed for his skipper has flivvered, since the captain's been and gorged himself on the beach, picks up the pan and carries it down the for'ard companionway to the berth-deck compartment, where the chief petty officers sits at their mess table, waiting for the usual quarantine layout of cracker hash to be served by their own mess cook. Their eyes gleams like a cat's in a cellar when Fang Ying plants the pan with the whole brown pig in the middle of their table.

"Pig meat, by blazes!" they yells. "Quarantine's over a day ahead of the schedule, ain't it?" they asks each other then.

"It's the Orphan!" yells some of the galley mob that's followed Fang Ying down the companionway to the berth deck. I am one of these, and now, sudden, I catches sight of Josh. The

brig Josh is double-ironed in is up in the eyes of the ship, just for'ard of the berth-deck compartment where the chief petty officers eats. The brig door is open, with a sea soldier guarding it, and Josh, his wrists and legs shackled, is staring wild at the brown pig in the pan on the table.

"The Orphan?" the chief petty officers asks us. Some of them pushes back their chairs. All of them looks ugly. It's plain none of them wants any of the Orphan.

"Who the devil," the chief gunner's mate asks, "has the nerve to think we'd eat the Orphan?"

"The captain," I sings out, "sends the Orphan to your mess with his compliments, him having dined ashore."

The chief petty officers gradually takes in the situation. One of them motions to Fang Ying.

"Take it away, Fang," he says to the captain's cook.

"Wha's malla?" the old Chinaman asks, blinking around at them.

Sudden, there comes a roar from the main deck that makes me feet tingle. It's a roar with a laugh in it. Then, when the noise stops sudden, all hands on the berth deck cocks their ears, wondering.

There's ten seconds of dead quiet. Then comes the sounds of a man's walk toward the companionway. But that ain't the only sound. Along with them steps comes the tinkle-tinkle of a little silver bell. All of us, huddling there on the berth deck, feels a queer chill running through our spines. It must be the ghost of the Orphan, thinks we —for here is the Orphan himself, as brown as a walnut, resting in his own grease in a pan!

The captain, smiling all over his ruddy old chops, appears at the head of the companionway. He has the crook of his cane thrust through the emerald-green leather collar of the Orphan of Amoy, leading him gentle.

All of us on the berth deck leaps in the air, howling hysterical. It ain't no ghost; it's the Orphan himself as natural as life, blinking sleepy at us. The captain, never leaving off smiling, raises his loose hand to stop our howls.

"I found this blessed little beggar," says he, "curled up on the pillow of my lounge, snoring his head off, when I returned to my cabin just now from my trip ashore."

So that's where the divil was, thinks I. Of course he would pick out the skipper's cabin, the only part of the ship that me and Josh couldn't visit to look for him.

"I've just heard," the skipper goes on, "that the Orphan was supposed to have been cooked. I am glad to find otherwise. I should hate to think there was a man in my ship's company that would cook a ship's pet."

Just then the Orphan, sniffing, catches the whiff of Josh, who's still standing in his double irons in the brig door. The Orphan tugs and tugs to throw off the crook of the skipper's cane. The skipper, seeing what he wants, turns him loose. The Orphan, his hoofs clattering like a young fire horse's, races down the companionway and over the deck to Josh, who, clumsy with his wrist irons, grabs him up all the same. And the Orphan of Amoy, not having his sleep out yet, goes to sleep prompt with his nose against Josh's neck.

"The mistake about your pet having been cooked," the skipper goes on, now addressing Josh, "seems to have been an unfortunate one for you, cox'n. But I can understand your feelings under your misapprehension. I shall order your release without prejudice, as well as the release of the man you had the difficulty with."

All hands gives the old boy a cheer for that, and he's just about to turn away when he remembers something.

"Oh, yes, yes, I thought there was something else," says he, facing us again and tap-tapping on the side of his cheek. "Er—uh—Fang Ying," says he, pointing a thoroughbred's long finger at his old Chinese cook, "it hasn't been explained yet, I think, how or when you contrived to get hold, on a quarantined ship, of that pig that you roasted for my dinner."

Old Fang Ying is very deaf. He knows his skipper's addressing him, but he can't make out the words.

"Wha's malla?" he asks. But there's a chink twinkle in his old lamps that shows maybe he's stalling for time. Somebody repeats the skipper's question to him. His explanation is easy, as a Chinaman's always is, whether he's lying or telling the truth. But this, it's plain, is the truth. To-day, says he, is the Chinese New Year. Last night an old friend of his in Hilo, a Chinese merchant, comes off to the *Kankakee* in the darkness of night in a sampan and brings him some New Year's gifts. Among these gifts, which he thrusts through the open port of Fang Ying's berth-deck storeroom, is this roasting pig. The skipper laughs and goes aft.

And here's Fang Ying's gift roast pig, still hot in the pan. All hands on the berth deck gets a piece of him. And, after all them long weeks of cracker hash, how good he tastes—particular because he ain't Typhus, the Orphan of Amoy!

Songs of the Training Camps

By Berton Braley

"B" DIVISION

WHEN we heard our country calling us we volunteered for service.
It was just our simple duty, or it looked that way to us,
Though the thought of facing shell fire made us feel a trifle nervous,
And we weren't exactly anxious to be mixing in the fuss.
Now in companies, battalions, and in regiments we're drilling;
We are lettered and we're numbered for our job "across the foam,"
But the men of "B" division weren't so ready or so willing;
While *we* hold the muddy trenches *they'll* be quartered safe at home!

Oh the men of "B" division made a safe and sane decision;
They are meek and peaceful parties and they hate to pack a gun.
They'll avoid the great collision, and we call 'em "B" division—
'Cause they'll "B" here while we're fighting,
And they'll "B" here when we're done!

They're the calm, intrepid members of the club of "We should worry!"
"Let George do it!" is their motto, and they follow it, all right;
They're the ones who ducked conscription—though it put them in a flurry—
And they'll try to cop our sweethearts while we go to France and fight.
But I'd rather be a soldier who is daring blood and slaughter,
Than to have a heart of putty and to stick at home, and know
That while other men were playing in the game across the water
I belonged to "B" division, with the guys who wouldn't go!

They have made their own decision and they're stuck in "B" division,
While we do our bit of service for the old Red, White, and Blue,
But we view 'em with derision and we call 'em "B" division,
'Cause they'll "B" here while we're fighting,
And they'll "B" here when we're through!

The Man Who Knew

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Clue of the Twisted Candle," Etc.

"What did he know?" will be your first inquiry, and we can truthfully say that you will be utterly amazed, and sometimes amused, at what he did know. He lives in London, this remarkable man, who devotes his life and fortune to finding out things. It is his hobby and solace in life. His peculiar services are indispensable in this absorbing novel by Wallace. If there ever was a "god in the machine," The Man Who Knew is it. Part of an Arabian proverb states: "The man who knows, and knows that he knows, is wise; follow him," and it aptly applies here.

(***A Three Part Story—Part One***)

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN IN THE LABORATORY.

THE room was a small one, and had been chosen for its remoteness from the dwelling rooms. It had formed the billiard room, which the former owner of Weald Lodge had added to his premises, and John Minute, who had neither the time nor the patience for billiards, had readily handed over this damp annex to his scientific secretary.

Along one side ran a plain deal bench which was crowded with glass stills and test tubes. In the middle was as plain a table, with half a dozen books, a microscope under a glass shade, a little wooden case which was opened to display an array of delicate scientific instruments and a Bunsen burner, which was burning bluely under a small glass bowl half filled with a dark and turbid concoction.

The face of the man sitting at the table watching this unsavory stew was hidden behind a mica and rubber mask, for the fumes which were being given off by the fluid were neither pleasant nor healthy. Save for a shaded light upon the table and the blue glow of the Bunsen lamp, the room was in darkness. Now and again the student would take a glass rod, dip it for an instant into the boiling liquid, and, lifting it, would allow the liquid drop by drop to fall from the rod onto a strip of litmus paper. What he saw was evidently satisfactory, and presently he turned out the Bunsen lamp, walked to the window and opened it, and switched on an electric fan to aid the process of ventilation.

He removed his mask, revealing the face of a good-looking young man, rather pale, with a slight, dark mustache and heavy, black, wavy hair. He closed the window, filled his pipe from the well-worn pouch which he took from his pocket, and began to write in a notebook, stopping now and again to consult some authority from the books before him.

In half an hour he had finished this work, had blotted and closed his book, and, pushing back his chair, gave himself up to reverie. They were not pleasant thoughts to judge by his face. He pulled from his inside pocket a leather case and opened it. From this

he took a photograph. It was the picture of a girl of sixteen. It was a pretty face, a little sad, but attractive in its very weakness. He looked at it for a long time, shaking his head as at an unpleasant thought.

There came a gentle tap at the door, and quickly he replaced the photograph in his case, folded it, and returned it to his pocket as he rose to unlock the door.

John Minute, who entered, sniffed suspiciously.

"What beastly smells you have in here, Jasper!" he growled. "Why on earth don't they invent chemicals that are more agreeable to the nose?"

Jasper Cole laughed quietly.

"I'm afraid, sir, that nature has ordered it otherwise," he said.

"Have you finished?" asked his employer.

He looked at the still-warm bowl of fluid suspiciously.

"It is all right, sir," said Jasper. "It is only noxious when it is boiling. That is why I keep the door locked."

"What is it?" asked John Minute, scowling down at the unoffending liquor.

"It is many things," said the other ruefully. "In point of fact, it is an experiment. The bowl contains one or two elements which will only mix with the others at a certain temperature, and as an experiment it is successful because I have kept the unmixable elements in suspension, even though the liquid has gone cold."

"I hope you will enjoy your dinner, even though it has gone cold," grumbled John Minute.

"I didn't hear the bell, sir," said Jasper Cole. "I'm awfully sorry if I've kept you waiting."

They were the only two present in the big, black-looking dining room, and dinner was as usual a fairly silent meal. John Minute read the newspapers, particularly that portion of them which dealt with the latest fluctuations in the stock market.

"Somebody has been buying Gwelo Deeps," he complained loudly.

Jasper looked up.

"Gwelo Deeps?" he said. "But they are the shares——"

"Yes, yes," said the other testily; "I know. They were quoted at a shilling last week; they are up to two shillings and threepence. I've got five hundred thousand of them; to be exact," he corrected himself, "I've got a million of them, though half of them are not my property. I am almost tempted to sell."

"Perhaps they have found gold," suggested Jasper.

John Minute snorted.

"If there is gold in the Gwelo Deeps there are diamonds on the Downs," he said scornfully. "By the way, the other five hundred thousand shares belong to May."

Jasper Cole raised his eyebrows as much in interrogation as in surprise.

John Minute leaned back in his chair and manipulated his gold toothpick.

"May Nuttall's father was the best friend I ever had," he said gruffly. "He lured me into the Gwelo Deeps against my better judgment. We sank a bore three thousand feet and found everything except gold."

He gave one of his brief, rumbling chuckles.

"I wish that mine had been a success. Poor old Bill Nuttall! He helped me in some tight places."

"And I think you have done your best for his daughter, sir."

"She's a nice girl," said John Minute, "a dear girl. I'm not taken with girls." He made a wry face. "But May is as honest and as sweet as they make them. She's the sort of girl who looks you in the eye when she talks to you; there's no damned nonsense about May."

Jasper Cole concealed a smile.

"What the devil are you grinning at?" demanded John Minute.

"I also was thinking that there was no nonsense about her," he said.

John Minute swung round.

"Jasper," he said, "May is the kind of girl I would like you to marry; in fact, she *is* the girl I would like you to marry."

"I think Frank would have some-

thing to say about that," said the other, stirring his coffee.

"Frank!" snorted John Minute. "What the devil do I care about Frank? Frank has to do as he's told. He's a lucky young man and a bit of a rascal, too, I'm thinking. Frank would marry anybody with a pretty face. Why, if I hadn't interfered——"

Jasper looked up.

"Yes?"

"Never mind," growled John Minute.

As was his practice, he sat a long time over dinner, half awake and half asleep. Jasper had annexed one of the newspapers, and was reading it. This was the routine which marked every evening of his life save on those occasions when he made a visit to London. He was in the midst of an article by a famous scientist on radium emanation, when John Minute continued a conversation which he had broken off an hour ago.

"I'm worried about May sometimes."

Jasper put down his paper.

"Worried! Why?"

"I am worried. Isn't that enough?" growled the other. "I wish you wouldn't ask me a lot of questions, Jasper. You irritate me beyond endurance."

"Well, I'll take it that you're worried," said his confidential secretary patiently, "and that you've good reason."

"I feel responsible for her, and I hate responsibilities of all kinds. The responsibilities of children——"

He winced and changed the subject, nor did he return to it for several days.

Instead he opened up a new line.

"Sergeant Smith was here when I was out, I understand," he said.

"He came this afternoon—yes."

"Did you see him?"

Jasper nodded.

"What did he want?"

"He wanted to see you, as far as I could make out. You were saying the other day that he drinks."

"Drinks!" said the other scornfully. "He doesn't drink; he eats it. What do you think about Sergeant Smith?" he demanded.

"I think he is a very curious person," said the other frankly, "and I can't understand why you go to such trouble to shield him or why you send him money every week."

"One of these days you'll understand," said the other, and his prophecy was to be fulfilled. "For the present, it is enough to say that if there are two ways out of a difficulty, one of which is unpleasant and one of which is less unpleasant, I take the less unpleasant of the two. It is less unpleasant to pay Sergeant Smith a weekly stipend than it is to be annoyed, and I should most certainly be annoyed if I did not pay him."

He rose slowly from the chair and stretched himself.

"Sergeant Smith," he said again, "is a pretty tough proposition. I know, and I have known him for years. In my business, Jasper, I have had to know some queer people, and I've had to do some queer things. I am not so sure that they would look well in print, though I am not sensitive as to what newspapers say about me or I should have been in my grave years ago; but Sergeant Smith and his knowledge touches me at a raw place. You are always messing about with narcotics and muck of all kinds, and you will understand when I tell you that the money I give Sergeant Smith every week serves a double purpose. It is an opiate and a prophy——"

"Prophylactic," suggested the other.

"That's the word," said John Minute. "I was never a whale at the long uns; when I was twelve I couldn't write my own name, and when I was nineteen I used to spell it with two n's."

He chuckled again.

"Opiate and prophylactic," he repeated, nodding his head. "That's Sergeant Smith. He is a dangerous devil because he is a rascal."

"Constable Wiseman——" began Jasper.

"Constable Wiseman," snapped John Minute, rubbing his hand through his rumpled gray hair, "is a dangerous devil because he's a fool. What has Constable Wiseman been here about?"

"He didn't come here," smiled Jasper. "I met him on the road and had a little talk with him."

"You might have been better employed," said John Minute gruffly. "That silly ass has summoned me three times. One of these days I'll get him thrown out of the force."

"He's not a bad sort of fellow," soothed Jasper Cole. "He's rather stupid, but otherwise he is a decent, well-conducted man with a sense of the law."

"Did he say anything worth repeating?" asked John Minute.

"He was saying that Sergeant Smith is a disciplinarian."

"I know of nobody more of a disciplinarian than Sergeant Smith," said the other sarcastically, "particularly when he is getting over a jag. The keenest sense of duty is that possessed by a man who has broken the law and has not been found out. I think I will go to bed," he added, looking at the clock on the mantelpiece. "I am going up to town to-morrow. I want to see May."

"Is anything worrying you?"

"The bank is worrying me," said the old man.

Jasper Cole looked at him steadily.

"What's wrong with the bank?"

"There is nothing wrong with the bank, and the knowledge that my dear nephew, Frank Merril, esquire, is accountant at one of its branches removes any lingering doubt in my mind as to its stability. And I wish to Heaven you'd get out of the habit of asking me 'why' this happens or 'why' I do that."

Jasper lit a cigar before replying:

"The only way you can find things out in this world is by asking questions."

"Well, ask somebody else," boomed John Minute at the door.

Jasper took up his paper, but was not to be left to the enjoyment its columns offered, for five minutes later John Minute appeared in the doorway, minus his tie and coat, having been surprised in the act of undressing with an idea which called for development.

"Send a cable in the morning to the manager of the Gwelo Deeps and ask him if there is any report. By the way, you are the secretary of the company. I suppose you know that?"

"Am I?" asked the startled Jasper.

"Frank was, and I don't suppose he has been doing the work now. You had better find out or you will be getting me into a lot of trouble with the registrar. We ought to have a board meeting."

"Am I the directors, too?" asked Jasper innocently.

"It is very likely," said John Minute. "I know I am chairman, but there has never been any need to hold a meeting. You had better find out from Frank when the last was held."

He went away, to reappear a quarter of an hour later, this time in his pajamas.

"That mission May is running," he began, "they are probably short of money. You might inquire of their secretary. *They* will have a secretary, I'll be bound! If they want anything send it on to them."

He walked to the sideboard and mixed himself a whisky and soda.

"I've been out the last three or four times Smith has called. If he comes to-morrow tell him I will see him when I return. Bolt the doors and don't leave it to that jackass, Wilkins."

Jasper nodded.

"You think I am a little mad, don't you, Jasper?" asked the older man, standing by the sideboard with the glass in his hand.

"That thought has never occurred to me," said Jasper. "I think you are eccentric sometimes and inclined to exaggerate the dangers which surround you."

The other shook his head.

"I shall die a violent death; I know it. When I was in Zululand an old witch doctor 'tossed the bones.' You have never had that experience?"

"I can't say that I have," said Jasper, with a little smile.

"You can laugh at that sort of thing, but I tell you I've got a great faith

in it. Once in the king's kraal and once in Echowe it happened, and both witch doctors told me the same thing—that I'd die by violence. I didn't use to worry about it very much, but I suppose I'm growing old now, and living surrounded by the law, as it were, I am too law-abiding. A law-abiding man is one who is afraid of people who are not law-abiding, and I am getting to that stage. You laugh at me because I'm jumpy whenever I see a stranger hanging around the house, but I have got more enemies to the square yard than most people have to the county. I suppose you think I am subject to delusions and ought to be put under restraint. A rich man hasn't a very happy time," he went on, speaking half to himself and half to the young man. "I've met all sorts of people in this country and been introduced as John Minute, the millionaire, and do you know what they say as soon as my back is turned?"

Jasper offered no suggestion.

"They say this," John Minute went on, "whether they're young or old, good, bad, or indifferent: 'I wish he'd die and leave me some of his money.'"

Jasper laughed softly.

"You haven't a very good opinion of humanity."

"I have no opinion of humanity," corrected his chief, "and I am going to bed."

Jasper heard his heavy feet upon the stairs and the thud of them overhead. He waited for some time; then he heard the bed creak. He closed the windows, personally inspected the fastenings of the doors, and went to his little office study on the first floor.

He shut the door, took out the pocket case, and gave one glance at the portrait, and then took an unopened letter which had come that evening and which, by his deft handling of the mail, he had been able to smuggle into his pocket without John Minute's observance.

He slit open the envelope, extracted the letter, and read:

DEAR SIR: Your esteemed favor is to hand. We have to thank you for the check, and we are very pleased that we have given you satisfactory service. The search has been a very long and, I am afraid, a very expensive one to yourself, but now that discovery has been made I trust you will feel rewarded for your energies.

The note bore no heading, and was signed "J. B. Fleming."

Jasper read it carefully, and then, striking a match, he lit the paper and watched it burn in the grate.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIRL WHO CRIED.

The northern express had deposited its passengers at Kings Cross on time. All the station approaches were crowded with hurrying passengers. Taxicabs and "growlers" were mixed in apparently inextricable confusion. There was a roaring babble of instruction and counterinstruction from policemen, from cab drivers, and from excited porters. Some of the passengers hurried swiftly across the broad asphalt space and disappeared down the stairs toward the underground station. Others waited for unpunctual friends with protesting and frequent examination of their watches.

One alone seemed wholly bewildered by the noise and commotion. She was a young girl not more than eighteen, and she struggled with two or three brown paper parcels, a hatbox, and a bulky hand bag. She was among those who expected to be met at the station, for she looked helplessly at the clock and wandered from one side of the building to the other till at last she came to a standstill in the center, put down all her parcels carefully, and, taking a letter from a shabby little bag, she opened it and read.

Evidently she saw something which she had not noticed before, for she hastily replaced the letter in the bag, scrambled together her parcels, and walked swiftly out of the station. Again she came to a halt and looked round the darkened courtyard.

"Here!" snapped a voice irritably. She saw a door of a taxicab open, and came toward it timidly.

"Come in, come in, for Heaven's sake!" said the voice.

She put in her parcels and stepped into the cab. The owner of the voice closed the door with a bang, and the taxi moved on.

"I've been waiting here ten minutes," said the man in the cab.

"I'm so sorry, dear, but I didn't read ——"

"Of course you didn't read," interrupted the other brusquely.

It was the voice of a young man not in the best of tempers, and the girl, folding her hands in her lap, prepared for the tirade which she knew was to follow her act of omission.

"You never seem to be able to do anything right," said the man. "I suppose it is your natural stupidity."

"Why couldn't you meet me inside the station?" she asked with some show of spirit.

"I've told you a dozen times that I don't want to be seen with you," said the man brutally. "I've had enough trouble over you already. I wish to Heaven I'd never met you."

The girl could have echoed that wish, but eighteen months of bullying had cowed and all but broken her spirit.

"You are a stone around my neck," said the man bitterly. "I have to hide you, and all the time I'm in a fret as to whether you will give me away or not. I am going to keep you under my eye now," he said. "You know a little too much about me."

"I should never say a word against you," protested the girl.

"I hope, for your sake, you don't," was the grim reply.

The conversation slackened from this moment until the girl plucked up courage to ask where they were going.

"Wait and see," snapped the man, but added later: "You are going to a much nicer home than you have ever had in your life, and you ought to be very thankful."

"Indeed I am, dear," said the girl earnestly.

"Don't call me 'dear,'" snarled her husband.

The cab took them to Camden Town, and they descended in front of a respectable-looking house in a long, dull street. It was too dark for the girl to take stock of her surroundings, and she had scarcely time to gather her parcels together before the man opened the door and pushed her in.

The cab drove off, and a motor cyclist who all the time had been following the taxi, wheeled his machine slowly from the corner of the street where he had waited until he came opposite the house. He let down the supports of his machine, went stealthily up the steps, and flashed a lamp upon the enamel numbers over the fanlight of the door. He jotted down the figures in a notebook, descended the steps again, and, wheeling his machine back a little way, mounted and rode off.

Half an hour later another cab pulled up at the door, and a man descended, telling the driver to wait. He mounted the steps, knocked, and after a short delay was admitted.

"Hello, Crawley!" said the man who had opened the door to him. "How goes it?"

"Rotten," said the newcomer. "What do you want me for?"

His was the voice of an uncultured man, but his tone was that of an equal.

"What do you think I want you for?" asked the other savagely.

He led the way to the sitting room, struck a match, and lit the gas. His bag was on the floor. He picked it up, opened it, and took out a flask of whisky which he handed to the other.

"I thought you might need it," he said sarcastically.

Crawley took the flask, poured out a stiff tot, and drank it at a gulp. He was a man of fifty, dark and dour. His face was lined and tanned as one who had lived for many years in a hot climate. This was true of him, for he had spent ten years of his life in the Matabeleland mounted police.

The young man pulled up a chair to the table.

"I've got an offer to make to you," he said.

"Is there any money in it?"

The other laughed.

"You don't suppose I should make any kind of offer to you that hadn't money in it?" he answered contemptuously.

Crawley, after a moment's hesitation, poured out another drink and gulped it down.

"I haven't had a drink to-day," he said apologetically.

"That is an obvious lie," said the younger man; "but now to get to business. I don't know what your game is in England, but I will tell you what mine is. I want a free hand, and I can only have a free hand if you take your daughter away out of the country."

"You want to get rid of her, eh?" asked the other, looking at him shrewdly.

The young man nodded.

"I tell you, she's a millstone round my neck," he said for the second time that evening, "and I am scared of her. At any moment she may do some fool thing and ruin me."

Crawley grinned.

"For better or for worse," he quoted, and then, seeing the ugly look in the other man's face, he said: "Don't try to frighten me, Mr. Brown or Jones, or whatever you call yourself, because I can't be frightened. I have had to deal with worse men than you and I'm still alive. I'll tell you right now that I'm not going out of England. I've got a big game on. What did you think of offering me?"

"A thousand pounds," said the other.

"I thought it would be something like that," said Crawley coolly. "It is a fleabite to me. You take my tip and find another way of keeping her quiet. A clever fellow like you, who knows more about dope than any other man I have met, ought to be able to do the trick without any assistance from me. Why, didn't you tell me that you knew a drug that sapped the will power of people and made them do just as you like? That's the knock-out drop to give her. Take my tip and try it."

"You won't accept my offer?" asked the other.

Crawley shook his head.

"I've got a fortune in my hand if I work my cards right," he said. "I've managed to get a position right under the old devil's nose. I see him every day, and I have got him scared. What's a thousand pounds to me? I've lost more than a thousand on one race at Lewes. No, my boy, employ the resources of science," he said flippantly. "There's no sense in being a dope merchant if you can't get the right dope for the right case."

"The less you say about my doping, the better," snarled the other man. "I was a fool to take you so much into my confidence."

"Don't lose your temper," said the other, raising his hand in mock alarm. "Lord bless us, Mr. Wright or Robinson, who would have thought that the nice, mild-mannered young man who goes to church in Eastbourne could be such a fierce chap in London? I've often laughed, seeing you walk past me as though butter wouldn't melt in your mouth and everybody saying what a nice young man Mr. So-and-so is, and I have thought, if they only knew that this sleek lad——"

"Shut up!" said the other savagely. "You are getting as much of a danger as this infernal girl."

"You take things too much to heart," said the other. "Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I am not going out of England. I am going to keep my present menial job. You see, it isn't only the question of money, but I have an idea that your old man has got something up his sleeve for me, and the only way to prevent unpleasant happenings is to keep close to him."

"I have told you a dozen times he has nothing against you," said the other emphatically. "I know his business, and I have seen most of his private papers. If he could have caught you with the goods, he would have had you long ago. I told you that the last time you called at the house and I saw you. What! Do you think John Minute would play blackmail if he could get out of it? You are a fool, Crawley!"

"Maybe I am," said the other philo-

sophically, "but I am not such a fool as you think me to be."

"You had better see her," said his host suddenly.

Crawley shook his head.

"A parent's feelings," he protested, "have a sense of decency, Reginald or Horace or Hector; I always forget your London name. No," he said, "I won't accept your suggestion, but I have got a proposition to make to you, and it concerns a certain relative of John Minute—a nice, young fellow who will one day secure the old man's swag."

"Will he?" said the other between his teeth.

They sat for two hours discussing the proposition, and then Crawley rose to leave.

"I leave my final jar for the last," he said pleasantly. He had finished the contents of the flask, and was in a very amiable frame of mind.

"You are in some danger, my young friend, and I, your guardian angel, have discovered it. You have a valet at one of your numerous addresses."

"A chauffeur," corrected the other; "a Swede, Jonsen."

Crawley nodded.

"I thought he was a Swede."

"Have you seen him?" asked the other quickly.

"He came down to make some inquiries in Eastbourne," said Crawley, "and I happened to meet him. One of those talkative fellows who opens his heart to a uniform. I stopped him from going to the house, so I saved you a shock—if John Minute had been there, I mean."

The other bit his lips, and his face showed his concern.

"That's bad," he said. "He has been very restless and rather impertinent lately, and has been looking for another job. What did you tell him?"

"I told him to come down next Wednesday," said Crawley. "I thought you'd like to make a few arrangements in the meantime."

He held out his hand, and the young man, who did not mistake the gesture, dived into his pockets with a scowl and handed four five-pound notes into the outstretched palm.

"It will just pay my taxi," said Crawley light-heartedly.

The other went upstairs. He found the girl sitting where he had left her in her bedroom.

"Clear out of here," he said roughly. "I want the room."

Meekly she obeyed. He locked the door behind her, lifted a suit case onto the bed, and, opening it, took out a small Japanese box. From this he removed a tiny glass pestle and mortar, six little vials, a hypodermic syringe, and a small spirit lamp. Then from his pocket he took a cigarette case and removed two cigarettes which he laid carefully on the dressing table. He was busy for the greater part of the hour.

As for the girl, she spent that time in the cold dining room huddled up in a chair, weeping softly to herself.

CHAPTER III.

FOUR IMPORTANT CHARACTERS.

The writer pauses here to say that the story of "The Man Who Knew" is an unusual one. It is reconstructed partly from the reports of a certain trial, partly from the confidential matter which has come into the writer's hands from Saul Arthur Mann and his extraordinary bureau, and partly from the private diary which May Nuttall put at the writer's disposal.

Those practiced readers who begin this narrative with the weary conviction that they are merely to see the workings out of a conventional record of crime, of love, and of mystery may be urged to pursue their investigations to the end. Truth is stranger than fiction, and has need to be, since most fiction is founded on truth. There is a strangeness in the story of The Man Who Knew which brings it into the category of veracious history. It cannot be said in truth that any story begins at the beginning of the first chapter, since all stories began with the creation of the world, but this present story may be said to begin when we

cut into the lives of some of the characters concerned, upon the seventeenth day of July, 19—.

There was a little group of people about the prostrate figure of a man who lay upon the sidewalk in Gray Square, Bloomsbury.

The hour was eight o'clock on a warm summer evening, and that the unusual spectacle attracted only a small crowd may be explained by the fact that Gray Square is a professional quarter given up to the offices of lawyers, surveyors, and corporations. These offices at eight o'clock on a summer's day are empty of occupants. The unprofessional classes who inhabit the shabby streets impinging upon the Euston Road do not include Gray Square in their itinerary when they take their evening constitutionals abroad, and even the loud children find a less depressing environment for their games.

The gray-faced youth sprawled upon the pavement was decently dressed and was obviously of the superior servant type.

He was as obviously dead.

Death, which beautifies and softens the plainest, had failed to entirely dissipate the impression of meanness in the face of the stricken man. The lips were set in a little sneer, the half-closed eyes were small, the clean-shaven jaw was long and underhung, the ears were large and grotesquely prominent.

I have chosen this evening and this unhappy event as the starting point of my narrative because it happened that the appearance of this unfortunate young man attracted to Gray Square at that hour three of the more important characters in this story. One might even say four.

A constable stood by the body, waiting for the arrival of the ambulance, answering in monosyllables the questions of the curious. Ten minutes before the ambulance arrived there joined the group a man of middle age.

He wore the pepper-and-salt suit which distinguishes the country excursionist taking the day off in London. He had little side whiskers and a heavy brown mustache. His golf cap was new and set at a somewhat rakish angle on his head. Across his waistcoat was a large and heavy chain hung at intervals with small silver medals. For all his provincial appearance his movements were decisive and suggested authority. He elbowed his way through the little crowd, and met the constable's disapproving stare without faltering.

"Can I be of any help, mate?" he said, and introduced himself as Police Constable Wiseman, of the Sussex Constabulary.

The London constable thawed.

"Thanks," he said; "you can help me get him into the ambulance when it comes?"

"Fit?" asked the newcomer.

The policeman shook his head.

"He was seen to stagger and fall, and by the time I arrived he'd snuffed out. Heart disease, I suppose."

"Ah!" said Constable Wiseman, regarding the body with a proprietorial and professional eye, and retailed his own experiences of similar tragedies, not without pride, as though he had to some extent the responsibility for their occurrence.

On the far side of the square a young man and a girl were walking slowly. A tall, fair, good-looking youth he was, who might have attracted attention even in a crowd. And the young woman at his side was by every standard beautiful. They reached the corner of Tabor Street, and it was the fixed and eager stare of a little man who stood on the corner of the street and the intensity of his gaze which first directed their attention to the tragedy on the opposite side of the square.

The little man who watched was dressed in an ill-fitting frock coat, trousers which seemed too long, since they concertinaed over his boots, and a glossy silk hat set at the back of his head.

"What a funny old thing!" said Frank Merril under his breath, and the girl smiled.

The object of their amusement turned sharply as they came abreast of him. His freckled, clean-shaven

face looked strangely old, and the big, gold-rimmed spectacles bridged halfway down his nose added to his ludicrous appearance. He raised his eyebrows and surveyed the two young people.

"There's an accident over there," he said briefly and without any preliminary.

"Indeed," said the young man politely.

"There have been several accidents in Gray Square," said the strange old man meditatively. "There was one in 1875, when the corner house—you can see the end of it from here—collapsed and buried fourteen people, seven of whom were killed, four of whom were injured for life, and three of whom escaped with minor injuries."

He said this calmly and apparently without any sense that he was acting at all unconventionally in volunteering the information, and went on:

"There was another accident in 1881, on the seventeeth of October, a collision between two hansom cabs which rsulted in the death of a driver whose name was Samuel Green. He lived at 14 Portington Mews, and had a wife and nine children."

The girl looked at the old man with a little apprehension, and Frank Merril laughed.

"You have a very good memory for these kind of things. Do you live here?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" The little man shook his head vigorously.

He was silent for a moment, and then:

"I think we had better go over and see what it is all about," he said with a certain gravity.

His assumption of leadership was a little staggering, and Frank turned to the girl.

"Do you mind?" he asked.

She shook her head, and the three passed over the road to the little group just as the ambulance came jangling into the square. To Merril's surprise, the policeman greeted the little man respectfully, touching his helmet.

"I'm afraid nothing can be done, sir. He is—gone."

"Oh, yes, he's gone!" said the other calmly.

He stooped down, turned back the man's coat, and slipped his hand into the inside pocket, but drew blank; the pocket was empty. With an extraordinary rapidity of movement, he continued his search, and to the astonishment of Frank Merril the policeman did not deny his right. In the top left-hand pocket of the waistcoat he pulled out a crumpled slip which proved to be a newspaper clipping.

"Ah!" said the little man. "An advertisement for a manservant cut out of this morning's *Daily Telegraph;* I saw it myself. Evidently a manservant who was on his way to interview a new employer. You see: 'Call at eight-thirty at Holborn Viaduct Hotel.' He was taking a short cut when his illness overcame him. I know who is advertising for the valet," he added gratuitously; "he is a Mr. T. Burton, who is a rubber factor from Penang. Mr. T. Burton married the daughter of the Reverend George Smith, of Scarborough, in 1889, and has four children, one of whom is at Winchester. Hum!"

He pursed his lips and looked down again at the body; then suddenly he turned to Frank Merril.

"Do you know this man?" he demanded.

Frank looked at him in astonishment.

"No. Why do you ask?"

"You were looking at him as though you did," said the little man. "That is to say, you were not looking at his face. People who do not look at other people's faces under these circumstances know them."

"Curiously enough," said Frank, with a little smile, "there is some one here I know," and he caught the eye of Constable Wiseman.

That ornament of the Sussex constabulary touched his cap.

"I thought I recognized you, sir. I have often seen you at Weald Lodge," he said.

Further conversation was cut short

as they lifted the body onto a stretcher and put it into the interior of the ambulance. The little group watched the white car disappear, and the crowd of idlers began to melt away.

Constable Wiseman took a professional leave of his comrade, and came back to Frank a little shyly.

"You are Mr. Minute's nephew, aren't you, sir?" he asked.

"Quite right," said Frank.

"I used to see you at your uncle's place."

"Uncle's name?"

It was the little man's pert but wholly inoffensive inquiry. He seemed to ask it as a matter of course and as one who had the right to be answered without equivocation.

Frank Merril laughed.

"My uncle is Mr. John Minute," he said, and added, with a faint touch of sarcasm: "You probably know him."

"Oh, yes," said the other readily. "One of the original Rhodesian pioneers who received a concession from Lo Bengula and amassed a large fortune by the sale of gold-mining properties which proved to be of no especial value. He was tried at Salisbury in 1897 for the murder of two Mashona chiefs, and was acquitted. He amassed another fortune in Johannesburg in the boom of '97, and came to this country in 1901, settling on a small estate between Polegate and Eastbourne. He has one nephew, his heir, Frank Merril, the son of the late Doctor Henry Merril, who is an accountant in the London and Western Counties Bank. He——"

Frank looked at him in undisguised amazement.

"You know my uncle?"

"Never met him in my life," said the little man brusquely. He took off his silk hat with a sweep.

"I wish you good afternoon," he said, and strode rapidly away.

The uniformed policeman turned a solemn face upon the group.

"Do you know that gentleman?" asked Frank.

The constable smiled.

"Oh, yes, sir; that is Mr. Mann. At the Yard we call him The Man Who Knows!"

"Is he a detective?"

The constable shook his head.

"From what I understand, sir, he does a lot of work for the commissioner and for the government. We have orders never to interfere with him or refuse him any information that we can give."

"The Man Who Knows?" repeated Frank, with a puzzled frown. "What an extraordinary person! What does he know?" he asked suddenly.

"Everything," said the constable comprehensively.

A few minutes later Frank was walking slowly toward Holborn.

"You seem to be rather depressed," smiled the girl.

"Confound that fellow!" said Frank, breaking his silence. "I wonder how he comes to know all about uncle?" He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, dear, this is not a very cheery evening for you. I did not bring you out to see accidents."

"Frank," the girl said suddenly, "I seem to know that man's face—the man who was on the pavement, I mean——"

She stopped with a shudder.

"It seemed a little familiar to me," said Frank thoughtfully.

"Didn't he pass us about twenty minutes ago?"

"He may have done so," said Frank, "but I have no particular recollection of it. My impression of him goes further back than this evening. Now where could I have seen him?"

"Let's talk about something else," she said quickly. "I haven't a very long time. What am I to do about your uncle?"

He laughed.

"I hardly know what to suggest," he said. "I am very fond of Uncle John, and I hate to run counter to his wishes, but I am certainly not going to allow him to take my love affairs into his hands. I wish to Heaven you had never met him!"

She gave a little gesture of despair.

"It is no use wishing things like that, Frank. You see, I knew your uncle

before I knew you. If it had not been for your uncle I should not have met you."

"Tell me what happened," he asked. He looked at his watch. "You had better come on to Victoria," he said, "or I shall lose my train."

He hailed a taxicab, and on the way to the station she told him of all that had happened.

"He was very nice, as he always is, and he said nothing really which was very horrid about you. He merely said he did not want me to marry you because he did not think you'd make a suitable husband. He said that Jasper had all the qualities and most of the virtues."

Frank frowned.

"Jasper is a sleek brute," he said viciously.

She laid her hand on his arm.

"Please be patient," she said. "Jasper has said nothing whatever to me and has never been anything but most polite and kind."

"I know that variety of kindness," growled the young man. "He is one of those sly, soft-footed sneaks you can never get to the bottom of. He is worming his way into my uncle's confidence to an extraordinary extent. Why, he is more like a son to Uncle John than a beastly secretary."

"He has made himself necessary," said the girl, "and that is halfway to making yourself wealthy."

The little frown vanished from Frank's brow, and he chuckled.

"That is almost an epigram," he said. "What did you tell uncle?"

"I told him that I did not think that his suggestion was possible and that I did not care for Mr. Cole, nor he for me. You see, Frank, I owe your Uncle John so much. I am the daughter of one of his best friends, and since dear daddy died Uncle John has looked after me. He has given me my education—my income—my everything; he has been a second father to me."

Frank nodded.

"I recognize all the difficulties," he said, "and here we are at Victoria."

She stood on the platform and watched the train pull out and waved her hand in farewell, and then returned to the pretty flat in which John Minute had installed her. As she said, her life had been made very smooth for her. There was no need for her to worry about money, and she was able to devote her days to the work she loved best. The East End Provident Society, of which she was president, was wholly financed by the Rhodesian millionaire.

May had a natural aptitude for charity work. She was an indefatigable worker, and there was no better known figure in the poor streets adjoining the West Indian Docks than Sister Nuttall. Frank was interested in the work without being enthusiastic. He had all the man's apprehension of infectious dissease and of the inadvisability of a beautiful girl slumming without attendance, but the one visit he had made to the East End in her company had convinced him that there was no fear as to her personal safety.

He was wont to grumble that she was more interested in her work than she was in him, which was probably true, because her development had been a slow one, and it could not be said that she was greatly in love with anything in the world save her self-imposed mission.

She ate her frugal dinner, and drove down to the mission headquarters off the Albert Dock Road. Three nights a week was devoted by the mission to visitation work. Many women and girls living in this area spend their days at factories in the neighborhood, and they have only the evenings for the treatment of ailments which, in people better circumstanced, would produce the attendance of specialists. For the night work the nurses were accompanied by a volunteer male escort. May Nuttall's duties carried her that evening to Silvertown and to a network of mean streets to the east of the railway. Her work began at dusk, and was not ended until night had fallen and the stars were quivering in a hot sky.

The heat was stifling, and as she came out of the last foul dwelling she

welcomed as a relief even the vitiated air of the hot night. She went back into the passageway of the house, and by the light of a paraffin lamp made her last entry in the little diary she carried.

"That makes eight we have seen, Thompson," she said to her escort. "Is there anybody else on the list?"

"Nobody else to-night, miss," said the young man, concealing a yawn.

"I'm afraid it is not very interesting for you, Thompson," said the girl sympathetically; "you haven't even the excitement of work. It must be awfully dull standing outside waiting for me."

"Bless you, miss," said the man. "I don't mind at all. If it is good enough for you to come into these streets, it is good enough for me to go round with you."

They stood in a little courtyard, a cul-de-sac cut off at one end by a sheer wall, and as the girl put back her diary into her little net bag a man came swiftly down from the street entrance of the court and passed her. As he did so the dim light of the lamp showed for a second his face, and her mouth formed an "O" of astonishment. She watched him until he disappeared into one of the dark doorways at the farther end of the court, and stood staring at the door as though unable to believe her eyes.

There was no mistaking the pale face and the straight figure of Jasper Cole, John Minute's secretary.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACCOUNTANT AT THE BANK.

May Nuttall expressed her perplexity in a letter:

DEAR FRANK: Such a remarkable thing happened last night. I was in Silvers Rents about eleven o'clock, and had just finished seeing the last of my patients, when a man passed me and entered one of the houses—it was, I thought at the time, either the last or the last but one on the left. I now know that it was the last but one. There is no doubt at all in my mind that it was Mr. Cole, for not only did I see his face, but he carried the snakewood cane which he always affects.

I must confess I was curious enough to make inquiries, and I found that he is a frequent visitor here, but nobody quite knows why he comes. The last house is occupied by two families, very uninteresting people, and the last house but one is empty save for a room which is apparently the one Mr. Cole uses. None of the people in the Rents know Mr. Cole or have ever seen him. Apparently the downstairs room in the empty house is kept locked, and a woman who lives opposite told my informant, Thompson, whom you will remember as the man who always goes with me when I am slumming, that the gentleman sometimes comes, uses this room, and that he always sweeps it out for himself. It cannot be very well furnished, and apparently he never stays the night there.

Isn't it very extraordinary? Please tell me what you make of it——

Frank Merril put down the letter and slowly filled his pipe. He was puzzled, and found no solution either then or on his way to the office.

He was the accountant of the Piccadilly branch of the London and Western Counties Bank, and had very little time to give to outside problems. But the thought of Cole and his curious appearance in a London slum under circumstances which, to say the least, were mysterious, came between him and his work more than once.

He was entering up some transactions when he was sent for by the manager. Frank Merril, though he did not occupy a particularly imposing post in the bank, held nevertheless a very extraordinary position and one which insured for him more consideration than the average official receives at the hands of his superiors. His uncle was financially interested in the bank, and it was generally believed that Frank had been sent as much to watch his relative's interests as to prepare himself for the handling of the great fortune which John Minute would some day leave to his heir.

The manager nodded cheerily as Frank came in and closed the door behind him.

"Good morning, Mr. Merril," said the chief. "I want to see you about Mr. Holland's account. You told me he was in the other day."

Frank nodded.

"He came in in the lunch hour."

"I wish I had been here," said the

manager thoughtfully. "I would like to see this gentleman."

"Is there anything wrong with his account?"

"Oh, no," said the manager with a smile; "he has a very good balance. In fact, too large a balance for a floating account. I wish you would see him and persuade him to put some of this money on deposit. The head office does not like big floating balances which may be withdrawn at any moment and which necessitates the keeping here of a larger quantity of cash than I care to hold.

"Personally," he went on, "I do not like our method of doing business at all. Our head office being in Plymouth, it is necessary, by the peculiar rules of the bank, that the floating balances should be so covered, and I confess that your uncle is as great a sinner as any. Look at this!"

He pushed a check across the table.

"Here's a bearer check for sixty thousand pounds which has just come in. It is to pay the remainder of the purchase price due to Consolidated Mines. Why they cannot accept the ordinary crossed check Heaven knows!"

Frank looked at the sprawling signature and smiled.

"You see, uncle's got a reputation to keep up," he said good-humoredly; "one is not called 'Ready-money Minute' for nothing."

The manager made a little grimace.

"That sort of thing may be necessary in South Africa," he said, "but here in the very heart of the money world cash payments are a form of lunacy. I do not want you to repeat this to your relative."

"I am hardly likely to do that," said Frank, "though I do think you ought to allow something for uncle's peculiar experiences in the early days of his career."

"Oh, I make every allowance," said the other; "only it is very inconvenient, but it was not to discuss your uncle's shortcomings that I brought you here."

He pulled out a pass book from a heap in front of him.

"'Mr. Rex Holland,'" he read. "He opened his account while I was on my holiday you remember."

"I remember very well," said Frank, "and he opened it through me."

"What sort of man is he?" asked the manager.

"I am afraid I am no good at descriptions," replied Frank, "but I should describe him as a typical young man about town, not very brainy, very few ideas outside of his own immediate world—which begins at Hyde Park Corner——"

"And ends at the Hippodrome," interrupted the manager.

"Possibly," said Frank. "He seemed a very sound, capable man in spite of a certain languid assumption of ignorance as to financial matters, and he came very well recommended. What would you like me to do?"

The manager pushed himself back in his chair, thrust his hands in his trousers' pockets, and looked at the ceiling for inspiration.

"Suppose you go along and see him this afternoon and ask him as a favor to put some of his money on deposit. We will pay the usual interest and all that sort of thing. You can explain that he can get the money back whenever he wants it by giving us thirty days' notice. Will you do this for me?"

"Surely," said Frank heartily. "I will see him this afternoon. What is his address? I have forgotten."

"Albemarle Chambers, Knightsbridge," replied the manager. "He may be in town."

"And what is his balance?" asked Frank.

"Thirty-seven thousand pounds," said the other, "and as he is not buying Consolidated Mines I do not see what need he has for the money, the more so since we can always give him an overdraft on the security of his deposit. Suggest to him that he put thirty thousand pounds with us and leave seven thousand pounds floating. By the way, your uncle is sending his secretary here this afternoon to go into the question of his own account."

Frank looked up.

"Cole," he said quickly, "is he coming here? By Jove!"

He stood by the manager's desk, and a look of amusement came into his eyes.

"I want to ask Cole something," he said slowly. "What time do you expect him?"

"About four o'clock."

"After the bank closes?"

The manager nodded.

"Uncle has a weird way of doing business," said Frank, after a pause. "I suppose that means that I shall have to stay on?"

"It isn't necessary," said Mr. Brandon. "You see, Mr. Cole is one of our directors."

Frank checked an exclamation of surprise.

"How long has this been?" he asked.

"Since last Monday. I thought I told you. At any rate, if you have not been told by your uncle, you had better pretend to know nothing about it," said Brandon hastily.

"You may be sure I shall keep my counsel," said Frank, a little amused by the other's anxiety. "You have been very good to me, Mr. Brandon, and I appreciate your kindness."

"Mr. Cole is a nominee of your uncle, of course," Brandon went on, with a little nod of acknowledgment for the other's thanks. "Your uncle makes a point of never sitting on boards if he can help it, and has never been represented except by his solicitor since he acquired so large an interest in the bank. As a matter of fact, I think Mr. Cole is coming here as much to examine the affairs of the branch as to look after your uncle's account. Cole is a very first-class man of business, isn't he?"

Frank's answer was a grim smile.

"Excellent!" he said dryly. "He has the scientific mind grafted to a singular business capacity."

"You don't like him?"

"I have no particular reason for not liking him," said the other. "Possibly I am being constitutionally uncharitable. He is not the type of man I greatly care for. He possesses all the virtues, according to uncle, spends his days and nights almost slavishly working for his employer. Oh, yes, I know what you are going to say; that is a very fine quality in a young man, and honestly I agree with you, only it doesn't seem natural. I don't suppose anybody works as hard as I or takes as much interest in his work, yet I have no particular anxiety to carry it on after business hours."

The manager rose.

"You are not even an idle apprentice," he said good-humoredly. "You will see Mr. Rex Holland for me?"

"Certainly," said Frank, and went back to his desk deep in thought.

It was four o'clock to the minute when Jasper Cole passed through the one open door of the bank at which the porter stood ready to close. He was well, but neatly dressed, and had hooked to his wrist a thin snakewood cane attached to a crook handle.

He saw Frank across the counter and smiled, displaying two rows of even, white teeth.

"Hello, Jasper!" said Frank easily, extending his hand. "How is uncle?"

"He is very well indeed," replied the other. "Of course he is very worried about things, but then I think he is always worried about something or other."

"Anything in particular?" asked Frank interestedly.

Jasper shrugged his shoulders.

"You know him much better than I; you were with him longer. He is getting so horribly suspicious of people, and sees a spy or an enemy in every strange face. That is usually a bad sign, but I think he has been a little overwrought lately."

He spoke easily: his voice was low and modulated with the faintest suggestion of a drawl, which was especially irritating to Frank, who secretly despised the Oxford product, though he admitted—since he was a very well-balanced and on the whole good-humored young man—his dislike was unreasonable.

"I hear you have come to audit the accounts," said Frank, leaning on the

counter and opening his gold cigarette case.

"Hardly that," drawled Jasper.

He reached out his hand and selected a cigarette.

"I just want to sort out a few things. By the way, your uncle had a letter from a friend of yours."

"Mine?"

"A Rex Holland," said the other.

"He is hardly a friend of mine; in fact, he is rather an infernal nuisance," said Frank. "I went down to Knightsbridge to see him to-day, and he was out. What has Mr. Holland to say?"

"Oh, he is interested in some sort of charity, and he is starting a guinea collection. I forget what the charity was."

"Why do you call him a friend of mine?" asked Frank, eying the other keenly.

Jasper Cole was halfway to the manager's office and turned.

"A little joke," he said. "I had heard you mention the gentleman. I have no other reason for supposing he was a friend of yours."

"Oh, by the way, Cole," said Frank suddenly, "were you in town last night?"

Jasper Cole shot a swift glance at him.

"Why?"

"Were you near Victoria Docks?"

"What a question to ask!" said the other with his inscrutable smile, and, turning abruptly, walked in to the waiting Mr. Brandon.

Frank finished work at five-thirty that night and left Jasper Cole and a junior clerk to the congenial task of checking the securities. At nine o'clock the clerk went home, leaving Jasper alone in the bank. Mr. Brandon, the manager, was a bachelor and occupied a flat above the bank premises. From time to time he strode in, his big pipe in the corner of his mouth. The last of these occasions was when Jasper Cole had replaced the last ledger in Mr. Minute's private safe.

"Half past eleven," said the manager disapprovingly, "and you have had no dinner."

"I can afford to miss a dinner," laughed the other.

"Lucky man," said the manager.

Jasper Cole passed out into the street and called a passing taxi to the curb.

"Charing Cross Station," he said.

He dismissed the cab in the station courtyard, and after a while walked back to the Strand and hailed another.

"Victoria Dock Road," he said in a low voice.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN MINUTE'S LEGACY.

La Rochefoucauld has said that prudence and love are inconsistent. May Nuttall, who had never explored the philosophies of La Rochefoucauld, had nevertheless seen that quotation in the birthday book of an acquaintance, and the saying had made a great impression upon her. She was twenty-one years of age, at which age girls are most impressionable and are little influenced by the workings of pure reason. They are prepared to take their philosophies ready-made, and not disinclined to accept from others certain rigid standards by which they measure their own elastic temperaments.

Frank Merril was at once a comfort and the cause of a certain half-ashamed resentment, since she was of the age which resents dependence. The woman who spends any appreciable time in the discussion with herself as to whether she does or does not love a man can only have her doubts set at rest by the discovery of somebody whom she loves better. She liked Frank, and liked him well enough to accept the little ring which marked the beginning of a new relationship which was not exactly an engagement, yet brought to her friendship a glamour which it had never before possessed.

She liked him well enough to want his love. She loved him little enough to find the prospect of an early marriage alarming. That she did not understand herself was not remarkable. Twenty-one has not the experience by which the complexities of twenty-one may be straightened out and made visible.

She sat at breakfast, puzzling the

matter out, and was a little disturbed and even distressed to find, in contrasting the men, that of the two she had a warmer and a deeper feeling for Jasper Cole. Her alarm was due to the recollection of one of Frank's warnings, almost prophetic, it seemed to her now:

"That man has a fascination which I would be the last to deny. I find myself liking him, though my instinct tells me he is the worst enemy I have in the world."

If her attitude toward Frank was difficult to define, more remarkable was her attitude of mind toward Jasper Cole. There was something sinister—no, that was not the word—something "frightening" about him. He had a magnetism, an aura of personal power, which seemed to paralyze the will of any who came into conflict with him.

She remembered how often she had gone to the big library at Weald Lodge with the firm intention of "having it out with Jasper." Sometimes it was a question of domestic economy into which he had obtruded his views—when she was sixteen she was practically housekeeper to her adopted uncle—perhaps it was a matter of carriage arrangement. Once it had been much more serious, for after she had fixed up to go with a merry picnic party to the downs, Jasper, in her uncle's absence and on his authority, had firmly but gently forbidden her attendance. Was it an accident that Frank Merril was one of the party, and that he was coming down from London for an afternoon's fun?

In this case, as in every other, Jasper had his way. He even convinced her that his view was right and hers was wrong. He had pooh-poohed on this occasion all suggestion that it was the presence of Frank Merril which had induced him to exercise the veto which his extraordinary position gave to him. According to his version, it had been the inclusion in the party of two ladies whose names were famous in the theatrical world which had raised his delicate gorge.

May thought of this particular incident as she sat at breakfast, and with a feeling of exasperation she realized that whenever Jasper had set his foot down he had never been short of a plausible reason for opposing her.

For one thing, however, she gave him credit. Never once had he spoken depreciatingly of Frank.

She wondered what business brought Jasper to such an unsavory neighborhood as that in which she had seen him. She had all a woman's curiosity without a woman's suspicions, and, strangely enough, she did not associate his presence in this terrible neighborhood or his mysterious comings and goings with anything discreditable to himself. She thought it was a little eccentric in him, and wondered whether he, too, was running a "little mission" of his own, but dismissed that idea since she had received no confirmation of the theory from the people with whom she came into contact in that neighborhood.

She was halfway through her breakfast when the telephone bell rang, and she rose from the table and crossed to the wall. At the first word from the caller she recognized him.

"Why, uncle!" she said. "Whatever are you doing in town?"

The voice of John Minute bellowed through the receiver:

"I've an important engagement. Will you lunch with me at one-thirty at the Savoy?"

He scarcely waited for her to accept the invitation before he hung up his receiver.

The commissioner of police replaced the book which he had taken from the shelf at the side of his desk, swung round in his chair, and smiled quizzically at the perturbed and irascible visitor.

The man who sat at the other side of the desk might have been fifty-five. He was of middle height, and was dressed in a somewhat violent check suit, the fit of which advertised the skill of the great tailor who had fashioned so fine a creation from so unlovely a pattern.

He wore a low collar which would

have displayed a massive neck but for the fact that a glaring purple cravat and a diamond as big as a hazelnut directed the observer's attention elsewhere. The face was an unusual one. Strong to a point of coarseness, the bulbous nose, the thick, irregular lips, the massive chin all spoke of the hard life which John Minute had spent. His eyes were blue and cold, his hair a thick and unruly mop of gray. At a distance he conveyed a curious illusion of refinement. Nearer at hand, his pink face repelled one by its crudities. He reminded the commissioner of a piece of scene painting that pleased from the gallery and disappointed from the boxes.

"You see, Mr. Minute," said Sir George suavely, "we are rather limited in our opportunities and in our powers. Personally, I should be most happy to help you, not only because it is my business to help everybody, but because you were so kind to my boy in South Africa; the letters of introduction you gave to him were most helpful."

The commissioner's son had been on a hunting trip through Rhodesia and Barotseland, and a chance meeting at a dinner party with the Rhodesian millionaire had produced these letters.

"But," continued the official, with a little gesture of despair, "Scotland Yard has its limitations. We cannot investigate the cause of intangible fears. If you are threatened we can help you, but the mere fact that you fancy there is some sort of vague danger would not justify our taking any action."

John Minute moved uncomfortably in his chair.

"What are the police for?" he asked impatiently. "I have enemies, Sir George. I took a quiet little place in the country, just outside Eastbourne, to get away from London, and all sorts of new people are prying round us. There was a new parson called the other day for a subscription to some boy scouts' movement or other. He has been hanging round my place for a month, and lives at a cottage near Polegate. Why should he have come to Eastbourne?"

"On a holiday trip?" suggested the commissioner.

"Bah!" said Minute contemptuously. "There's some other reason. I've had him watched. He goes every day to visit a woman at a hotel—a confederate. They're never seen in public together. Then there's a peddler, one of those fellows who sell glass and repair windows; nobody knows anything about him. He doesn't do enough business to keep a fly alive. He's always hanging round Weald Lodge. Then there's a Miss Paines, who says she's a landscape gardener, and wants to lay out the grounds in some newfangled way. I sent her packing about her business, but she hasn't left the neighborhood."

"Have you reported the matter to the local police?" asked the commissioner.

Minute nodded.

"And they know nothing suspicious about them?"

"Nothing!" said Mr. Minute briefly.

"Then," said the other, smiling, "there is probably nothing known against them, and they are quite innocent people trying to get a living. After all, Mr. Minute, a man who is as rich as you are must expect to attract a number of people, each trying to secure some of your wealth in a more or less legitimate way. I suspect nothing more remarkable than this has happened."

He leaned back in his chair, his hands clasped, a sudden thoughtful frown on his face.

"I hate to suggest that anybody knows any more than we, but as you are so worried I will put you in touch with a man who will probably relieve your anxiety."

Minute looked up.

"A police officer?" he asked.

Sir George shook his head.

"No, this is a private detective. He can do things for you which we cannot. Have you ever heard of Saul Arthur Mann? I see you haven't. Saul Arthur Mann," said the commissioner,

"has been a good friend of ours, and possibly in recommending him to you I may be a good friend to both of you. He is The Man Who Knows."

"The Man Who Knows," repeated Mr. Minute dubiously. "What does he know?"

"I'll show you," said the commissioner. He went to the telephone, gave a number, and while he was waiting for the call to be put through he asked: "What is the name of your boy-scout parson?"

"The Reverend Vincent Lock," replied Mr. Minute.

"I suppose you don't know the name of your glass peddler?"

Minute shook his head.

"They call him 'Waxy' in the village," he said.

"And the lady's name is Miss Paines, I think?" asked the commissioner, jotting down the names as he repeated them. "Well, we shall—— Hello! Is that Saul Arthur Mann? This is Sir George Fuller. Connect me with Mr. Mann, will you?"

He waited a second, and then continued:

"Is that you, Mr. Mann? I want to ask you something. Will you note these three names? The Reverend Vincent Lock, a peddling glazier who is known as 'Waxy,' and a Miss Paines. Have you got them? I wish you would let me know something about them."

Mr. Minute rose.

"Perhaps you'll let me know, Sir George——" he began, holding out his hand.

"Don't go yet," replied the commissioner, waving him to his chair again. "You will obtain all the information you want in a few minutes."

"But surely he must make inquiries," said the other, surprised.

Sir George shook his head.

"The curious thing about Saul Arthur Mann is that he never has to make inquiries. That is why he is called The Man Who Knows. He is one of the most remarkable people in the world of criminal investigation," he went on. "We tried to induce him to come to Scotland Yard. I am not so sure that the government would have paid him his price. At any rate, he saved me any embarrassment by refusing point-blank."

The telephone bell rang at that moment, and Sir George lifted the receiver. He took a pencil and wrote rapidly on his pad, and when he had finished he said "Thank you," and hung up the receiver.

"Here is your information, Mr. Minute," he said. "The Reverend Vincent Lock, curate in a very poor neighborhood near Manchester, interested in the boy scouts' movement. His brother, George Henry Lock, has had some domestic trouble, his wife running away from him. She is now staying at the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, and is visited every day by her brother-in-law, who is endeavoring to induce her to return to her home. That disposes of the reverend gentleman and his confederate. Miss Paines is a genuine landscape gardener; has been the plaintiff in two breach-of-promise cases, one of which came to the court. There is no doubt," the commissioner went on reading the paper, "that her *modus operandi* is to get elderly gentlemen to propose marriage and then to commence her action. That disposes of Miss Paines, and you now know why she is worrying you. Our friend Waxy has another name—Thomas Cobbler—and he has been three times convicted of larceny."

The commissioner looked up with a grim little smile.

"I shall have something to say to our own record department for failing to trace Waxy," he said, and then resumed his reading.

"And that is everything! It disposes of our three," he said. "I will see that Waxy does not annoy you any more."

"But how the dickens——" began Mr. Minute. "How the dickens does this fellow find out in so short a time?"

The commissioner shrugged his shoulders.

"He just knows," he said.

He took leave of his visitor at the door.

"If you are bothered any more," he said, "I should strongly advise you to go to Saul Arthur Mann. I don't know what your real trouble is, and you haven't told me exactly why you should fear an attack of any kind. You won't have to tell Mr. Mann," he said with a little twinkle in his eye.

"Why not?" asked the other suspiciously.

"Because he will know," said the commissioner.

"The devil he will!" growled John Minute, and stumped down the broad stairs onto the Embankment, a greatly mystified man. He would have gone off to seek an interview with this strange individual there and then, for his curiosity was piqued and he had also a little apprehension, one which, in his impatient way, he desired should be allayed, but he remembered that he had asked May to lunch with him, and he was already five minutes late.

He found the girl in the broad vestibule, waiting for him, and greeted her affectionately.

Whatever may be said of John Minute that is not wholly to his credit, it cannot be said that he lacked sincerity.

There are people in Rhodesia who speak of him without love. They describe him as the greatest land thief that ever rode a Zeedersburg coach from Port Charter to Salisbury to register land that he had obtained by trickery. They tell stories of those wonderful coach drives of his with relays of twelve mules waiting every ten miles. They speak of his gambling propensities, of ten-thousand-acre farms that changed hands at the turn of a card, and there are stories that are less printable. When M'Lupi, a little Mashona chief, found gold in '92, and refused to locate the reef, it was John Minute who staked him out and lit a grass fire on his chest until he spoke.

Many of the stories are probably exaggerated, but all Rhodesia agrees that John Minute robbed impartially friend and foe. The confidant of Lo'Ben and the Company alike, he betrayed both, and on that terrible day when it was a toss of a coin whether the concession seekers would be butchered in Lo'Ben's kraal, John Minute escaped with the only available span of mules and left his comrades to their fate.

Yet he had big, generous traits, and could on occasions be a tender and a kindly friend. He had married when a young man, and had taken his wife into the wilds.

There was a story that she had met a handsome young trader and had eloped with him, that John Minute had chased them over three hundred miles of hostile country from Victoria Falls to Charter, from Charter to Marandalas, from Marandalas to Massikassi, and had arrived in Biera so close upon their trail that he had seen the ship which carried them to the Cape steaming down the river.

He had never married again. Report said that the woman had died of malaria. A more popular version was that John Minute had followed his erring wife to Pieter Maritzburg and had shot her and had served seven years on the breakwater for his sin.

About a man who is rich, powerful, and wholly unpopular, hated by the majority, and feared by all, legends grow as quickly as toadstools on a marshy moor. Some were half true, some wholly apocryphal, deliberate, and malicious inventions. True or false, John Minute ignored them all, denying nothing, explaining nothing, and even refusing to take action against a Cape Town weekly which dealt with his career in a spirit of unpardonable frankness.

There was only one person in the world whom he loved more than the girl whose hand he held as they went down to the cheeriest restaurant in London.

"I have had a queer interview," he said in his gruff, quick way. "I have been to see the police."

"Oh, uncle!" she said reproachfully.

He jerked his shoulder impatiently.

"My dear, you don't know," he said. "I have got all sorts of people who ——"

He stopped short.

"What was there remarkable in the interview?" she asked, after she had ordered the lunch.

"Have you ever heard," he asked, "of Saul Arthur Mann?"

"Saul Arthur Mann?" she repeated. "I seem to know that name. Mann, Mann! Where have I heard it?"

"Well," said he, with that fierce and fleeting little smile which rarely lit his face for a second, "if you don't know him he knows you; he knows everybody."

"Oh, I remember! He is The Man Who Knows!"

It was his turn to be astonished.

"Where in the world have you heard of him?"

Briefly she retailed her experience, and when she came to describe the omniscient Mr. Mann—— "A crank," growled Mr. Minute. "I was hoping there was something in it."

"Surely, uncle, there must be something in it," said the girl seriously. "A man of the standing of the chief commissioner would not speak about him as Sir George did unless he had very excellent reason."

"Tell me some more about what you saw," he said. "I seem to remember the report of the inquest. The dead man was unknown and has not been identified."

She described, as well as she could remember, her meeting with the knowledgeable Mr. Mann. She had to be tactful because she wished to tell the story without betraying the fact that she had been with Frank. But she might have saved herself the trouble, because when she was halfway through the narrative he interrupted her.

"I gather you were not by yourself," he grumbled. "Master Frank was somewhere handy, I suppose?"

She laughed.

"I met him quite by accident," she said demurely.

"Naturally," said John Minute.

"Oh, uncle, and there was a man whom Frank knew! You probably know him—Constable Wiseman."

John Minute unfolded his napkin, stirred his soup, and grunted.

"Wiseman is a stupid ass," he said briefly. "The mere fact that he was mixed up in the affair is sufficient explanation as to why the dead man remains unknown. I know Constable Wiseman very well," he said. "He has summoned me three times—once during the war for exposing lights, once for doing a little pistol shooting in the garden just as an object lesson to all tramps, and once—confound him!—for a smoking chimney. Oh, yes, I know Constable Wiseman."

Apparently the thought of Constable Wiseman filled his mind through two courses, for he did not speak until he set his fish knife and fork together and muttered something about a "silly, meddling jackass!"

He was very silent throughout the meal, his mind being divided between two subjects. Uppermost, though of least importance, was the personality of Saul Arthur Mann. Him he mentally viewed with suspicion and apprehension. It was an irritation even to suggest that there might be secret places in his own life which could be flooded with the light of this man's knowledge, and he resolved to beard The Man Who Knows in his den that afternoon and challenge him by inference to produce all the information he had concerning his past.

There was much which was public property. It was John Minute's boast that his life was a book which might be read, but in his inmost heart he knew of one dark place which baffled the outside world. He brought himself from the mental rehearsal of his interview to what was, after all, the first and more important business.

"May," he said suddenly, "have you thought any more about what I asked you?"

She made no attempt to fence with the question.

"You mean Jasper Cole?"

He nodded, and for the moment she made no reply, and sat with eyes downcast, tracing a little figure upon the tablecloth with her finger tip.

"The truth is, uncle," she said at last, "I am not keen on marriage at all just

yet, and you are sufficiently acquainted with human nature to know that anything which savors of coercion will not make me predisposed toward Mr. Cole."

"I suppose the real truth is," he said gruffly, "that you are in love with Frank?"

She laughed.

"That is just what the real truth is not," she said. "I like Frank very much. He is a dear, bright, sunny boy."

Mr. Minute grunted.

"Oh, yes, he is!" the girl went on. "But I am not in love with him—really."

"I suppose you are not influenced by the fact that he is my—heir," he said, and eyed her keenly.

She met his glance steadily.

"If you were not the nicest man I know," she smiled, "I should be very offended. Of course, I don't care whether Frank is rich or poor. You have provided too well for me for mercenary considerations to weigh with me."

John Minute grunted again.

"I am quite serious about Jasper."

"Why are you so keen on Jasper?" she asked.

He hesitated.

"I know him," he said shortly. "He has proved to me in a hundred ways that he is a reliable, decent lad. He has become almost indispensable to me," he continued with his quick little laugh, "and that Frank has never been. Oh, yes, Frank's all right in his way, but he's crazy on things which cut no ice with me. Too fond of sports, too fond of loafing," he growled.

The girl laughed again.

"I can give you a little information on one point," John Minute went on, "and it was to tell you this that I brought you here to-day. I am a very rich man. You know that. I have made millions and lost them, but I have still enough to satisfy my heirs. I am leaving you two hundred thousand pounds in my will."

She looked at him with a startled exclamation.

"Uncle!" she said.

He nodded.

"It is not a quarter of my fortune," he went on quickly, "but it will make you comfortable after I am gone."

He rested his elbows on the table and looked at her searchingly.

"You are an heiress," he said, "for, whatever you did, I should never change my mind. Oh, I know you will do nothing of which I should disapprove, but there is the fact. If you marry Frank you would still get your two hundred thousand, though I should bitterly regret your marriage. No, my girl," he said more kindly than was his wont, "I only ask you this—that whatever else you do, you will not make your choice until the next fortnight has expired."

With a jerk of his head, John Minute summoned a waiter and paid his bill.

No more was said until he handed her into her cab in the courtyard.

"I shall be in town next week," he said.

He watched the cab disappear in the stream of traffic which flowed along the Strand, and, calling another taxi, he drove to the address with which the chief commissioner had furnished him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN WHO KNEW.

Backwell Street, in the City of London, contains one palatial building which at one time was the headquarters of the South American Stock Exchange, a superior bucket shop which on its failure had claimed its fifty thousand victims. The ornate gold lettering on its great plate-glass window had long since been removed, and the big brass plate which announced to the passer-by that here sat the spider weaving his golden web for the multitude of flies, had been replaced by a modest, oxidized scroll bearing the simple legend:

SAUL ARTHUR MANN.

What Mr. Mann's business was few people knew. He kept an army of

clerks. He had the largest collection of file cabinets possessed by any three business houses in the City, he had an enormous post bag, and both he and his clerks kept regulation business hours. His beginnings, however, were well known.

He had been a stockbroker's clerk, with a passion for collecting clippings mainly dealing with political, geographical, and meteorological conditions obtaining in those areas wherein the great joint stock companies of the earth were engaged in operations. He had gradually built up a service of correspondence all over the world.

The first news of labor trouble on a gold field came to him, and his brokers indicated his view upon the situation in that particular area by "bearing" the stock of the affected company.

If his Liverpool agents suddenly descended upon the Cotton Exchange and began buying May cotton in enormous quantities, the initiated knew that Saul Arthur Mann had been awakened from his slumbers by a telegram describing storm havoc in the cotton belt of the United States of America. When a curious blight fell upon the coffee plantations of Ceylon, a six-hundred-word cablegram describing the habits and characteristics of the minute insect which caused the blight reached Saul Arthur Mann at two o'clock in the afternoon, and by three o'clock the price of coffee had jumped.

When, on another occasion, Señor Almarez, the President of Cacura, had thrown a glass of wine in the face of his brother-in-law, Captain Vassalaro, Saul Arthur Mann had jumped into the market and beaten down all Cacura stocks, which were fairly high as a result of excellent crops and secure government. He "beared" them because he knew that Vassalaro was a dead shot, and that the inevitable duel would deprive Cacura of the best president it had had for twenty years, and that the way would be open for the election of Sebastian Romelez, who had behind him a certain group of German financiers who desired to exploit the country in their own peculiar fashion.

He probably built up a very considerable fortune, and it is certain that he extended the range of his inquiries until the making of money by means of his curious information bureau became only a secondary consideration. He had a marvelous memory, which was supplemented by his system of filing. He would go to work patiently for months, and spend sums of money out of all proportion to the value of the information, to discover, for example, the reason why a district officer in some far-away spot in India had been obliged to return to England before his tour of duty had ended.

His thirst for facts was insatiable; his grasp of the politics of every country in the world, and his extraordinarily accurate information concerning the personality of all those who directed those policies, was the basis upon which he was able to build up theories of amazing accuracy.

A man of simple tastes, who lived in a rambling old house in Streatham, his work, his hobby, and his very life was his bureau. He had assisted the police times without number, and had been so fascinated by the success of this branch of his investigations that he had started a new criminal record, which had been of the greatest help to the police and had piqued Scotland Yard to emulation.

John Minute, descending from his cab at the door, looked up at the imposing facia with a frown. Entering the broad vestibule, he handed his card to the waiting attendant and took a seat in a well-furnished waiting room. Five minutes later he was ushered into the presence of The Man Who Knew. Mr. Mann, a comical little figure at a very large writing table, jumped up and went halfway across the big room to meet his visitor. He beamed through his big spectacles as he waved John Minute to a deep armchair.

"The chief commissioner sent you, didn't he?" he said, pointing an accusing finger at the visitor. "I know he did, because he called me up this morning and asked me about three people who, I happen to know, have been

bothering you. Now what can I do for you, Mr. Minute?"

John Minute stretched his legs and thrust his hands defiantly into his trousers' pockets.

"You can tell me all you know about me," he said.

Saul Arthur Mann trotted back to his big table and seated himself.

"I haven't time to tell you as much," he said breezily, "but I'll give you a few outlines."

He pressed a bell at his desk, opened a big index, and ran his finger down.

"Bring me 8874," he said impressively to the clerk who made his appearance.

To John Minute's surprise, it was not a bulky dossier with which the attendant returned, but a neat little book soberly bound in gray.

"Now," said Mr. Mann, wriggling himself comfortably back in his chair, "I will read a few things to you."

He held up the book.

"There are no names in this book, my friend; not a single, blessed name. Nobody knows who 8874 is except myself."

He patted the big index affectionately.

"The name is there. When I leave this office it will be behind three depths of steel; when I die it will be burned with me."

He opened the little book again and read. He read steadily for a quarter of an hour in a monotonous, singsong voice, and John Minute slowly sat himself erect and listened with tense face and narrow eyelids to the record. He did not interrupt until the other had finished.

"Half of your facts are lies," he said harshly. "Some of them are just common gossip; some are purely imaginary."

Saul Arthur Mann closed the book and shook his head.

"Everything here," he said, touching the book, "is true. It may not be the truth as you want it known, but it is the truth. If I thought there was a single fact in there which was not true my *raison d'être* would be lost. That is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, Mr. Minute," he went on, and the good-natured little face was pink with annoyance.

"Suppose it were the truth," interrupted John Minute, "what price would you ask for that record and such documents as you say you have to prove its truth?"

The other leaned back in his chair and clasped his hands meditatively.

"How much do you think you are worth, Mr. Minute?"

"You ought to know," said the other with a sneer.

Saul Arthur Mann inclined his head.

"At the present price of securities, I should say about one million two hundred and seventy thousand pounds," he said, and John Minute opened his eyes in astonishment.

"Near enough," he reluctantly admitted.

"Well," the little man continued, "if you multiply that by fifty and you bring all that money into my office and place it on that table in ten-thousand-pound notes, you could not buy that little book or the records which support it."

He jumped up.

"I am afraid I am keeping you, Mr. Minute."

"You are not keeping me," said the other roughly. "Before I go I want to know what use you are going to make of your knowledge."

The little man spread out his hands in deprecation.

"What use? You have seen the use to which I have put it. I have told you what no other living soul will know."

"How do you know I am John Minute?" asked the visitor quickly.

"Some twenty-seven photographs of you are included in the folder which contains your record, Mr. Minute," said the little investigator calmly. "You see, you are quite a prominent personage—one of the two hundred and four really rich men in England. I am not likely to mistake you for anybody else, and, more than this, your history is so interesting a one that naturally I know much more about you than I should

if you had lived the dull and placid life of a city merchant."

"Tell me one thing before I go," asked Minute. "Where is the person you refer to as 'X?'"

Saul Arthur Mann smiled and inclined his head never so slightly.

"That is a question which you have no right to ask," he said. "It is information which is available to the police or to any authorized person who wishes to get into touch with X. I might add," he went on, "that there is much more I could tell you, if it were not that it would involve persons with whom you are acquainted."

John Minute left the bureau looking a little older, a little paler than when he had entered. He drove to his club with one thought in his mind, and that thought revolved about the identity and the whereabouts of the person referred to in the little man's record as X.

CHAPTER VII.

INTRODUCING MR. REX HOLLAND.

Mr. Rex Holland stepped out of his new car, and, standing back a pace, surveyed his recent acquisition with a dispassionate eye.

"I think she will do, Feltham," he said.

The chauffeur touched his cap and grinned.

"She did it in thirty-eight minutes, sir; not bad for a twenty-mile run—half of it through London."

"Not bad," agreed Mr. Holland, slowly stripping his gloves.

The car was drawn up at the entrance to the country cottage which a lavish expenditure of money had converted into a bijou palace.

He still lingered, and the chauffeur, feeling that some encouragement to conversation was called for, ventured the view that a car ought to be a good one if one spent eight hundred pounds on it.

"Everything that is good costs money," said Mr. Rex Holland sententiously, and then continued: "Correct me if I am mistaken, but as we came through Putney did I not see you nod to the driver of another car?"

"Yes, sir."

"When I engaged you," Mr. Holland went on in his even voice, "you told me that you had just arrived from Australia and knew nobody in England; I think my advertisement made it clear that I wanted a man who fulfilled these conditions?"

"Quite right, sir. I was as much surprised as you; the driver of that car was a fellow who traveled over to the old country on the same boat as me. It's rather rum that he should have got the same kind of job."

Mr. Holland smiled quietly.

"I hope his employer is not as eccentric as I, and that he pays his servant on my scale."

With this shot he unlocked and passed through the door of the cottage.

Feltham drove his car to the garage which had been built at the back of the house, and, once free from observation, he lit his pipe, and, seating himself on a box, drew from his pocket a little card which he perused with unusual care.

He read:

One: To act as chauffeur and valet. Two: To receive ten pounds a week and expenses. Three: To make no friends or acquaintances. Four: Never under any circumstances to discuss my employer, his habits, or his business. Five: Never under any circumstances to go farther eastward into London than is represented by a line drawn from the Marble Arch to Victoria Station. Six: Never to recognize my employer if I see him in the street in company with any other person.

The chauffeur folded the card and scratched his chin reflectively.

"Eccentricity," he said.

It was a nice five-syllable word, and its employment was a comfort to this perturbed Australian. He cleaned his face and hands, and went into the tiny kitchen to prepare his master's dinner.

Mr. Holland's house was a remarkable one. It was filled with every form of labor-saving device which the ingenuity of man could devise. The furniture, if luxurious, was not in any great quantity. Vacuum tubes were to

be found in every room, and by the attachment of hose and nozzle and the pressure of a switch each room could be dusted in a few minutes. From the kitchen, at the back of the cottage, to the dining room ran two endless belts electrically controlled, which presently carried to the table the very simple meal which his cook-chauffeur had prepared.

The remnants of dinner were cleared away, the chauffeur dismissed to his quarters, a little one-roomed building separated from the cottage, and the switch was turned over which heated the automatic coffee percolator which stood on the sideboard.

Mr. Holland sat reading, his feet resting on a chair.

He only interrupted his study long enough to draw off the coffee into a little white cup and to switch off the current.

He sat until the little silver clock on the mantelshelf struck twelve, and then he placed a card in the book to mark the place, closed it, and rose leisurely.

He slid back a panel in the wall, disclosing the steel door of a safe. This he opened with a key which he selected from a bunch. From the interior of the safe he removed a cedarwood box, also locked. He threw back the lid and removed one by one three check books and a pair of gloves of some thin, transparent fabric. These were obviously to guard against telltale finger prints.

He carefully pulled them on and buttoned them. Next he detached three checks, one from each book, and, taking a fountain pen from his pocket, he began filling in the blank spaces. He wrote slowly, almost laboriously, and he wrote without a copy. There are very few forgers in the criminal records who have ever accomplished the feat of imitating a man's signature from memory. Mr. Rex Holland was singularly exceptional to all precedent, for from the date to the flourishing signature these checks might have been written and signed by John Minute.

There were the same fantastic "E's," the same stiff-tailed "Y's." Even John Minute might have been in doubt whether he wrote the "Eight hundred and fifty" which appeared on one slip.

Mr. Holland surveyed his handiwork without emotion.

He waited for the ink to dry before he folded the checks and put them in his pocket. This was John Minute's way, for the millionaire never used blotting paper for some reason, probably not unconnected with an event in his earlier career. When the checks were in his pocket, Mr. Holland removed his gloves, replaced them with the check books in the box and in the safe, locked the steel door, drew over its front the sliding panel, and went to bed.

Early the next morning he summoned his servant.

"Take the car back to town," he said. "I am going back by train. Meet me at the Holland Park tube at two o'clock; I have a little job for you which will earn you five hundred."

"That's my job, sir," said the dazed man when he recovered from the shock.

Frank sometimes accompanied May to the East End, and on the day Mr. Rex Holland returned to London he called for the girl at her flat to drive her to Canning Town.

"You can come in and have some tea," she invited.

"You're a luxurious beggar, May," he said, glancing round approvingly at the prettily furnished sitting room. "Contrast this with my humble abode in Bayswater."

"I don't know your humble abode in Bayswater," she laughed. "But why on earth you should elect to live at Bayswater I can't imagine."

He sipped his tea with a twinkle in his eye.

"Guess what income the heir of the Minute millions enjoys?" he asked ironically. "No, I'll save you the agony of guessing. I earn seven pounds a week at the bank, and that is the whole of my income."

"But doesn't uncle——" she began.

"Not a bob," replied Frank vulgarly; "not half a bob."

"But——"

"I know what you're going to say; he treats you generously. I know. He treats me justly. Between generosity and justice, give me generosity all the time. I will tell you something else. He pays Jasper Cole a thousand a year! It's very curious, isn't it?"

She leaned over and patted his arm.

"Poor boy," she said sympathetically, "that doesn't make it any easier—Jasper, I mean."

Frank indulged in a little grimace, and said:

"By the way, I saw the mysterious Jasper this morning—coming out of Waterloo Station looking more mysterious than ever. What particular business has he in the country?"

She shook her head and rose.

"I know as little about Jasper as you," she answered.

She turned and looked at him thoughtfully.

"Frank," she said, "I am rather worried about you and Jasper. I am worried because your uncle does not seem to take the same view of Jasper as you take. It is not a very heroic position for either of you, and it is rather hateful for me."

Frank looked at her with a quizzical smile.

"Why hateful for you?"

She shook her head.

"I would like to tell you everything, but that would not be fair."

"To whom?" Frank asked quickly.

"To you, your uncle, or to Jasper."

He came nearer to her.

"Have you so warm a feeling for Jasper?" he asked.

"I have no warm feeling for anybody," she said candidly. "Oh, don't look so glum, Frank! I suppose I am slow to develop, but you cannot expect me to have any very decided views yet a while."

Frank smiled ruefully.

"That is my one big trouble, dear," he said quietly; "bigger than anything else in the world."

She stood with her hand on the door, hesitating, a look of perplexity upon her beautiful face. She was of the tall, slender type, a girl slowly ripening into womanhood. She might have been described as cold and a little repressive, but the truth was that she was as yet untouched by the fires of passion, and for all her twenty-one years she was still something of the healthy schoolgirl, with a schoolgirl's impatience of sentiment.

"I am the last to spin a hard-luck yarn," Frank went on, "but I have not had the best of everything, dear. I started wrong with uncle. He never liked my father nor any of my father's family. His treatment of his wife was infamous. My poor governor was one of those easy-going fellows who was always in trouble, and it was always John Minute's job to get him out. I don't like talking about him——" He hesitated.

She nodded.

"I know," she said sympathetically.

"Father was not the rotter that Uncle John thinks he was. He had his good points. He was careless, and he drank much more than was good for him, but all the scrapes he fell into were due to this latter failing."

The girl knew the story of Doctor Merril. It had been sketched briefly but vividly by John Minute. She knew also some of those scrapes which had involved Doctor Merril's ruin, material and moral.

"Frank," she said, "if I can help you in any way I would do it."

"You can help me absolutely," said the young man quietly, "by marrying me."

She gasped.

"When?" she asked, startled.

"Now, next week; at any rate, soon." He smiled, and, crossing to her, caught her hand in his.

"May, dear, you know I love you. You know there is nothing in the world I would not do for you, no sacrifice that I would not make."

She shook her head.

"You must give me some time to think about this, Frank," she said.

"Don't go," he begged. "You cannot know how urgent is my need of you. Uncle John has told you a great

deal about me, but has he told you this—that my only hope of independence—independence of his millions and his influence—you cannot know how widespread or pernicious that influence is," he said, with an unaccustomed passion in his voice, "lies in my marriage before my twenty-fourth birthday?"

"Frank!"

"It is true. I cannot tell you any more, but John Minute knows. If I am married within the next ten days"—he snapped his fingers—"that for his millions. I am independent of his legacies, independent of his patronage."

She stared at him, open-eyed.

"You never told me this before."

He shook his head a little despairingly.

"There are some things I can never tell you, May, and some things which you can never know till we are married. I only ask you to trust me."

"But suppose," she faltered, "you are not married within ten days, what will happen?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I am John's liege man of life and limb and of earthly regard," he quoted flippantly. "I shall wait hopefully for the only release that can come, the release which his death will bring. I hate saying that, for there is something about him that I like enormously, but that is the truth, and, May," he said, still holding her hand and looking earnestly into her face, "I don't want to feel like that about John Minute. I don't want to look forward to his end. I want to meet him without any sense of dependence. I don't want to be looking all the time for signs of decay and decrepitude, and hail each illness he may have with a feeling of pleasant anticipation. It is beastly of me to talk like this, I know, but if you were in my position—if you knew all that I know—you would understand."

The girl's mind was in a ferment. An ordinary meeting had developed so tumultuously that she had lost her command of the situation. A hundred thoughts ran riot through her mind. She felt as though she were an arbitrator deciding between two men, both of whom she was fond of and even at that moment, there intruded into her mental vision a picture of Jasper Cole, with his pale, intellectual face and his grave, dark eyes.

"I must think about this," she said again. "I don't think you had better come down to the mission with me."

He nodded.

"Perhaps you're right," he said.

Gently she released her hand and left him.

For her that day was one of supreme mental perturbation. What was the extraordinary reason which compelled his marriage by his twenty-fourth birthday? She remembered how John Minute had insisted that her thoughts about marriage should be at least postponed for the next fortnight. Why had John Minute suddenly sprung this story of her legacy upon her? For the first time in her life she began to regard her uncle with suspicion.

For Frank the day did not develop without its sensations. The Piccadilly branch of the London and Western Counties Bank occupies commodious premises, but Frank had never been granted the use of a private office. His big desk was in a corner remote from the counter, surrounded on three sides by a screen which was half glass and half teak paneling. From where he sat he could secure a view of the counter, a necessary provision, since he was occasionally called upon to identify the bearers of checks.

He returned a little before three o'clock in the afternoon, and Mr. Brandon, the manager, came hurriedly from his little sanctum at the rear of the premises and beckoned Frank into his office.

"You've taken an awful long time for lunch," he complained.

"I'm sorry," said Frank. "I met Miss Nuttall, and the time flew."

"Did you see Holland the other day?" the manager interrupted.

"I didn't see him on the day you sent me," replied Frank, "but I saw him on the following day."

"Is he a friend of your uncle's?"

"I don't think so. Why do you ask?"

The manager took up three checks which lay on the table, and Frank examined them. One was for eight hundred and fifty pounds six shillings, and was drawn upon the Liverpool Cotton Bank, one was for forty-one thousand one hundred and forty pounds, and was drawn upon the Bank of England, and the other was for seven thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds fourteen shillings. They were all signed "John Minute," and they were all made payable to "Rex Holland, esquire," and were crossed.

Now, John Minute had a very curious practice of splitting up payments so that they covered the three banking houses at which his money was deposited. The check for seven thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds fourteen shillings was drawn upon the London and Western Counties Bank, and that would have afforded the manager some clew even if he had not been well acquainted with John Minute's eccentricity.

"Seven thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds fourteen shillings from Mr. Minute's balance," said the manager, "leaves exactly fifty thousand pounds."

Mr. Brandon shook his head in despair at the unbusinesslike methods of his patron.

"Does he know your uncle?"

"Who?"

"Rex Holland."

Frank frowned in an effort of memory.

"I don't remember my uncle ever speaking of him, and yet, now I come to think of it, one of the first checks he put into the bank was on my uncle's account. Yes, now I remember," he exclaimed. "He opened the account on a letter of introduction which was signed by Mr. Minute. I thought at the time that they had probably had business dealings together, and as uncle never encourages the discussion of bank affairs outside of the bank, I have never mentioned it to him."

Again Mr. Brandon shook his head in doubt.

"I must say, Mr. Merril," he said, "I don't like these mysterious depositors. What is he like in appearance?"

"Rather a tall, youngish man, exquisitely dressed."

"Clean shaven?"

"No, he has a closely trimmed black beard, though he cannot be much more than twenty-eight. In fact, when I saw him for the first time the face was familiar to me and I had an impression of having seen him before. I think he was wearing a gold-rimmed eyeglass when he came on the first occasion, but I have never met him in the street, and he hardly moves in my humble social circle." Frank smiled.

"I suppose it is all right," said the manager dubiously; "but, anyway, I'll see him to-morrow. As a precautionary measure we might get in touch with your uncle, though I know he'll raise Cain if we bother him about his account."

"He will certainly raise Cain if you get in touch with him to-day," smiled Frank, "for he is due to leave by the two-twenty this afternoon for Paris."

It wanted five minutes to the hour at which the bank closed when a clerk came through the swing door and laid a letter upon the counter which was taken into Mr. Brandon, who came into the office immediately and crossed to where Frank sat.

"Look at this," he said.

Frank took the letter and read it. It was addressed to the manager, and ran:

Dear Sir: I am leaving for Paris to-night to join my partner, Mr. Minute. I shall be very glad, therefore, if you will arrange to cash the inclosed check. Yours faithfully,
Rex A. Holland.

The "inclosed check" was for fifty-five thousand pounds and was within five thousand pounds of the amount standing to Mr. Holland's account in the bank. There was a postscript to the letter:

You will accept this, my receipt, for the sum, and hand it to my messenger, Sergeant George Graylin, of the corps of commis-

sioners, and this form of receipt will serve to indemnify you against loss in the event of mishap.

The manager walked to the counter.

"Who gave you this letter?" he asked.

"Mr. Holland, sir," said the man.

"Where is Mr. Holland?" asked Frank.

The sergeant shook his head.

"At his flat. My instructions were to take this letter to the bank and bring back the money."

The manager was in a quandary. It was a regular transaction, and it was by no means unusual to pay out money in this way. It was only the largeness of the sum which made him hesitate. He disappeared into his office and came back with two bundles of notes which he had taken from the safe. He counted them over, placed them in a sealed envelope, and received from the sergeant his receipt.

When the man had gone Brandon wiped his forehead.

"Phew!" he said. "I don't like this way of doing business very much, and I should be very glad to be transferred back to the head office."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a bell rang violently. The front doors of the bank had been closed with the departure of the commissioner, and one of the junior clerks, balancing up his day book, dropped his pen, and, at a sign from his chief, walking to the door, pulled back the bolts and admitted—John Minute.

Frank stared at him in astonishment.

"Hello, uncle," he said. "I wish you had come a few moments before. I thought you were in Paris."

"The wire calling me to Paris was a fake," growled John Minute. "I wired for confirmation, and discovered my Paris people had not sent me any message. I only got the wire just before the train started. I have been spending all the afternoon getting on to the phone to Paris to untangle the muddle. Why did you wish I was here five minutes before?"

"Because," said Frank, "we have just paid out fifty-five thousand pounds to your friend, Mr. Holland."

"My friend?" John Minute stared from the manager to Frank and from Frank to the manager, who suddenly experienced a sinking feeling which accompanies disaster.

"What do you mean by 'my friend?' " asked John Minute. "I have never heard of the man before."

"Didn't you give Mr. Holland checks amounting to fifty-five thousand pounds this morning?" gasped the manager, turning pale.

"Certainly not!" roared John Minute. "Why the devil should I give him checks? I have never heard of the man."

The manager grasped the counter for support.

He explained the situation in a few halting words, and led the way to his office, Frank accompanying him.

John Minute examined the checks.

"That is my writing," he said. "I could swear to it myself, and yet I never wrote those checks or signed them. Did you note the commissionaire's number?"

"As it happens I jotted it down," said Frank.

By this time the manager was on the phone to the police. At seven o'clock that night the commissionaire was discovered. He had been employed, he said, by a Mr. Holland, whom he described as a slimmish man, clean shaven, and by no means answering to the description which Frank had given.

"I have lived for a long time in Australia," said the commissionaire, "and he spoke like an Australian. In fact, when I mentioned certain places I had been to he told me he knew them."

The police further discovered that the Knightsbridge flat had been taken, furnished, three months before by Mr. Rex Holland, the negotiations having been by letter. Mr. Holland's agent had assumed responsibility for the flat, and Mr. Holland's agent was easily discoverable in a clerk in the employment of a well-known firm of surveyors and

auctioneers, who had also received his commission by letter.

When the police searched the flat they found only one thing which helped them in their investigations. The hall porter said that, as often as not, the flat was untenanted, and only occasionally, when he was off duty, had Mr. Holland put in an appearance, and he only knew this from statements which had been made by other tenants.

"It comes to this," said John Minute grimly; "that nobody has seen Mr. Holland but you, Frank."

Frank stiffened.

"I am not suggesting that you are in the swindle," said Minute gruffly. "As likely as not, the man you saw was not Mr. Holland, and it is probably the work of a gang, but I am going to find out who this man is, if I have to spend twice as much as I have lost."

The police were not encouraging.

Detective Inspector Nash, from Scotland Yard, who had handled some of the biggest cases of bank swindles, held out no hope of the money being recovered.

"In theory you can get back the notes if you have their numbers," he said, "but in practice it is almost impossible to recover them, because it is quite easy to change even notes for five hundred pounds, and probably you will find these in circulation in a week or two."

His speculation proved to be correct, for on the third day after the crime three of the missing notes made a curious appearance.

"Ready-money Minute," true to his nickname, was in the habit of balancing his accounts as between bank and bank by cash payments. He had made it a practice for all his dividends to be paid in actual cash, and these were sent to the Piccadilly branch of the London and Western Counties Bank in bulk. After a payment of a very large sum on account of certain dividends accruing from his South African investments, three of the missing notes were discovered in the bank itself.

John Minute, apprised by telegram of the fact, said nothing; for the money had been paid in by his confidential secretary, Jasper Cole, and there was excellent reason why he did not desire to emphasize the fact.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE POPULAR ON SALE JANUARY 20TH.

SUPERB PREPAREDNESS

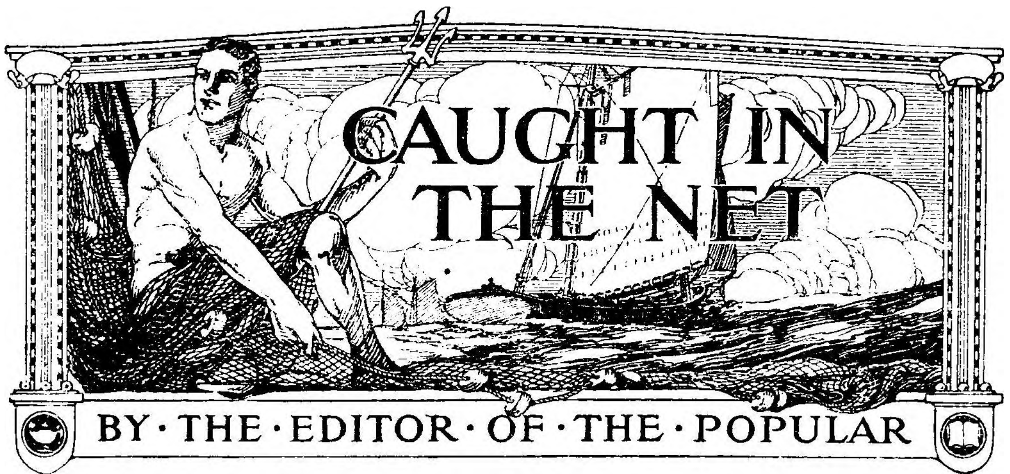
REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS HEFLIN, of Alabama, is an ardent believer in the theory that anybody who talks about peace with Germany at this stage of the proceedings is in reality an enemy of the United States. What Heflin wants is a fight, a fight to the finish, with no other object in view than the complete overthrow of kaiserism. He claims that every American, instead of questioning our preparedness, should speak to Prussianism in the spirit and words of the old mountaineer of Alabama.

This old fellow liked to take a drink of liquor now and then, but the objections of his wife were so constant, so well taken, and so convincing that he was driven to the subterfuge of hiding his jug of the oil of mirth in an old hollow tree. When opportunity offered, he repaired furtively to the secret saloon and imbibed.

One day, just after he had refreshed himself with several generous swigs, and was about to replace the jug, he saw a rattlesnake on the ground in front of him. The rattler was coiled and ready for the quick spring and fatal stab.

The mountaineer was not scared. His courage was equal to the occasion. Instead of trying to run, he looked the rattler squarely in the eyes, and defied him, thus:

"Strike, dern you, strike! You'll never find me better prepared."



HARD AND SOFT FACTS

TO the man in robust health fighting his way in the world, reality and hard facts are the things that count, and rightly, for the world is made chiefly of facts as hard as the floor of the arena where the battle of life is fought; yet the man who keeps a garden in his mind, where he cultivates even the humblest flowers, will outlast and outclass the man whose pleasure ground is a quadrangle of hard facts.

When Athos visited the great Cardinal Richelieu, he found him engaged in composing verses. When Villon visited Angers, King René, the strongest man of his time, was collecting books, art treasures—and writing verses. Charles of Orleans, who battered the Duke of Burgundy and led the charge at Agincourt, wrote "La Gentille Allouette," and cultivated ballads as other men cultivate roses. Kitchener loved flowers and his ambition was to grow them; Gladstone lived parts of his life beneath the skies of Greece, Disraeli beneath the skies of an imaginary world; Lloyd George is a poet, a pastoral poet who yet speaks in the language of guns; and John Jones runs a village store, and never will run anything else, because his store is his mind.

ALASKAN COAL FIELDS

GEOLOGICAL surveys by the United States indicate the presence of billions of tons of coal in Alaska, awaiting development. Already, under government direction, shafts are being sunk and actual mining is in progress. This work is going forward in the Matanuska coal fields, where, despite the drawbacks of limited labor supply and infant transportation facilities, good results have been obtained. Up to the present, three mines have been opened, two of them at Moose Creek, the third at Eska Creek. They are about fifty miles from tidewater, at Anchorage, a town of some five thousand inhabitants, which affords a fine harbor for the largest ships during the summer season; and they are about one hundred and fifty miles from Seward, which has an ice-free harbor. The new government railroad solves the question of haulage at reasonable rates.

The principal mine is known as "The Doherty," where a one-hundred-and-fifty-foot shaft has revealed a vein of coal of excellent quality. Present opera-

tions have many difficulties to contend against, but about sixty tons of coal are turned out every twenty-four hours. Most of it is used for government locomotives, steam shovels, and the propulsion of other United States machinery. Formerly the government had to pay from sixteen to eighteen dollars a ton for coal brought from Puget Sound and delivered at Anchorage, but the Doherty output has reduced the cost to half that price. And the cost is expected to lessen as development increases.

From the partial survey, up to date, it has been conjectured that the bulk of the Matanuska coal will be bituminous of high quality. Recently tested by the navy department, the coal was proved to be of equal value to the better grades obtained at the mines of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. There are also anthracite and lignite deposits. The quantity of Alaskan coal can only be guessed at. Mr. Alfred H. Brooks, one of the government experts connected with the Geological Survey, estimated that the minimum amount of the deposits might be conservatively reckoned at one hundred and fifty billion tons. Development of these vast deposits ought to follow apace, for the Pacific coast States will need more and more fuel, and the shortage even now is embarrassing.

One feature of the Matanuska fields ought to make a strong appeal to the adventurous-souled among us, and that is the fact that the government will lease, free of charge, ten-acre "prospects" to responsible applicants who want to try their luck at delving for the precious commodity.

We wonder how many gold prospectors will turn their attention to black diamonds?

UP FROM PIRACY

ACQUIRING a soul is a difficult process. But it can be done. Witness the improvement in neighborly amenities since that reeking age when the gastronomic urge—quite unspiritualized—dominated neighborly intercourse.

While we have acquired our individual souls, our collective souls are yet in the making. Hence the citizen has to live up to a higher grade of ethics than the State. Nations commit atrocities which would not be tolerated if done by individuals. And the juggernaut methods of capital are explained on the ground that "corporations are soulless." However, the corporations are making rapid strides toward remedying this deficiency. It was not so long ago that capital's slogan was: "Let the public be damned!" Yet it sounds like an utterance from the Dark Ages. Those picturesque days when a trust began its career as a bandit and ended as a philanthropist are passing swiftly by. For capital is developing a code of ethics—encouraged thereto by strikes and government commissions, and in time it will take its duty toward society as seriously as do older professions, the military and medical, say.

There was a period in their evolution when the fighting man and the medicine man regarded the public chiefly as loot. Now we see them defending the community welfare in time of war and plague, regardless of personal fatality—it being a matter of a soldier's honor and a doctor's ethics so to do.

Industrialism, still in the early throes of evolution, has until recently thought only of its own profits in times of public disaster. It is common knowledge that it waxed fat on the government's necessity during the Civil War. Even so late as the Spanish War it was still a sort of national pirate—sailing under

skull and crossbones—and complacently set about to scuttle the ship of state by selling embalmed beef to the soldiers.

Since then capital has developed its qualities of soul to the extent of hoisting the flag of patriotism. With the outbreak of our present war the country was pleasantly astonished to see large industries offering their plants and products to the government without profit. Such a change of heart on the part of our erstwhile freebooters revives one's hopes of the millennium. The English statesmen who visited us recently said what impressed them most was the sight of American big business men giving their time and brains free—to help the nation solve its war problems. All of which shows it is becoming unpopular—and unprofitable—to make the public walk the plank. Business is evolving from a more money-making occupation into a science of public service—the corporation is achieving a soul.

"THE SERVANT IN THE HOUSE"

WHEN the war broke out, over a hundred thousand domestic servants in England came out of the kitchen and stepped into the munitions factories. No one is quite so stupid as to think that these young women are going to trail back when peace comes. They have enjoyed regular hours of work, free evenings, semiskilled work and high wages. They will cling to their skill, and continue their work in processes of engineering when the arsenals are converted into peace factories. The writer has been recently reading a little digest of reports from five hundred and sixty-one domestic servants. They are an indictment of the life. "Repression" is the word that sums up their complaint. "Lack of companionship," the "servants' bedroom in the roof," "low wages," "loss of caste"—"He knew fellows who would introduce shopgirl sisters to their friends, but never those in service"—"indefinite hours," "no prospects"—these all reduce themselves to the statement that the life of a servant is more suppressed than that of her sister in the modern factory with war wages.

What is the answer? There are several possible answers. One is that the domestic servant will come for the day, receiving a wage at the same rate as that of the industrial worker. This is the probable line of solution for the majority. Another solution is also taking place. The rich are being taxed on excess profits, supertax, income tax, and death duties with such thoroughness that they are giving up their old-time "establishments." "The middle class" is slowly disappearing. The "lower class" is slowly rising, but they have never kept servants. In short, the "domestic servant," as we knew her a generation ago, is ceasing to exist.

BRAIN STUFF

YOU have noticed in everyday life the oft-repeated allusions to the composition of our skulls and their contents. "Bonehead" and "ivory dome" are favorites, and we have heard our cranium called a "bean" and a "nut," and had it rapped on as a substitute for wood. Such similes and treatment made us curious as to the real make-up of the human brain, so we investigated. We were taken aback to learn that our brains were water principally, between 90% and 95%, according to the highest authority, the remainder being a phosphorized fat with a trace of mineral salts and sulphur. The cells of the brain are so minute that they tax the powers of the microscope. Their actual

number has been estimated at between six hundred millions and sixteen hundred millions in a single brain. And the saddest part of this staggering accounting is that the cleverest of us do not use more than a mere fraction of our share of cells.

But what is the *thinking* substance? Science has asked this question for a long time. A half century or so ago a famous philosopher declared that without phosphorus there would be no thought. His dictum spread far and wide. We witness one of its effects to-day in the popular notion that fish, a food rich in phosphorus, is good for the brain. But an idiot might live on a diet of fish for forty years without improvement. That brings us to another peculiar characteristic of the human brain: Its weight has nothing to do with its intelligence, apparently. Idiots have frequently had a vast bulk of physical brain. The secret of brain power is thought to lie in its convolutions and cellular formation. But chemists have weighed and analyzed brains in vain effort to determine what produces a Shakespeare or a Wagner. At best the physical gives poor explanation of the spiritual.

Three pounds avoirdupois is about the weight of the average brain, or, to be more exact, about forty-nine ounces, which is fourteen hundred centimeters. Following is the weight in centimeters of some famous brains, with poetry and fiction in the lead:

Dollinger, 1,207; Harless, 1,238; Gambetta, 1,294; Liebig, 1,392; Birchoff, 1,452; Broca, 1,485; Gauss, 1,492; Agassiz, 1,512; Thackeray, 1,644; Schiller, 1,781; Cuvier, 1,821; Turgenieff, 2,012; Byron, 2,238.

THE BALANCE

JUSTICE is represented as standing with a sword in one hand and a balance in the other; this representation might more truly figure Nature.

Nature's occupations are many, but the endeavor to make things balance is not the least of them. If the herring shoals were to multiply at will the result would be disastrous; if flies were not checked by all sorts of means the world would die under a cloud of flies.

On all hands we have appalling living forces, as in the hordes of insect life; forces that, should they be released from the checks put upon their power of expansion, would destroy us as surely as fire, and far more horribly. One does not like even to imagine a world destroyed by earwigs.

Nature keeps the balance chiefly with the sword. She destroys in order that we may live. People may ask why, if she is so clever, does she not put a limit on overproduction? Why does she not prevent billions of little herrings being born only to be destroyed. The answer partly is that she overproduces to give food to the destroyers, to give exercise to the destroyers, and to distribute the destroyers.

Swallows do not go to the South in winter for the sake of the climate—they go for food. In the sea all the restaurants are movable, and to dine you have to travel many miles an hour, and incidentally visit many localities you would not otherwise visit, for the sake of fishermen who may catch you and eat you. So the balance is kept, not only of numbers but of distribution, and the further we go into this matter the more clearly do we see the workings of an intelligence beside which the intelligence of man seems small indeed.

Up Liberty Hill

By Ellis Parker Butler

Author of "The Ambition of Barnabee Holt," Etc.

For a change, the humorist sacrifices your smile to a serious reflection, and brings to your notice the Debt Doctor, a man with a new and creative idea for common use. We know that Liberty Bonds are a tremendous incentive to thrift, and it is enough to say that the Liberty Hill Plan of the Debt Doctor is a complement thereto

SEVEN days after Brann's thirty-sixth birthday Ella received the telegram from Riverside. It contained just four words—"Father died this morning"—and was signed by Ella's cousin, Jessie. A few days later Ella received the letter from Jessie telling of the old man's peaceful demise, and in the letter was one sentence that was like a sentence of eternal servitude to Brann: "Father, in his will, leaves me a life interest in the estate; everything else goes to the hospital outright." This ended Brann's hope of anything coming from that source, and there was no other source.

Ella wept over the letter, tears that were in part because of the death of the kindly old man and in part because of the dull hopelessness of the future that he might so easily have made happy. Jessie's father had been Ella's only uncle. It was a disappointment, and a rather bitter one, that he had left nothing to them, but Sam and Ella did not mention this, even to each other. It meant that they must go on as they had been going, with the three children growing up and being more of an expense each year, the poor furniture getting shabby, and Sam's forehead showing deeper and deeper creases of worry.

The troubles of the Branns were not uncommon troubles. Except for Ella's operation—and that had turned out favorably four years before—they were nothing, as the saying is, that money could not cure. Sam Brann, after his marriage, had crept up to one hundred and fifty dollars a month in salary, and there he had clung—hung on for dear life—because of the debts that worried him, the mouths to feed, and the bodies to house and clothe.

Both he and Ella had hoped, not unreasonably, that Ella's Uncle Henry would leave them a few dollars. They had looked forward—not eagerly, but with due regret for the event that must occur some time—to a possibility that Uncle Henry's will would set Sam free. They felt bound hand and foot, and especially brain bound, by the debts. They hung like a dark menace over their lives, taking away all joy, making life a wearisome thing and making work a treadmill. Work should not be that. Work should be a pleasant satisfaction or a sane adventure in search of fortune.

The load of debt had taken the snap out of Sam Brann, and now it was drying the sap out of him. At thirty-six he felt old, and hated to feel so. He knew he was a better man than he had shown himself to be. He was confident he could hold down a bigger job than he held at Morley's, but he simply did not dare to cut loose from that sure one hundred and fifty a month. What he saw was himself using his talents as a life-insurance agent. He was so sure he could make good at that that he would have thrown up his job at Morley's in a minute—if it had not been for Ella and the kids and

those debts. The debts were eight hundred dollars.

Of their disappointment when their hope of something from Uncle Henry failed they said but this:

"Well," said Ella, "I suppose we will just go on as we have been going."

"I don't see what else we can do," Sam answered.

Nor did he see what else they could do, but he could not keep from wondering whether there was not something to be done. And every time he tried to think what could be done the thought of those debts came like a mist before his eyes and befogged his brain. They were like a fog wall across the road. As old man Strout said, they gave him the blind eye. They blinded him so that he could not see a way out.

Nevertheless, Sam Brann, angered by the thought that Ella had to patch and scrape and save and go without, tried to think of a way out.

It was one night, after he and Ella had gone to bed, that he decided. He had been reading in bed a book that was more interesting than any novel to him—"The Modern Insurance Agent"—and he got out of bed to extinguish the electric light.

"If I hadn't been fool enough to get married," he thought, "I could cut away from Morley to-morrow. A man is an idiot to marry when he——"

He turned for a last glance round the room. He went to the crib at the foot of the bed to see that the baby was tucked in.

"Poor kid!" he said, thinking of the near poverty the baby was to grow up to.

Then, as he went back to his own bed to turn out the light that was at its head, his eyes rested on Ella. She was sleeping, with her head resting on one cheek and one arm thrown above her head. Even after all these hard years, her nightdress showed that she wished to appear attractive to his eyes. It had a row of cheap insertion lace and an edging of lace, but it was so old that the fabric was rotten and it had torn across her breast. She had mended it carefully, but where the tear had been the stitching showed like a white scar.

Sam Brann stood for several minutes looking down at his sleeping wife. He remembered how much younger she had looked when he had married her.

"It's worry," he said. "Poor girl!" And then and there he decided to do what he had more than once thought of doing. It was not murder. It was not suicide. It was nothing like that, and yet—to many men—it has often been a sort of suicide. He decided to borrow money to pay his debts, and to borrow it in the only way a man in his position could borrow it.

II.

At the door of the loan shark's office, Sam Brann paused, hesitating with his hand on the knob. He looked back along the corridor, but no one was in sight in the whole long, narrow, tile-floored hall. This relieved him somewhat, but, in addition to his reluctance to be seen entering Strout's, he had still some reluctance to take the step the opening of the door would initiate. Then he drew a deep breath and opened the door.

"Just inside the door," his friend Coston had told him that morning on the train to town, "you will find a girl—a woman of about thirty-five—sitting at a desk. You won't see Strout; he's seldom there. The girl will ask you what you want, and when you tell her she will slide a blank at you and ask you to fill it in, and she will go on with her work as if you did not exist. When you've got it filled in you shove it at her and she'll tell you to come back at such an hour on such a day. It's easy. With a man like you there won't be any trouble. You go back and get your money and sign the note; that's all."

"But if you take my advice," said Berkley, "you won't go near the place. I've been there! After my wife was sick I tried it. I was eight years between the teeth of that shark—eight years! I'll bet I paid him five hundred dollars for a two-hundred-dollar loan. Oh, more than that! They eat you

alive, those loan sharks. They suck your blood. It's like Coston says; it is easy to get in, but say! It's the devil and all to get out again. Keep away from them, Brann. You'll be sorry."

"I don't know that I'll try it," said Brann. "I just wondered about it. Who was that one you mentioned, Coston? I might as well have his address."

"You leave him alone, Brann," urged Berkley.

"His name's Strout. He's in the Mammoth Building, fifteenth floor, I think."

That very afternoon Brann had asked Morley for an hour or so, and now he was standing just inside the door that bore an inscription in gilt letters:

"E. STROUT, LOANS."

The room was much as Coston had described it, but as Brann closed the door behind him he noticed some things Coston had not mentioned. The desk at which the girl of thirty-five was supposed to sit stood where he had said it would be, just outside the railing, but the girl of thirty-five was not there. In a far corner of the room, which was small, a bookkeeper stood at a tall desk, thumbing over a pile of record cards and making entries in a ledger. He had a thin, hard face, and chewed gum with quick, hard movements of his jaw. He did not look up when Brann came in.

At another desk, just inside the railing, another man sat with his back to the door, bending over a record book of considerable size, running down its columns with a pen.

There was not much wall space in the room, but where there was space a motto or picture hung. There were three pictures. One was a portrait of Billy Sunday with his fist raised in a vigorous elocutionary pose, a second was a good portrait of Henry Ward Beecher, the third was a trashy lithograph of the "Rock of Ages," with a splashy blue sea and a maiden with long, golden hair clinging to a heavy stone cross. The framed mottoes were not the usual "This is My Busy Day" sort. They were: "God Rules," "Honesty is the Best Policy," and even "Do As You Would Be Done By."

"The hypocrite!" thought Brann, and then the man at the desk turned suddenly and looked up at Brann. He was an old man. His face was seamed and cross-wrinkled, his hair long and white, but quite thin on top. As he looked at Brann he adjusted his rimless spectacles.

"Well, my friend," he asked, "what can I do for you?"

"I want to borrow some money," said Brann, coloring. "A friend of mine——"

"This is the place," said the old man. "Come in."

Brann fumbled with the catch of the railing gate and entered. He took the seat the old man indicated. Brann was perspiring with nervous shame. He felt as most those who entered Strout's door for the first time felt. Later, when they came to make the payments on the principal, and to pay the outrageous interest and to renew their notes for principal and interest, they felt otherwise, for the loan shark is the last resort of the beaten dog. Those who go there feel as an honest man always feels when he accepts assistance from a crook. No one likes to be seen entering or leaving a pawnshop, but a pawnbroker is an honest gentleman compared with the loan shark. Brann felt that his face was red and burning.

The old man closed the record book he had been studying and drew from a desk drawer a blank covered with questions.

"If you will just fill this out?" he suggested, and handed Brann a pen. Then he leaned back in his chair and took up a small, black-covered book and read to himself while Brann studied the blank and filled in the answers to the question. When the old man put down the book to receive the blank from Brann, Brann noticed what it was. It was a copy of the New Testament.

"Quite right!" said the old man. "All

shipshape, I should say. Can you come back, say, Tuesday at three? Quite right! Good day, sir!"

Brann hurried out.

III.

That night Brann told Ella what he had done.

"Won't you have to pay frightful interest, Sam?" she asked. "I've always heard that men who lend money like that just rob the people who borrow from them. Don't you have to pay a bonus or something every time the note is renewed?"

"That's not the question with me, Ella," said Sam. "Old Strout has not talked terms to me yet, but his terms are not what I am interested in. It is this thing of being in debt to forty different people and all of them worrying me all the time. I get so I can't think. It is as if I was in the middle of a flock of vultures and all of them flying at me so that I have to spend all my time beating them off. Strout may be a bigger vulture than any one of them, but he will be only one. I'll have time to think between his attacks. And, honey, when I get him paid up I'm going to get into the insurance game just as quick as I can."

"Of course you must do what you think best, Sam," his wife said.

He had amused her somewhat by telling her of the office, with its highly religious legends and portraits, and of Strout, who looked like a gospel shouter. "The mean, little, dried-up cuss," he called him. Tuesday at three, however, he was back in Strout's office, ready to accept whatever terms the loan shark proposed.

Strout and his bookkeeper were alone again, the bookkeeper as grimly indifferent as ever.

"Come in! Come in!" Strout exclaimed as he saw Brann. He put down the Testament he had been reading and turned his wrinkled face toward Brann, looking through the young man, studying him.

"My name is Brann," said Sam. "You told me to call to-day about a loan. I left an application blank——"

The old man chuckled, as at some good joke known to him alone.

"Hee! hee!" he cackled. "You think I'm Eli, don't you? I'm Elias. Eli was the money lender. He was my brother; he's dead. God rest his soul!" He shook his head slowly, and then repeated rather mournfully: "God rest his soul!"

Brann had seated himself at the old man's side. Now he arose.

"Sit down! Sit down!" said the old man. "Maybe I'll be better than Eli."

He fumbled in a pigeonhole until he found the blank Brann had filled out.

"Why did you want to borrow money from a loan shark?" he asked, looking up at Brann again. "Eli was that. He gripped 'em and he strangled 'em. He's dead now, God rest his soul! How many did he grip and strangle, Hoskins?"

"Something over twelve thousand, all told," said the bookkeeper, and shut his jaw on his chewing gum again with a snap.

"Dreadful! Dreadful!" said the old man mournfully. "But I'm making amends; yes, I'm making amends. They keep coming here, poor fellows. Like you," he said, with something like suddenness, to Brann. Then he chuckled. "They come to the loan shark and they find the Debt Doctor."

His eyes actually twinkled as he said it. He put a thin hand on Brann's arm.

"That's what most of 'em need, a Debt Doctor," he said. "I thought of it myself. To make amends for Eli. Eli is dead, God rest his poor soul!"

He shot his thin arm toward another pigeonhole and put a printed slip in Brann's hand.

"Read it!" he ordered.

Brann took the slip and read what was printed on its two sides: "Let the Debt Doctor collect your slow accounts," it began. It was a well-written circular. "If I can collect a dollar here and a dollar there from your slow debtors," it said, "and you put the money in a savings bank at four per

cent, in a few years you will have enough to discount all your bills." There were tables showing how the dollar here and the dollar there, put in the savings bank, increased. "Don't fret and fume to collect an old debt in a lump; let the Debt Doctor collect it little by little, the only way a slow debtor can pay."

There was much to that effect. The same thing was repeated over and over in different words, all insisting that the creditor accept small payments on account and bank them as a special fund. Brann handed the slip back to Elias Strout.

"Yes," he said, "but I wanted to borrow; I have no debts I want collected."

"And I don't collect debts," grinned old Elias. "Young man, I'm almost twice as old as you are. I can talk to you like a father. Tell me, right out, how do you feel about yourself?"

"Feel? About myself?" asked Sam, puzzled.

"Feel you are a big success in life, do you?" asked old Strout.

"Lord, no!" said Brann impulsively.

"Don't take the name of the Lord in vain," said Elias severely. "Well, then, what do you think of yourself?"

"Oh, I'm a failure," said Brann rather hopelessly. "I'm one of the under dogs they tell about. I've got a miserable salary, I'm eight hundred dollars in debt, it takes about all I earn to pay living expenses, I've got a wife and three children to support——"

Elias chuckled in his dry way again.

"And you are a failure," he said. "Just so! Don't seem worth while for such a failure to go on living, does it? How long have you been married?"

"Fifteen years," said Brann.

Old Elias consulted the blank Brann had filled in.

"Right!" he said. "You've supported a wife fifteen years. Cost you not less than three hundred dollars at the lowest each year. That's forty-five hundred dollars. One child eleven years old cost you at least one hundred dollars a year, eleven hundred dollars. One child eight years old, eight years at one hundred dollars, eight hundred dollars. One child four years old, say three hundred dollars to date. That is sixty-seven hundred dollars you've paid out on account of the community, ain't it? I don't count your own support—every man is expected to earn his own living—but I'm figuring up what you've been worth to the community. You've produced three children and paid for the keep of them and your wife sixty-seven hundred dollars, and you owe eight hundred dollars. I don't see where the failure comes in, my son. Your community value shows a surplus of fifty-eight hundred dollars and three children. That's success for any man. Why, my friend, you've carried a load worth sixty-seven hundred to the community, and you had to run in debt only eight hundred dollars while you were doing it! That's fine! That's great!"

"A good part of the debt was for an operation my wife had to have," said Brann.

"Yes, think of that! Repairs for the good of the community!" said old Elias rather excitedly. "Why, you ought to be proud! Listen, is a bachelor who reaches thirty-six and is free from debt a good community asset? Absolutely! He has a right to feel proud of himself. And you have reached thirty-six, supported a wife, produced three children, and owe only a trifling eight hundred dollars. Why, my dear man, if that bachelor is worth par to the community you are worth three hundred and sixty! You have no reason to think poorly of yourself."

Brann looked with amusement at the excited old man.

"You fellows always think of money in the bank," said old Strout. "If you haven't money in the bank you think you are failures. And you are only thirty-six years old! Why, my son, the average man don't begin to amass a competence until he is forty-five. If a man begins to pile up money before he is forty it is most unusual. And you are only thirty-six." He turned toward the gum-chewing bookkeeper.

"Hoskins," he said briskly, "give me that Bradbury chart."

The bookkeeper turned to a file and handed old Elias a stiff sheet of paper. Strout spread it out on the desk.

"See that title at the top?" he asked. "Says 'Liberty Hill.' I thought of that. I got up this chart. I thought of this whole idea. I sell these charts. Until Eli died I went about the country selling them. But brother Eli was such a rascal, such an eternal old shark—he did so much evil—that when he died and left me his money I just said I would come here and squat in his office and try to make up for some of the evil he did. And I'm doing it, son; I'm doing it! They keep coming here for loans and I set 'em right."

Brann examined the chart carelessly. The heavy paper was quadrille ruled—ruled into small squares—with a heavy line ruled at the top. Down the right-hand margin the rows of squares were marked five dollars, ten dollars, fifteen dollars, and so on, each horizontal row representing five dollars. The up-and-down rows were marked with months—January, February, March, and so on. On this Bradbury chart a rough line began at January, 1899, and zigzagged up and across the chart until it reached the heavy line at the top in the row of squares marked May, 1903. The whole affair was greasy and soiled, as if it had been handled innumerable times.

"Hoskins," said old Elias, "what is Bradbury now?"

"General manager of the U. & G. Biscuit Company, salary fifteen thousand dollars," said the bookkeeper briefly.

"Was getting six hundred dollars a year, owed debts of three hundred and sixty, had a wife and baby, was thirty-two years old and thought he was a failure when I sold him the first chart I ever sold," said old Elias. "See, here he starts his line at three hundred and sixty dollars. It goes up five dollars the first month, seven and a half the second, ten dollars the next. It goes up and up and up. Here it goes down ten dollars—Christmas he bought something for the wife and baby and let the grocer wait a month—but it goes up eleven dollars the next month. Here he hits the Freedom Line. That's a Liberty Hill for you!"

"Some men can save enough out of their salaries——" Brann began.

"Bradbury couldn't," chuckled old Elias. "That's the point; he couldn't. He had the 'blind eye.' Have you got the 'blind eye?' "

"What's that?" asked Brann.

"When you try to think of your affairs the debts you owe come down over your eyes like a soft, black shutter," said Elias. "They are always there, in your brain, just above your eyes, ready to flop down and blind your thoughts. Honest, now, don't you think of your debts as a distressing mass, a soft, black wall you can't push through, something that keeps you from seeing the future clearly?"

"Why, yes," said Brann hesitatingly. "If I could just throw them aside and see ahead a few years——"

"This does it!" exclaimed old Strout, slapping the Bradbury chart. "You take the black wall, the eye-blinding something that worries you, and you turn it into a line and start it here. Then it is no longer something awful and mysterious; it is a line that you have to make climb up the chart month by month, up Liberty Hill to Freedom Heights."

IV.

For a minute Brann stared at the chart.

Said old Elias: "The way you do it is this: You buy a chart from me and take it home and show it to your wife and your children. You start your line at the bottom of your hill and you say: 'That's where we are now. When that line gets to here'—and you show them the Freedom Line—'we will be free. Every month the line climbs upward is a glad month; every month it slips back a square is a sad month. We'll all try to help, won't we, mother?' That's what you will say. Your wife will say: 'We certainly will!' Wives always say that. Then you put the chart where you and your wife can

see it every day. On your bedroom wall is a good place."

Old Strout chuckled again.

"You'll break your necks to get that line up Liberty Hill," he said. "A dollar here and a dollar there; it is easy with the chart to urge you on and encourage you. And that's where this circular comes in."

He gave Brann again the circular headed "Let the Debt Doctor collect your slow accounts."

"I don't collect accounts," he said. "This is just to give your creditors the idea that small payments on old accounts are worth taking. They've been nagging you to pay up in full or you wouldn't have come here to borrow from a shark. They get this circular; you happen in and offer to pay a dollar now and then as you can save it; they jump at the chance, because the circular has prepared them for it."

"It strikes me as childish," said Brann.

"Why?"

"It looks as if I had to coax myself with a sort of picture thing," Brann said.

"The chart? Why, my dear young man, the chart is the one great discovery of modern business. I took the idea from big business, from the biggest business. Railroads, Standard Oil, banks, the governments—they all use charts. A board of directors can't meet without a chart on the table. I'm a director in a small bank over in Jersey; we have a chart showing the deposits and how they have increased year by year, month by month, week by week. It is the first thing we look at when we enter the directors' room. Everybody is overworked there; all trying to get the bank in good, profit-paying shape. Only yesterday the cashier said to me: 'Strout, I'm about worked out, but I won't quit. That chart is keeping me going.' That's what charts do—keep us going. Up and up! 'Excelsior' applied to business and turned into a picture, into a moving picture that changes week by week or month by month."

Strout was right. Modern business is done on charts. You can't talk with a big-business man ten minutes before he begins to talk about his charts, his summer "peaks" and his winter "valleys." It is always, "We expect to push our gross sales up" to some point not yet reached or, "We hit a new peak without profits" last week or last month or last year. In spite of himself Brann's brain began to itch for a chart, with a line that he could begin pushing upward.

"But the main reason I wanted to borrow a lump sum," he said, "was so I could cut loose from this poor job I have and get into another line—life insurance."

"My son," said old Strout, "if you think you can make good in life insurance, or anything else, don't wait. There are two times when it is safe for a man to try a new field. One is when he had a lot of money in the bank; the other is when he is in debt over his ears. In the first instance he can stand a loss; in the second a loss won't hurt him."

"But my family?"

"Might starve, eh, while you are getting on your feet?" grinned Strout. "How many starving families do you see? My friend, there is a great deal more talk about failure than there are failures. Think of the failures you know——"

"I'm about the only one," said Brann.

"You're not a failure," said Strout angrily, as if Brann had offered him a personal insult. "You haven't tried anything that you could fail at. Wake up! Put your debts on a chart! Try something!"

"How much are the charts?" asked Brann.

"One dollar," said Elias. "Hoskins, give this young man a No. 9 chart."

V.

That night Brann took the chart home and showed it to his wife with a feeling of mild shame, fearing she would accuse him of silliness. She listened while he explained its psychology.

"There is a good place for it between the clothes closet and the dresser," was what she said.

"But what do you think of it, Ella?" Sam asked. "Will you help me push the line up Liberty Hill?"

"Sam, you know I'm always willing to do everything I can. Of course. I was just thinking it was a pity—but, of course, we can do that later."

"Do what?"

"Why, make another chart, so Liberty Hill can go on climbing after it passes the Freedom Line," said Ella.

She was a little tremulous and doubtful when Sam told her he had decided to leave Morley and plunge into the insurance field immediately.

"Don't you think we ought to wait until we push Liberty Hill above the Freedom Line, Sam?" she asked.

"No, I don't," he said, "but I won't try it without your approval. The one important thing is that Liberty Hill. But listen, Ella——"

He explained why he thought he could make a success in the insurance line. He told her the methods and plans he had thought out.

"But I thought people never wanted insurance," she said. "I thought it was something that had to be forced on them."

"That's just where my plan differs," said Brann. "I'm going into the business on the theory that people do want insurance, and I know it is the right theory. Why, Ella, there is to-day more money invested in insurance policies than in any other form of investment in the world, I do believe. Now, when I go to a man——"

Brann made the plunge at the end of the month. The next month was one of somewhat hard sledding for the Branns, but Liberty Hill went upward like a steep cliff because when Sam went to his creditors to ask them to accept a dollar now and a dollar then he found they were willing to take out policies with him if he would pay all, or nearly all, his commission on his old accounts. Before the next month had passed he was well in the harness. He was placing policies with the friends he had counted on and opening the subject of insurance with new prospects—laying the foundations for future business.

He found that being forced to use his own resources of brain and initiative was giving him new belief in himself, and, at the same time, he found that the insurance business was not such an unsupported affair as he had imagined. Back of him was the whole great company, every energy exerted to make his work easier.

VI.

Exactly two years and three months after he had gone to old Strout for a loan Brann went back to the office in the Mammoth Building. The day before he had paid the surgeon the last dollar of the bill for Ella's operation, and, although it was not yet the end of the month, he and Ella had carried the line of Liberty Hill to the Freedom Line, marking the chart with pen and ink.

When he entered the office old Elias sat at his desk, seemingly no older, still reading his New Testament. He looked up and seemed to recognize something familiar in Brann's face.

"You don't know me?" said Sam. "I'm Samuel Brann. You sold me a chart a little over two years ago. I just thought I would drop in and say I have run Liberty Hill up to the Freedom Line."

Old Elias put down his book.

"Yes, yes," he said. "They all do. Hoskins, let me have one of the Mount Independence charts." He looked at Brann through his rimless spectacles, took in his clean-cut face, his pleased smile. "Give me one of the five-year charts, ruled for a ten-thousand-dollar hill," he said.

"That ought to be about right," said Brann.

On the Square

By Charles A. Bonfils

Author of "Bo-rees—Accessory After the Fact," Etc.

All the world was a bluff and a sham to this confidence man, and when he received his death sentence at the hands of his physician, he met it with the same amount of faith that he had in everything else

SAY that again, doc; I didn't quite make you—in spots."

"Bad Bill" Wilson—there was another in town held to be respectable—looked up at Doctor Petrie, a smile, which he didn't feel, wrinkling unpleasantly his tallowy, heavy face, his small blue eyes serious and sharp. The physician's odd appearance usually brought a smile to the lips of most people seeing him for the first time. His thick, sandy hair, streaked with gray, stood up stiffly in spite of careful parting and brushing, giving him an air of wild distraction which his mild, staring, round blue eyes and calm, youthful face belied. His gaudy vest of ancient cut and pattern was crossed from the top pockets by a heavy-linked watch chain; a large gold-nugget stickpin ornamented his much awry, sky-blue four-in-hand which had climbed halfway up his straight collar. His Oxford shoes were very yellow and very shiny. Entirely at odds with his aging hair was his boyish figure, as, indeed, his whole appearance was at odds with his reputation—that of one of the most careful and successful physicians in the Rocky Mountain region. He looked like an amateur bunko artist. Wilson, the patient, looked like a staid, sedentary, prosperous business man.

But Wilson's smile was not of amusement; it was to keep up his courage. He listened to the grave, easy voice of the physician explaining what he had just told him, ending with: "I don't want to frighten you unnecessarily, but you should know the truth——"

"Yes, give it to me straight, doc," Wilson urged. "I want to know the worst."

"It may happen at any time now—ten minutes from now, ten years from now, and without the slightest warning," the physician went on. "It is organic, something that neither medicine nor an operation can reach. The only thing that you can do is to take the best care of yourself; avoid all excitement, quit smoking—I believe, though, you said you didn't smoke—quit any stimulants, don't walk upstairs where you can possibly avoid it; better still, not at all. Don't overeat; don't worry; don't hurry. With what I have said before, I believe that's about all."

"Outside of them things I kin do what I like, eh?" Wilson grinned almost maliciously. "You might say I'm a well man."

Holding to the handrail, he walked carefully down the stairs from the physician's stuffy little office and out into the balmy evening. The street formed one side of the courthouse square, the broad walks of which, lined along the inner side with light iron benches and backed by broad lawns that surrounded the tall, sallow brown building, were a notable loafing place in fine weather for the poorer sick and convalescents of the city. Here came the pitiable thousands who suffered from that vampirelike disease that keeps its victims white as bone—the white plague.

Although the trees were still bare, it being early in April, the unusual warmth of the day had coaxed the

grass out in a rush of tender green that turned the lawns into long strips and curving angles of rich velvet. Wilson crossed over, seeking a place to rest, to think it over. He felt aged, feeble, helpless, as would a man who met suddenly for the first time a difficulty that could not be "fixed" or "squared:" Death, himself unassailable, not to be bribed, taking his own sure time.

Wilson had no difficulty in finding an unoccupied bench, for there were few invalids out so late. He took one that faced the principal street; he wanted the reassuring scenes of everyday life, activity, the companionship of crowds, the friendliness of lights, the solace of motion.

It was dinner time; the sidewalk was crowded with hurrying people flowing in a steady, eager stream eastward toward the residence part of the city. The street lamps suddenly flashed on, clusters of large, round globes, glowing like enormous yellow pearls, linking themselves in perspective into two perfectly graduated necklaces fit for the bright, clean, lively street, and in between, in a steady, silent procession, glided the rubber-shod automobiles, swift and easy like launches on a stream.

It was a goodly sight, a warming, hopeful one to a man who had just received a death sentence. He wondered that he had never before realized how beautiful it was, how happy a man should be who had his part in it, and he had had his part in it, disreputable though it was, for years, at all hours, day and night. His soul revolted; swiftly his anger turned upon the brash little doctor who had sat in judgment and pronounced sentence upon him.

After all, what did he know, this doctor?

All the world was a bluff and a sham, and if a confidence man didn't know that, who should? There was nobody in the whole town on the square, neither man nor woman. If the most respected judge in town had been on the level, not willing to listen to reason when spoken by a powerful ward leader, Wilson would not at the time be sitting on a bench on this street; he would be in the penitentiary. If the police department had been on the square he would not have been able to work the suckers that annually drifted into town, work them with the strap trick, the lock trick, the lost-pocketbook trick, the soap-wrapping fraud, and even gold bricks, as he had been doing for fifteen years.

Why, hadn't he sold a block of fake mining stock only the month before to a highly respected banker from out of town, who thought he was buying it from a dying man who didn't know its value? And didn't he and Jack Salmon sell a gold brick to a pious deacon who believed he was robbing a drunken Indian—the chief of police getting his bit, of course. There was the "fixed" horse race he and Salmon pulled only a year before, when with horses, race, suddenly dying jockey, and all they took in a famous surgeon. Why, the whole world was bluffing and kidding itself all the time. Every man he had ever "bunked" had been trying to cheat some one else.

This doctor told him that he had to make up his mind to look Death in the face every hour, every second of the day and night, to be ready to meet him at every turn, and yet to look straight ahead. It was a pretty tough proposition for a man who had never known a sick day in his life, who had lived life any way he wanted to, any and all hours, any and all kinds of life, to be suddenly brought to a halt by a cheap little doctor's claim that he had a deadly weak heart. That heart had kept going for fifty years and over, and had never made a protest before a week ago. Likely enough the doctor thought he would scare him, have him come trotting round every day or so for the good, fat fees in it. If he was on the square, he was the first man Bad Bill Wilson had ever met who was.

"You got 'em, too?" A weak, husky voice at his elbow suddenly recalled Wilson to where he was.

He turned to see a bloodless face

staring out of the dark at him. Despite its pallor, its emaciation, the painfully flat cheeks, the skin drawn tight over the cheek bones, it was a young face—that of a boy scarcely twenty. Wilson did not need a look at the dry hair, harsh as husks, nor the feverishly bright eyes, to know him for what he was—a victim of the white plague.

"Got what?" he inquired in reply to the boy's question.

"The bugs; the mikes," the boy replied. He leaned over out of the intricate shadow of the bare limbs of a tree, and Wilson saw that he was smiling, a smile of ghastly, humorous fellowship in the confraternity waiting for Death. He saw, too that the boy's heavy ulster, much too large for the small body it infolded was worn threadbare around the bony white wrists.

"The—the——" Wilson paused, disliking even to repeat the words.

"Mikes—bugs—microbes," the boy explained, smiling. "I thought you had 'em, too. I've seen a lot of big, fat fellows like you that looked all right on the outside, but were gone on the inside, like some apples. Thought you were like me; had the 'con.'"

"No, nothing like that," Wilson assured him. "I'm sick, though, in a way," he confided, with a sudden, grateful feeling for the comradeship. "The doc says it's here." He laid a large, soft hand over his heart. "Says I may bump off any minute." He smiled, making a brave front before the boy. "Just found it out this afternoon," he went on, seeking sympathy for the first time in his life. "Come kinda sudden; brought face to face with the old Enemy without expecting it."

"Yep, kinda tough—at first," the boy answered nonchalantly. "But you'll get used to it in a little while, and then it's nothing."

Wilson stole a swift, angry look at him. Was he kidding, he wondered, kidding him, a man at whose elbow Death was standing? Or was he bluffing, kidding himself, with this cool way of looking at it? Surely no man could face Death with such easy assurance. Yet this boy was standing at the edge of the grave; Wilson had seen many of them in his years in this city of last resort for them, and he knew the signs. The kid was just being smart, just bluffing, like all the world.

"Yep, I guess a fellow can git used to anything," he replied to the boy, a note of sarcasm coming into his voice in spite of himself. The boy was quick to catch it.

"A fellow doesn't think so at first; at least I didn't," he hastily consoled him. "I remember when the doctor told me, and told me, too, I would have to hike out here; I thought I'd drop, but I didn't. After a few months of it it didn't seem so bad."

"One attack may carry me off," Wilson told him, gloomily resentful.

"I've had two, and the third will get me," the boy answered without emotion. "But it may never come at that," he went on hopefully. "If I could just get the proper food I'd be all right, the doctor says."

So, after all, the boy *was* just bluffing. He was filled with hope. He did not believe he was going to die; he felt he had a chance, Wilson reflected; felt that he could be cured, while the doctor had assured him that there was no cure for heart trouble such as his.

"If I could only get the right kind of eats," the boy went on; "fresh eggs and milk and plenty of open air, I'd get well. The supper I had to-night over at The Ideal was fierce. Cost me twenty-five cents, too, and I could hardly eat a bite of it. Don't ever go over there for grub." Wilson knew the restaurant for one of the poorest in town.

"I wish I could get out in the country to the Brotherhood Colony," the boy added. "Then I'd get well sure."

"Why don't you go?" grumbled Wilson.

"Costs too much," he explained. "It wouldn't do any good to go out there for just a little while. A fellow would have to stay three months, maybe four or five. That would cost a hundred dollars; it's five a week. I got only twenty-five, and no more coming in."

"What'll you do?" Wilson asked, looking at him sharply.

"Oh, I don't know; county hospital, if they'll take me. If not—well, it'll just be walk the streets, I guess. I don't know of anything else."

"You say you got twenty-five dollars?" Wilson asked him, the instincts of his business strong in him, banishing even the oppressive memory of his recent doom.

"Just twenty-five; not a cent more in the world. When that's gone I'm on the street."

"Say how'd you like to double that, triple it?" Wilson tempted him. "I know a place where I believe I could run that into a hundred for you."

"Gee! If you only could!" The boy leaned toward him in his eagerness. "It might mean life to me."

"Mind, now, I don't say I can; I just think I can," Wilson warned him. "Where you expect big returns you gotta take some risk, though I believe I can turn that twenty-five a couple of times for you." He smiled benevolently. Back at his regular work, pitiably small though it was, made him feel almost happy for the moment.

"I'll, I'll—take any reasonable risk," the boy ended with a rush. "If I make it, I've got a chance for life; if I don't—well, it's only bringing the other thing much closer. Maybe you was sent to save me."

"The miserable hypocrite," Wilson reflected. "Oh, no, the idea of death did not scare him at all! He didn't want to live. Oh, no!"

"What kinda game is it?" the boy asked. "How you going to double it, triple the money?"

"Races," Wilson answered impressively; "races. There's a pool room in town that sells pools on the night tracks—ever play the races any?" he broke off short.

"Never played a race nor saw one in my life," the boy replied. "I lived in the country till I came here."

"Well, then," Wilson went on, assured that his victim would not detect the gross fraud, "there's a place in town that sells pools on the night races in St. Louis and New Orleans. I know one of the telegraph operators, and can git the tip on the winner half a minute before it's wrote on the board, see? Just time enough to git a bet down."

"When could we play it?" whispered the boy. "If I win I'll get well, and I'll pay it back to him."

"Why, I can play it to-night for you, if you've got the money with you," he replied briskly. "You're right, too, about paying it back. Get well; that's the idea, and then you can give it back and with interest, though, mind you, kid, I'm not sayin' that it's sure to win. Sometimes it comes off wrong an' you git stung; but it's a good sporting chance at that."

"I ain't got the money with me—it's down to my room—but I can get it in half an hour. It's only a few blocks, but I got to walk slowly."

"I'll go with you to save time," Wilson cheerfully offered. He did not propose to lose sight of such an easily plucked bird, poor though he was.

The crowd on the street had thinned to a few stragglers, for which Wilson was thankful, since the boy talked excitedly all the way down. He had never seen such a poor room as the boy's room—so dark, so cold, so dismal. It was in an old black building on a side street in a decayed part of the city. The stairs were steep, dirty, and windy. The windowless room was lighted by a grimy skylight of opaque glass—when light and air were what this boy needed above all other things. The faded wall paper, marked with greasy finger prints, was dusty and cobwebby near the ceiling; the carpet a mere pulp of dingy rags seemingly held together by its very dirt.

The enamel was flaked off the cold, white iron bed in many disfiguring scars, and the mattress, lumpy as from some terrible swellings, sagged woefully in the middle. The bed was covered with a soiled, torn counterpane, beneath which showed a cheap, highly colored quilt and a pair of thin gray blankets. The pillow was shamefully dirty. A rickety washstand covered

with oilcloth, a cracked bowl and pitcher were the only other furnishings. How it was heated, if at all, Wilson couldn't see. All of the boy's belongings were in the cheap little trunk before which he was kneeling, eagerly diving into its contents. The money in his hand, he lifted a flushed, laughing face to Wilson's grim countenance.

"It's fierce, ain't it?" he asked, reading distaste in his visitor's face. "But when you're pretty near broke you have to do the best you can. Besides, when you got the kind of sickness I got they won't let you in decent rooming houses even if you have money."

He handed his money—two ten-dollar bills and a five in an envelope—to Wilson. "If we're lucky," he exulted, "I'll hike out of this hole and over to the Colony the first thing to-morrow."

It was worse than fierce, Wilson said to himself, as they walked back up the street. It was terrible. To think of making a fight for life in such a room, little better than a cell!

At the door of a big, dark building near the square, Wilson told him to wait. "The pool room is upstairs," he whispered. "Now, kid, if you lose the money——" He stopped.

"If I lose it—well, what is coming will come just a little earlier than I thought," the boy assured him. "I'm taking a chance, that's all; my last chance."

Wilson did not even make the pretense of going upstairs. He crossed the dark rotunda, and stood before a door that led into another street. He paused a moment to listen, to see whether the boy might be following him. Then he took out the carefully kept envelope the boy had given him, looked at it, thrust one hand in it as if to count the money again. He stood hesitating with it in his hand, and then turned away from the door abruptly. Fifteen minutes, half an hour he waited, walking up and down in the dark rotunda, timing himself by his watch. Then he hurried out to the door, where the boy was waiting.

"Well, kid," he greeted him, "we've been lucky. Here's your money and a little more besides." He handed him the envelope. "I might have done better, but all but two of the races was over."

The boy started to thank him. "You don't know how much you've done for me," he began, but Wilson stopped him.

"Never mind that, kid," he interrupted. "You don't know what you've done for me. I was setting there on that bench, dreading death, 'fraid it might come any minute. I'm not afraid now; you've taught me not to be afraid. If a kid like you in such a room, and all alone, could face it smiling, not laughing only because he didn't have the breath, I guess it's up to me to look it in the face, too."

They parted at the square by the bench where they had met an hour before, the boy still full of protestation and thanks.

"You must give me that man's name," he insisted. "I want to pay him back when I get well."

"Never mind it, kid. I'll square it with him myself," Wilson assured him.

"See you here again to-morrow, then," the boy said gratefully.

"Hope so, kid; hope so myself. If you don't, an' want to find me, jest ask anybody for W. W. Wilson. Any policeman can tell you where to find Bad Bill Wilson." He started off up the street; the boy sat down on the bench to count his money. He found in the envelope his own three bills and a fourth, this for one hundred dollars. He put the money back and turned to look after his friend.

Wilson was near the corner now. The boy saw him stop, waver, and then he saw two or three men step toward him. A moment later he sank down and disappeared behind the rush of people. Before the boy could reach his side Bad Bill Wilson had gone to a place beyond the direction of the most astute policeman. For, fearing lest the light of his one good deed should be swallowed up in the gloom of his many bad ones, past and to come, the All Father had called his very first bluff at being "on the square."

Meestair Carcajou

By Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Captain Blanche, of the Tug Brulay," Etc.

In which Spears takes us into the wilderness with old French Louie, smartest trapper of them all, and opens up a new chapter in wood lore for us. His shrewdest enemy is a shaggy-haired, big-footed, cunning-eyed beast, which walks like a bear, has a weasel's head, and is nearly five feet long from nose to tail—Meestair Carcajou.

(In Two Parts—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the winter season drew toward an end, the snow melted, the ice in Lake Superior broke from the jagged shores, and sweet bird songs warmed the soul of the wilderness, French Louie stopped short one day at the farthest bend on his most remote trap-line loop, and, with an exclamation, wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"W'at! By gar, I thought dat las' mink look all rusty an' his bristles worn short! So? Well, I bettaire expect I stop trapping right here. Yah!"

He jerked a trap from its cubby, cleared the trap ring, and put the trap into his leather pack. By that act the winter trapping season ended for the little old man whose hair and whiskers had grown all winter and whose raiment was as badly worn as that of the mink whose condition, bordering on the spring shed, had warned him that now it was folly to continue his catching of fur.

"Well," he admitted reluctantly, "I bettaire leave dem mink traps. Already marten, pekan, fox are no good; I don' tak' any more. If I see some wolf now—five dollaire reward for heem, mebbe, if de hide all shed like a samson fox. W'en dem water fellers get worn orr, an' de hair come out—den I quit. But wait! Suppose I get a b'ar? Eh? Ole bear ver' sensible. He wear hes wintaire coat long time in June. Sweat some in warm day—eh? But de col', frosty night—well, I bettaire took up all dem traps!"

As he tramped along, the weariness of the winter was upon him. He had waxed strong with the wind and cold; the terrors of loose snow, sleet, bitter frosts, and wolves had found his heart brave and joyous, as a wilderness man's should be.

The dazzling hues of February had found him in harmony; then had followed the relaxing of tension, the fatigue of wet snows, the softening of the winter into a sweet, good-tempered spring.

Taking up his traps and carrying them in was the last dead lift of the winter's toil. It was the cleaning up of the work, when he was weary with unremitting effort and alertness. He carried the steel implements in, and he told himself whimsically that one pound of steel trap weighed more than six pounds of dog-wolf skins.

Half the traps had been new ones the previous fall. They were strangers to him then. He had been unable to judge of their parts and spirit at that time. They looked very much alike. Now, at the end of the winter's trap-

ping, he knew them all individually; some he regarded with certain fondness, others he scolded for their laziness. Out in the Green Timber were certain "fool traps," which he had tried and found wanting, and had tossed out into the deep moss to rust away in disgrace.

He cleaned all his proved traps, greased them with moose tallow, and packed them in bundles of fifty traps each—traps of assorted sizes, and each bundle weighed nearly one hundred pounds. He had eight bundles when he had finished his task of preparing the steel against rust.

One bundle of traps he tied up with particular care, abusing it fondly with countless invectives.

"Such a mess of traps!" he groaned. "Dey make a feller wish he was dead all over. Not'in' but clean—clean. W'y, I be'n clean traps a week, seven days. An' dese traps! Dey break a man's back wit' de fur dey catch!"

He carried the eight packs, all wrapped up in birch bark, out into the woods behind his cabin, and hid each of them carefully in a crevice among the rocks of a ledge a few rods from the main trunk of his trap line. The traps were all within a hundred yards of one another. They were as perfectly hidden from human discovery as could be. French Louie regarded the cache with satisfaction. When he returned in the autumn he would find them ready for another campaign.

Last of all, he carried out the pack of specially distinguished traps. He took it to the ledge and hoisted it up the face about twenty feet to a crack under a monster split chunk. Back in this crack, the traps would be perfectly dry. They were invisible from below. One could look into the crevice and not see the bundle which was craftily banked with stones and moss.

A precious bundle of traps, dear to the fur seeker's heart, he looked frequently back at the place where he had concealed them, while he departed from the place, stepping with all the care of a cat, leaving no more sign of his footsteps than the passing breeze left, he told himself rather vaingloriously. He forgot to knock wood when he boasted; perhaps he did not realize that he was boasting.

Having dismantled his line, taken in all his poisons, and cleared up all his line wigwams and cabins, French Louie spent hours clearing up around his main cabin on Otter Harbor. He cleared it out with utmost care. He picked up around it. He made it ready for the summer desertion—but with a thought for possible visitors.

The dishes were scoured, the extra ax and crosscut saw were taken out and hidden. The bedding was all carefully washed and mended. Every nook and cranny was mopped or washed down.

Thus the camp would be fit to use when next he returned. It would also give any chance sport, coming that way in the summer, a hint that the cabin was regarded with affection by its builder, who would return, and that it should be used with care, "like one of dem millionaire fellers' house down East."

Last of all, French Louie rapidly packed the winter catch into half-size bales of forty pounds' weight. His muskrats made two bundles of two hundred and fifty spring rats in each. Then he packed fox, lynx, fisher, ermine, mink, and marten skins into half bales, with a small wolfskin on top and bottom to protect the valuable inside pelts.

Having taken care of these high-priced skins, he carried down the coarse wolf hides and packed them, twenty in a bundle.

He kept tabs on his catch in his own way; he had pebbles from the gravel beach, a color for each kind of skin. He added pebble after pebble to the piles, and when he was through packing he counted the pebbles. There were one hundred and ninety red pebbles for mink, sixty white ones for marten, thirty-four black pebbles for fisher, and so on. He did not need pebbles to keep track of three black and one silver fox.

Picking up the pebbles, the old trapper counted them one by one. When he had counted them he walked down

to the harbor and looked out toward the lake, overcome with emotion, speechless, blinking-eyed, wetting his lips to keep from choking.

Never had he caught so many furs before; he could not reckon up the list exactly, but he knew that he had taken more than two thousand dollars' worth of precious furs. The coarse wolf hides, with their bounties, added hundreds of dollars to the season's luck.

The wise old trapper, keen with years of experience, endowed with wilderness cunning, had toiled without taking stock of what he did. He had kept no count, kept no records, had left each day behind him with a feeling of satisfaction sufficient for the hour.

At last he cast off the mooring lines, hoisted the sail, and strutted down the narrow cove into the bay and thence out upon old Superior, driving and heeling to the sou'west breeze, bound for Thunder Bay, where he would find People!

As he turned Thunder Cape a strange diffidence assailed him. He hesitated, shrank before the thought of the gaze of humans. He turned and scudded into a little lee harbor, where he composed himself, trying to still the flutterings of his Gallic heart. He stared, thrilled, at the flashing of Port Arthur lights sparkling in the falling night; he watched the wonderful spectacle of a long passenger train, a serpentine string of lights coiling and pouring along the ice-worn ledges.

"Ah-h!" he whispered to himself. "I com' back to my own—to my people! If only I was young again, but I am an old feller, a burned-out fire, gray ashes, wit' a bit of glow down under —eh? Mebby I fin' some kindlin'— quick!"

So with welling hope and whining sail, he headed again toward that gay city, and drew near swiftly to the People.

CHAPTER II.

Fort William and Port Arthur held no disappointment in store for French Louie, the trapper. Like a fox approaching a bait, he ran in and then fled precipitately, only to return again. He landed in mid-morning with a rush, and Big Tim, of the dredging and towing fleet, recognized him.

Then Big Tim hugged the little old fellow and started to drag him uptown, but paused when he saw that the cabin was packed full of skins. Such a cargo of furs he had never seen before in any one trapper's catch. It was like looking at a Hudson's Bay post spring shipment. The big water-front captain hailed a truck, and the bales were loaded on it and carried up to the fur exchange, and around French Louie flocked friends and fur buyers and all kinds of people, one of whom brought him a long overcoat and insisted that he wear it until he had time to go get clothes to wear—a delicate hint which startled French Louie and thrice embarrassed him as he stood in the dingy and tattered, skin-mended garments of the wild trap-line land.

So French Louie was back among his own people again, and he held forth at dinner tables and around fireplaces and in sporting-goods stores and in dock cabins, telling such things that had long since earned him a reputation from end to end of the Great Canadian Desert, for well as people knew the Green Timber, French Louie had strange and marvelous tales to tell—unbelievable to the mob, but each of which found some one whose eyes had seen the like and who knew that French Louie was telling splendid wilderness lore in the guise of vivacious *coureur de bois* narrative fiction.

And when French Louie had passed through a barber's, when he had traversed a clothing store, when he had entered upon a shoe-store torture seat, he emerged so wonderfully garbed that he felt young again, and he did indeed raise his hat to slim beauties whose cheeks vied with the topknot of the pileated woodpecker, whose eyes flashed with rare delight, and who welcomed the little old man's gallantries and admiration and racing compliments—such a delightful old fellow, who was very old, very wise; in fact, who knew that he was old and that he must not for

a moment forget that he was privileged beyond youth.

So the summer of rest for the trapper passed with its delights, its forebodings, its gayety, its visits up and down the North Shore among old friends and new. One day he was in Rossport, another he ate dinner with Yankee sports on a wonderful gasoline boat in Nipigon Bay, a third day he cooked a big brook trout all alone on Blind Channel, congratulating himself that he still knew where and how to catch fish. Daily he tested his skill, his memory, his resourcefulness—to make sure that his soul was young, though he was an old, old man, too old for seriousness of purpose in gallantry.

What sorrow did he feel! What an outpouring were his regrets when he met, first a tall, slim French breed, and then a daughter of Norway affected his sanity; there was an old flame, who weighed more than two hundred pounds, to whom he burst out a flood of invective against himself.

"Ah, the years that I have waste'!" he deplored. "What a fool am I! Ef on'y I had my youth lak you——"

"Go way!" she turned upon him, seizing the ax helve she used on her man's sledge team, but, failing to meet his glance, she dropped the helve to go look out the door, where she could see the grim stone and timber land and where French Louie could only suspect what memories were displayed in her eyes.

The summer went by almost before French Louie knew that it had begun. With a start, he awakened from the joy and enchantment of human companionship. He stopped short in front of the Port Arthur customhouse one early September day and stared at a flying spider web which glistened in the air before his eyes. An end of the web fluttered up toward the sky, and on the tip of it was a foot or so of white snarl long and frayed.

"Sacre!" French Louie muttered under his breath. "Arachne flying? Those witches on the go, eh?"

He blinked and looked around him.

In that instant he was torn by two temptations. One was to remain among the People; to live out in the towns and villages, where he could spend his money and talk and parade around. The other was a subtler, insidious demand that he go forth into the wilderness again, and as he thought about the deep Green Timber and its teeming aisles the idea occurred to him that back there in the woods he would be in fit company for an old, old voyageur.

"Ah," he said to himself, "I shall go back and make the clean-up of that fur pocket! I haf but touch the treasure of fur! I recall the black hair upon the snow, where a jet fox have walk, shedding; he becomes prime now! A thousand-dollaire black fox! An' the loup cervier an' mink an' fisher. Mebby I fin' dat ole wolf—hi-i! Dat ole wolf Two Toes one tam nuisance! I bettaire go back an' fex heem!"

He recalled many acquaintances there in the fur pocket back from Otter Head. If he knew many humans, also he knew many wild creatures. He fondly recalled a savage little white weasel which included his cabin on a long runway. He wondered if a certain blue jay with a crooked topknot would return to jeer him. He figured that he would be remiss to his own brave heart if he failed to wreak vengeance upon a certain old fox which had scrupulously avoided his cunningest traps and scorned some of his tastiest pills of death.

In a flurry of excitement, feeling as though he had already delayed more than three days too long, or perhaps a week, he scurried to a sporting-goods store and purchased ten dozen traps, which he figured would be needed to replace those which the previous winter had shown were near the end of their usefulness. He bought provisions, ammunition, a new belt pistol, a little .22-caliber target pistol, accusing himself of rank extravagance because he wanted the little "toy" to play with and shoot at a mark, and finally he had his stores loaded on his little sailboat and hoisted the sail to a gay west wind.

Ah, but it was a beautiful day to be

sailing away into the wilds! The sky was blue—no trace of gray or rose or white in its depths. Every one of the huge crags of stone around Thunder Bay was ablaze with its own peculiar beauty—Thunder Cape with its stones of sparkling granite, Pie Island with its wonderful perpendicular lines, the great jagged westward shore aglow with wintry, evergreen tree shelter, and, past Welcome Islands, dim, distant, blue Isle Royal, mystic and enchanted, both ends dancing above silvery strata in strange mirage.

Out into the wide bay sailed Old French Louie, and behind him his friends waved him farewell and said to one another:

"He's getting old; he's as lively as ever, isn't he? But some time he'll sail away like this, and it'll be the last we'll ever see or hear of him. He'll die out there in the Green Timber, just like——"

They called the roll of old trappers —and young—whom they had known and who had gone forth heroically because they did not think of danger or peril—and yet never returned.

French Louie, delighted with this friendliness, waved his farewell to them a thousand times with both hands, while he steered with one foot and protested in his subconsciousness against the unrelenting force of gravitation, which forced him to keep the other foot in the cockpit or at least on the splashboard while he watched back and steered straight for Thunder Cape—away from the coal chutes, the big black smokestacks, the big warehouses and elevators, the smoke and steam of transcontinental locomotives, and all the conspicuous landmarks astern.

When at last he could see none of his friends nor any sign of their handkerchiefs and light fall overcoats, he turned to steer by the landmarks ahead of him. If he had been light of gesture in bidding farewell, he now grew quiet as he breathed deeply and gave way to the spell of the Alone.

Definitely he had turned from the People and returned to the Green Timber. The west wind carried him along; the whitecaps of dark, sullen Superior romped and hissed alongside, long swells out of the cold southwest gave lift to the light, brave craft.

"I do not know why I go back," French Louie protested to himself. "I need not go back. I suppose it es the bad habit of a feller—ef it es a bad habit to make love to the Green Timber when a man iss old. By gar, I bet I marry some woman, ef I stay all winter aroun' dem Nort' Shore towns! Yah! Mebby mine eyes get weak—but I t'ink not. Dey're as strong as efer for a pretty woman. But I am ole—Ole French Louie! So! Well, I bettaire get to Otter Head like—um-m!"

With a wave to the Swede fisherman on Hare Island, with another wave to Thunder Cape light—Old French Louie drove down the coast. It was late, he told himself. He would have much to do. He must cut wood, he must fix up cubbies, he must clear out fallen trees along the trap lines, he must search keenly for sign that would tell him of old animal runways abandoned and new ones trod down by the exigencies and whims of the wilderness creatures.

Yet when he had stopped a minute with Shaganash light keeper, and bought some salt at Rossport, pretending that he had forgotten it, and that he needed an excuse to stop, and when he had passed by the last of the North Shore settlements and paid his three days' visit at Otter Head light, he steered gayly up Otter Bay, through the narrows into Otter cove or harbor, and full tilt up the sand of his Main Cabin beach.

With a shout of joy, a squeal of satisfaction, he leaped ashore and romped up his little path to where he had built his cabin the year before, and from which he had gone forth to make and cover his trap lines out into the depths of the stone and timberland.

He rushed up to it, through the overhanging spruce and balsam branches, and emerged into the little clearing, where he stopped short with a scream of anger:

"*Sacre! Folie!* Damnable Yankee

sport! What malice! What haf I seen wit' dese eyes?"

Waving his hands up and down and swearing in the good old Indian way, naming each and everything and telling what it meant, he jumped up and down like a marten in a trap.

He had left the cabin in perfect order, clean, snug, open for any passer-by, but mutely demanding observation of wilderness courtesy of man for man. Now most of the half logs of the roof were tip-tilted about, and the hewn door was off its wooden hinges and lying against a tree twenty feet distant. Blankets had been taken out and pawed over on the ground. All the cooking utensils within had been carried away. A stool made with ax and auger had been carefully pulled to pieces.

"I know what done all dat!" French Louie shrieked. "It was some Yankee sport! It take a Yankee sport to raise hell all aroun' an' tear up t'ings and make French Louie——"

He raced up and down, taking note of what had been done. He ran out into the woods and returned into the clearing. He raced back to his boat and caught up his rifle and loaded it with cartridges, and, taking off his hat and looking up at the sky, he prayed fervently for just one fair shot at the unspeakable scoundrel who had so broken up his cabin, so wantonly destroyed his property, so maliciously robbed him of his few poor possessions—for everything of metal had been unscrupulously carried away.

"By gar!" French Louie revised his opinion again and again. "Only some tam Injun take sooch stuff away. Only some diabolical Yankee sport tear op all a po'r trapper's cabin! Oh, ef on'y I have catch dat feller! By gar!"

Every time he jumped, French Louie did something to his wreck. He pulled and jerked the scooped-out logs which had formed the cabin roof, and every pull and every jerk, apparently made with abandon and without care, left something in good order, something in its place. In a few minutes the cabin roof was almost but not quite repaired. Three of the scooped logs were missing.

When French Louie searched in the cabin, he swore more profanely when he found that the stove was missing. He looked under the bunk to see if the galvanized pipe were there where he had put it to protect it from the elements. The pipe was gone, but the stove was there.

He pulled the stove out, and found that it was only the frame of a stove; the cast lids, the oven door, even the ash-box slide was gone, nor was it anywhere in the cabin. The malice of the thief was clear and plain.

"Well, by tam!" French Louie exclaimed, lifting his two hands and trying to think of a malediction sufficiently strong, ending weakly: "I bettaire go look at my traps, an' I know some son of a goon would steal dem—ef he could find 'em!"

He set forth on the trot for the rock ledge, three hundred yards distant, where he had safely stored his traps. He climbed, first of all, to the crevice in which he had most carefully hidden his favorite traps. As his face topped the ledge and he could look into the hiding place, bright rays from the setting sun shone clear to the back end. The stones which had hidden the traps were gone. The bark with which the traps had been wrapped was lying on the stone floor in torn fragments.

Not one trap was there!

But French Louie found four bundles of his traps intact, and he carried them back to the cabin one at a time and threw them upon the floor of his cabin without violence. It would not do to break traps.

He cooked his supper over an open fire outside. He was through gesticulating now. He sat grimly silent, thinking. He stared into the fire as he ate his trout and bread. He looked over his shoulder from time to time into the darkness of the woods. What did they hold?

"An' I t'ought I come to mak' a clean-op!" he grinned at last. "I come too late. By gar, I don' understand! Dat ole scoundrel took de rocks I pack

dem trap in wit'. W'at yo' mak' out'n dat, French Louie, you ole fool, you? Yankee sport? Injun Johnny sneak um? Well, I bet I be sorry I come back er somet'ing will feel like it, dat all I got to say. Hu-u-u!"

French Louie knew the Green Timber. He had seen things, he had enjoyed and suffered sensations, he had been through experiences of which other men might never know. When he told some people what he knew they laughed at him, but other old trappers would listen with approval.

French Louie, puzzling and figuring, put this and that together. Here was a vandal, here was a thief, here was a scoundrel, here was a—what would he call it?

One fact loomed large in all the discoveries that he had made regarding the raid on his main cabin. Everything that had been done might have been done by one of those crazy Yankees who feel called upon to tear down and destroy the shelters of woodsmen, carrying away cooking utensils and wantonly dismantling structures built by the labor of days. An Indian might steal everything in sight and out of sight, but he would not trouble to hide sticks and stones.

But who—but what would carry away the lids of a stove and not take the frame? What, above all things, would carry away the stones which the trapper had stacked up around the traps in the crevice in the rock ledge?

French Louie swore and cursed and gesticulated as he pranced again around his camp fire. He shook his fists and he swore and shrieked till a dozen owls were calling back at him, and somewhere a blue jay, hearing his outcries, jeered him.

Suddenly he stopped still. He listened. He heard something indistinctly. He moved away from the fire so that the snap of the steam and the hiss of the flames would not interfere with his hearing plainly.

In the dark silence he heard plainly what had first attracted his attention. He plunged out into the woods. He ran a ways and stopped to listen. Thus he charged back and forth and around. At last he stopped and looked up toward the dark sky at a big, gnarly, limber-limbed old white birch. The wind was blowing through its bare branches. Away up near the top, French Louie saw something silhouetted black against the sky.

As the tree swayed in the breeze he heard plainly a "plunk-plunk," and he knew that he had found the thing that had made the strange sounds. He climbed up the tree with agility. He approached the thing that he had seen. He reached and seized it, and pulled it loose from the place where it hung.

It was his galvanized water pail. It had been wedged in among the branches, so that it hung there firmly. It was right side up and contained several inches of water and a mass of leaves fallen from twigs above. The wind had blown a heavy branch against it on one side.

French Louie returned to the ground and strode indignantly back to his cabin.

"The t'ievin' rascal!" he cried. "The son of a goon! By gar, an' I come back to a dull wintaire in de Green Timber. Mos' all de wolfs caught an' nottin' mooch to do. By gar!"

He threw his head back and laughed with loud delight. He jumped up and danced a bit of a jig, as limber as his legs could be.

"Hi-i!" he shouted. "You son of a goon—Meestair Carcajou!"

CHAPTER III.

An invasion of humans, who tore a great gash through the timber, who blasted about till stones rained out of the sky, and who made the earth tremble, disturbed more and more a shaggy-haired, big-footed, cunning-eyed beast which had his den in a ledge on the divide between the Pagwachuan and Otasawian Rivers.

This beast, which walked like a bear, which had a weasel's head, and which was nearly five feet long from the end of his nose to the end of his bushy

tail, resembled a skunk in several particulars, but on an enormous scale.

Until the arrival of the crew which was building the second Canadian transcontinental line, the animal had lived in peace and security. That was rather more than could be said of any but the largest or fleetest of his neighbors. Only one man had ever had anything to do with him, and that man had shortly taken up his traps and abandoned a line which had promised unusual returns in fur until the arrival of the beast.

This man called the creature a wolverene. He added a choice assortment of expletives and qualifying adjectives to the name. He hoped, and, in a way, prayed that he would never again see or hear sign of the brute.

The wolverene, who rather enjoyed the trapper and his line while they remained, may have hoped for the return of others of the kind, but the blasters and their earthquakes drove the animal from his den and made a wanderer of him. He turned his back upon the slash of the railroad right of way and this took him southward.

He wandered along, and left his trail through caribou moss, over stone ridges, through green timber, and around the shores of lakes. He slept where fatigue overtook him. He went in and out of a thousand crevices among the rocks; he pawed into the tops of fallen trees by the hundred; he ate fish beside streams, partridges on their nests, berries where they ripened, squirrels when he could catch them, rabbits whom he paralyzed with terror, and without ceremony pulled down a gangling moose calf and only took to a tree when the indignant cow charged him with an anger superior to his own hunger. Later he had the satisfaction of finishing eating the remains of the calf, for the wolverene was even more patient than the moose cow.

So the wolverene wandered on, paying little attention to the passing of time or the distance that he traveled. He did not find the kind of place he wanted for his den. Perhaps the joy of wandering around without the responsibility of a home den had attractions for him. No doubt traveling, forced though the start had been, was now settling upon him as a desirable mode of life.

He had one nerve-jarring adventure. He was following down a deep, narrow rock ravine one night rather carelessly when he came to a strange odor in the bottom. He crossed the band of scent with caution, and then took another thought on the matter, and would have returned to take another whiff when there appeared high over his head a flaring of fire, the roar of thunders, a scream that any wild creature the world over would have envied; the wolverene turned and fled with speed from under the terrible thing that suddenly breathed and scrambled overhead.

The wolverene made haste to leave this thing behind him. He did not know what it was. He was quite sure, however, that an animal of that size, with that voice, would require a large number of wolverenes to keep it fed, and even a strong, crafty wolverene of great self-confidence must needs hesitate to remain in such a vicinity.

A day's swift flight carried the wolverene into a country which possessed many attributes of value from his standpoint. Rabbits and grouse were so plenty that he grew tired of eating so many of them. He found many streams, and he easily walloped large and luscious trout out of the rockbound pools. For variety he discovered mink, marten, weasels—all relatives and good to eat—foxes, lynx, and even an occasional deer.

He wandered out one dawn upon a rock cliff, and gazed forth across such a sea as he had never dreamed of. Far out on the sea was a cloud of strange blackness; the lake rolled and rocked dizzily with huge waves; thousands of gulls were in sight—and gulls are good to eat. He had also eaten their eggs, which he had found on rocks in the trifling little lakes with which he had been acquainted heretofore.

This lake was a strange phenomenon, and because it was strange he went down into a bay and sniffed the water;

he wandered along the shore and found a trout so large that it was as much as he could eat at one meal—it was the most satisfying trout he had ever known, for it had a glorious smell. He found, too, a bird that was dead and safe and required no catching. There were some savory little things which served to give relish to his meals, though they lived in shells like stone.

He wandered around, and found many berries and some nuts and worms and other food in ample supply. It was a strange and fascinating country. It had, here and there, signs and evidence of the presence of humanity, but not enough to worry about. Besides, the wolverene felt that when winter arrived he would know very well what to do with the men who remained thereabouts—if any did remain.

Taking his time, but feeling the approach of autumn, the wolverene hunted up and down and selected a den among the stony fastnesses of a mountain up Twin Falls River. Then over on the head of an arm of the great lake he discovered a man's cabin, and carefully entered it through the roof by removing the logs of which it was composed.

Having entered the cabin, he took out all the things that suggested service or utility or which were inexplicable—it is not safe to inquire too closely into what was in the animal's mind. He removed everything that he could carry away. He even tipped over the stove, and when it fell to pieces he carried away all the loose parts and then tried to push the main part into a hiding place under the bunk—only to discover long, hollow, light stovepipe there. These he carried away, glad to have come upon them.

When he was looking for places to deposit all the various articles contained in the human den he stumbled upon a package wrapped in birch bark in a crevice in a rock. This bade him pause. Possibly the package was safe and sane, but the wolverene was taking no chances. He returned to the pack every night and on two cloudy days one week. He determined that the rocks around the pack were safe, so he removed them. Then he pulled the bark away tentatively and shook the steel traps within. He knew those traps. He had collected a number of the like back in his own home country.

With great caution, he had pulled the traps from their hiding place and carried them away to new and, to his mind, much better quarters. Thus, seeking hiding places, he discovered other bundles of traps. There were so many things to hide away that even his own instinct for such places came to an end, and he felt obliged to take some of the articles up many-linked trees and hang them among the branches.

It was a very satisfactory pastime or labor, whichever one cares to call it. The wolverene perhaps ought not to be credited with a sense of humor. Possibly his sole motive was one of greed. Whether he thought the traps would ripen and grow soft and sweet like blueberries or rich and savory like stranded trout, or whether he wanted to set them and catch animals in them, as he had found animals caught in their like away up Pagwachuan way, is a question. At any rate, if he had any animal passion to satisfy, he satisfied it.

Having gutted the cabin, having made way with many score of traps and eaten a satisfactory meal each day during the accomplishment of his self-appointed task, he set off through the green timber, following the blazed trail through the woods. He could see the yellow streak against the dark spruce bark as well as a man. He could feel the trail made by the man's feet in the moss and through the humus as well as a man—possibly better. At intervals along the way, he found little dens erected on stones, against the high roots of large trees or dead stubs and other places.

These cubbies excited his interest, and as each had an odor of animal life—and death!—around them, he studied and dissected each one with caution and yet with great thoroughness. Pieces of wood, chips that were the sides of the cubbies, which had ax marks on them, he carried away and hid carefully where he would know

where they were, if he ever happened to need them. When it was not too much work or trouble he dragged away the long poles which had served as well sweeps to hoist a trapped victim in a trap clear of the ground.

As a starter, the wolverene visited more than fifty miles of the trap line that started from Otter Cove. Every few miles he found a cabin—usually a paper-birch bark wigwam, and in these wigwams he found articles of interest and value. He skillfully climbed up to the pole rafters on which they were hung and tasted the beans which he had spilled, and devoured the eternal pork that was preserved there. He carried away whatever pleased his fancy, and there was very little of human interest or service that did not please the fancy of the wolverene.

The beast performed all his operations with great deliberation and circumspection. He had all the time there was between meals to do what he found occasion to do. He would sit on his haunches and turn over in his fore-paws a pail, a trap, a trap-line ax, a frying pan, a can of salt, a tin box of matches. He scratched the pails with his claws, and listened attentively to the sound they made. He tried the wood in the hatchet handles with his teeth. He picked the cartridges out of a box of .22's and carefully hid each one under a log or a stone or in a brush heap, taking as much trouble over a half-cent cartridge as over a dollar-and-a-half ax, from which fact it may be surmised he had no sense of value.

When the wolverene returned to his chosen den up Twin Falls River he carried with him, more than thirty miles, a case knife with a bone handle. He dropped the knife at the entrance to the cave, which was formed by a split in a huge rock. This knife was all that he carried home with him. It amused him, when he had eaten a few pounds of fish, two or three rabbits, a spruce grouse or two, and such other edibles as he had required, to take this case knife up and turn it over in his paws and try to eat the bone off the handle; he succeeded in breaking it into small fragments. It was good sport to try to bite the blade hard enough so that he couldn't pull it away with his paws.

All this effort on the part of the wolverene was perfectly absurd. He went about it with unruffled deliberation, however. He neglected not one least little thing. All the while he was about it his little black eyes would glance sideways, as though he were regretful because there were no spectators to watch him. Sometimes he wrinkled up his nose, and quivers played along his black lips from muzzle to remotest corners. His ears twitched, his whiskers played like antennæ, the muscles under his ears jerked and swelled as the skin wrinkled over them.

There was something wolflike in the expression and shape of his head; there was all the cunning, all the savagery, all the desperate hunger which one sees in the wild, free, living wolf. But there was much more than these wolf traits in the beast. There was the suggestion of Old Man Skunk in his sidelong glance—the strange, heinous suggestion and defiance which the Mephitis gives when most offensive. But to this whimsical grimace was added the heavy power and sensible courage of a bear.

It was as though the wolverene had been endowed with most of the qualities that are typical of the woods creatures—the very face of the brute at the moment of his slyest theft was like that of a coon—and every one knows that a coon laughs like a blue jay. To all these qualities of bear, skunk, wolf, and jay was added the subtle and terrible ferocity of all the *Mustelidæ*. The wolverene was a weasel from head to tail, from ear tips to the soles of his feet.

His color was that of well-roasted coffee—nearly black along his spine. Across his shoulders and along each side to his hips was a stripe of muddy white hair. His tail was long and heavy, his paws large and flat, his legs large and powerful, his hair long and coarse, his fur—which was just beginning to grow in for the fall—was thick and fine. While he slathered over the case knife,

he rolled his eyes about, but where his glance fell it was with a quick, sharp, savage look, full of suspicion.

Like the loon, he traveled alone, and he lived alone. He turned from the devastation of the trap-line cabins to hunting, but he did not hunt like his relative, the pekan, nor like the marten. Instead of setting forth to find prey, he climbed a long, broken stone ridge, and in a gap found where a game trail went from Twin Falls River Valley to that of the Pukoso. Here there were tracks of many kinds of animals. Here was the crossing of moose, caribou, bear, wolves, and countless other creatures.

The wolverene snuffled along among the broken rocks above the trail the other creatures followed, and he walked out at last upon a point of stone where the passer-by must pass directly beneath the cluster of starved little spruce trees on the top of the little rock ledge.

There he pulled away sticks and matted a kind of bed for himself where he could lie in comfort and wait, and no cat could lurk with steadier patience. Spread down, squat and motionless, his broad, rounded ears listening, his bare snout quivering, and his little black eyes watching both ways along the runway of the wilderness creatures.

There approached along the animal trail a two-stepper. The wolverene started uneasily. This was no moose calf! This was no wolf, no clumsy porcupine! He looked sharply, and then backed rapidly, but without demonstration out of his ambush, slid through the clump of trees, and hastened away among the upright rocks and under fallen timber.

Soon afterward, what his ears and eyes had told him his nose verified—a man had climbed up into that rock gap through the ridge and passed on by, spraying the whole lee wilderness with unimaginable odors. The wolverene tried with his tongue to push back the stench from his nostrils, and when he felt safe to do so he made wholly inadequate but to him rather unsatisfactory gestures of contempt.

That night he hunted around, found a rabbit, picked up a dead fish and a dead bird on the lake shore, and returned with his appetite unappeased to his cavern den. But every step he took, everything he did, he first deliberated upon the question of whether it was a proper thing to do, in view of the fact that he had been routed from his ambush that day by a Man.

Inbred in his soul—if he had a soul—were ages of distrust, combat, matching of wits with men. If he had been endowed with intelligence to receive traditions from his ancestors—and there are men who know his kind intimately who will aver that he must have such stores, since in no other way could he have acquired such a repertoire of deviltry—he would have recalled stories of Indians who preceded white men, and wolves of many passing generations and of predicaments, lures, difficulties, and successes in a vast number of ways and means.

As it was, he smiled with a kind of satisfaction. Very lately, within his own recollection—no longer ago than a few days—he had casually but with exceeding thoroughness taken a large number of things which belonged to a man, and he had put them into his own particular hiding places.

It is a question whether wolverenes learned to hide things from observing men or whether men learned to cache their stores by observing wolverenes—or whether both inherited or derived their common habit from the more or less innocent squirrel.

At least, this wolverene felt very well assured that the human who had passed by so inopportunely was searching for him—a feeling very likely shared in by all the larger wilderness creatures who knew anything about humans.

While the wolverene was meditating upon the fact of a man in that region, it occurred to him that possibly he ought to go and investigate. The stale old odor of the things which he had confiscated over in the log den of the man had much in common with the fresh and overwhelming odor of the man whom he had discovered the previous day.

Accordingly, having the time and the

disposition, the wolverene started across to the head of Otter Harbor to see if any human had been around there lately. Of course he started early in the night, and a few hours later he arrived in the dark at the log cabin.

Just as he had suspected, the man had been there. He had made numerous changes. He had left behind a large, a delightful, a partly edible assortment of materials and articles.

The wolverene rolled his beady little eyes to look in the direction the man had taken, and then grinned.

CHAPTER IV.

The wolverene spent much time inspecting the renovated and repaired cabin at the head of Otter Cove. He walked all around it. He smelled of the handle of the ax blade, which was sunk high in a spruce-tree trunk, out of the way of porcupines. He went around and around the cabin, over its roof, under it on the side where stones served as the foundation, and he carefuly, circumspectly strolled out on each of the several trails that radiated from the cabin.

He was hours making that inspection, and in the first streak of dawn he withdrew, stopping a hundred times to look back. A raccoon could not have had greater curiosity, a bear greater caution, a fox more cunning designs. Yet he had not so much as turned a chip of wood bottom side up; he had not stepped where the man had stepped; he had neither entered nor disturbed the place—this time—within the meaning of the law. Neither had he left any trace or sign of his presence there.

He retreated into the shadow of the timber as the dawn arrived, and an hour later, several miles distant, he curled down in a hole in the rocks which he had noticed some time before. On the way to this retreat he caught a rabbit, and it shows his caution that he did not leave one drop of blood where the tragedy happened, but carefully strewed the place with dry leaves and left it to all appearance undisturbed. Only a fox or fisher would have paused there to question with their nostrils the appearance of things.

If the wolverene was hungry, as his kind go, he did not feel the night's adventures had been without compensation. There loomed before him a certainty of excitement of pastime—possibly he thought of that—and of treasure-trove.

What the wolverene had in mind may be questioned. Of all creatures to be astonished at avarice, theft, instinct of collecting useless things, and because of impudent invasion, men profess the most acute surprise and indignation at a wolverene's behavior when he most resembles a thieving human. The wolverene had first spied upon the cabin, and retired to think it over. In due course he would formulate plans—if he may be permitted such human frivolities—and then, having made up his mind——

This wolverene returned to the cabin the following night, but stopped short in the edge of the little firewood clearing. From the chimney of the cabin issued a whirling film of thin blue smoke; from within issued a chorus of barking cries and ejaculations, grunts, and frequently a number of birdlike whistles, in rhythm and according to rote.

"Phew!" The wolverene sniffed the horribly tainted air. "He's home!"

Backing away like the shadow he was, he circled around till he found where the man had come sweating in from a long hike. The trails were as distinct as a paved street from a cow path, judged by the wolverene's nose. Having found the long road, he followed the trail out into the Green Timber, and shortly he had his reward.

Beside this trail, not far away, was a firm little hut, newly built of fresh, sweet spruce chips of large size. There was an odor of very appetizing kind within, but the wolverene did not attempt to enter by the little front door—a mink or marten or a fisher might be so unreasoning as that. The wolverene carefully pulled away some of the chips, lifted the spruce bough over the top of the cubby, and took out the chunk of fish within. This he dis-

sected with great care and ate with cautious relish.

The cubby was mysterious and suspicious in that it did not have a steel trap set at the entrance. The wolverene spent considerable time feeling for such a trap, but found none. In his previous experience with such human contraptions, back on the Pagwachuan and Otasawian watersheds, he had always found traps, used to catch and hold marten, mink, fishers, rabbits, lynx, and other wild creatures. There were no such iron things here. The wolverene was puzzled, and he went on along the trail, seldom in it, but first on one side, then on the other, where he could keep sharp tabs on the human's runway.

Sure enough, he found another trap cubby, baited as the other one had been, but without any trap in it. This cubby was one which the wolverene had torn down, and he remembered it. He inspected it with great interest in its new form. He approached it with caution and with his paws feeling under the innocent-appearing surface of things. He had great faith in humanity from experience and inherited instinct of old — a human would leave great temptation and exact the supreme penalty as punishment for yielding.

However, the meat in the cubby was delicious, and if there was nothing to take away but some chopped and whittled sticks the animal made the most of them. He carried them away and hid them with great care and satisfaction.

So he continued all that night along the trap line. On the way he found a wigwam, rebuilt and newly furnished. The bark tepee contained a number of valuable and interesting things—pails, a frying pan, table ware, a plate and cup, cans containing tea, salt, sugar, and the like.

The wolverene was delayed here a considerable time, making his investigation and carrying away to hiding places what he had found. He was interested and possibly amused to find that the human had recovered some of the things which the wolverene had previously carried away.

There was a pail, for example, which

the animal had buried under an old treetop. He now carried it out and packed it firmly in a crevice in a ledge. He carried some of the things half a mile, but others he carefully cached in sight of the cabin. On the blanket he left plain and unmistakable sign of his contempt and derision.

When the dawn arrived the wolverene was a long way out on the human runway, and he had left nothing behind him which he wanted or which he thought the human would miss. Moreover, the wolverine was well fed. In every one of the cubbies, new or reconstructed, the brute had found something good to eat, and his flanks were rounded out and there was an intense satisfaction in his feelings.

He retreated in something of a circle and went to rest where he could watch and smell the human runway through the green timber. Nothing happened that day, and that night the wolverene spent in hunting on his own hook. He tramped along in a kind of half-bear, half-dog gait, known to science as subplantigrade. He caught rabbits and ran into a lynx, which he had a glorious time killing and eating. He circled around all night, and two nights thereafter he returned home and curled down in his nest with a sigh of tired satisfaction.

The next night he went over to Otter Harbor again, and luck was with him. The human was away. He had gone southward, toward Pukoso. He had not gone out on the trail which the wolverene had followed the other night. He had fixed things around a bit since the night of inspection, but the wolverene was able to overcome his natural reluctance to begin a perfectly new enterprise without due meditation. Having made the first inspection as thorough as possible, he proceeded to collect the articles which he desired or which he felt the human desired, and between the two considerations he stripped the cabin bare.

There was one thing that troubled and disgusted him. It was a long, limber, musical, one-man crosscut saw. When he tried to drag it the saw vi-

brated ominously, as though it might bite or explode or sting. When he pulled at one end the other end hooked into things. When he was pulling it along one edge stung him and tangled in his hair. He was repeatedly alarmed by these manifestations, and finally left the thing covered with sticks and leaves where it lay out in the swamp north of camp.

Other things he found less difficulty with. He could carry a pail with ease, and he tore a blanket to pieces and buried the rabbit wool in different directions from the human's den. He of course did not enter the cabin through the dangerous and suspicious doorway, but carefully and by exercise of considerable strength and ingenuity, through a hole torn in the split-log roof. He left through a hole he managed to make with his powerful claws in the floor. Just by way of showing that the door, hung on pins, was not too much for him, he lifted it off its hinges from the inside and carried away the latchstring and the latch itself.

The wolverene was two nights in doing all that he found he could do toward rearranging the cabin and its contents. When he had left it at last, having plastered mud upon the table and dismounted the stove as before, he had the feeling that he had done what he had to do in a thoroughly conscientious manner. He stopped to look back at the cabin as he departed, and two or three times he returned to add a finishing touch here and there. But this was only adding surfeit to satisfaction.

Also, when he took his departure, he went a long, long way and hid himself in the darkest, deepest, most remote place he had discovered in his wanderings through this new and delightful hunting land which chance had led him into—unless, perchance, some tradition of the family had let him know what was to be had on the east shore of Lake Superior. There are humans who believe that a wolverene has a whole code of spite, a lore of history, and a private devil for a tutor.

The wolverene waited in his hiding place to see if anything was going to happen. Sooner or later something usually happened when one persistently made changes in a human's cabin and along his line of traps. The wolverene had a kind of an idea about what would take place, and he preferred to have time to think the matter over. That was why he did not return to his own home den, but preferred a deeper seclusion.

Nothing happened. There was no pursuit, no discovery of the hiding place, and no hint of an invasion. A perfect, if surprising and perhaps unsatisfactory, quiet prevailed. The wolverene, having waited in vain expectancy, ventured forth again. He hunted rabbits and partridges, and counted himself the most fortunate wolverene anywhere because he found a porcupine on the ground and away from its den.

Killing a porcupine with one's teeth is a scientific exploit. The wolverene was a scientist. He charged the porcupine with a guttural exclamation. The porcupine gave one look and then began to switch its tail fearfully. Being a porcupine, the quill pig awaited the approach of the wolverene, and depended on the passive protection of quills for its safety. The wolverene pranced around clumsily, making numerous false motions and feints at the porcupine, which always turned its flapping tail to the insulting threats.

The porcupine had but one policy—to await attack in the good time chosen by its enemy. It had but two protections, a mass of spines that stuck up in all directions and a tail to flap, the tail being heavily armed with spines.

It was fun for the wolverene. When his lively jumping around made him out of breath, he sat back and rested, while the porcupine slapped its tail with increasing fear and waited with increasing trembling and doubt. The wolverene rushed up, rushed away, doubled back, and leaped over the porcupine, which whimpered with fear and at last lost its head.

It began to look for some direction in which to flee—some deep hole among the rocks, some hollow log in which to dive headfirst, followed by its vigorous

tail, which certainly no wolverene would dare risk touching. The porcupine thought it saw an opportunity, and with a rush it left its squatting position on the ground and dashed ahead on its short, clumsy legs, and as it ran the wolverene dashed up, too, and, ducking under the main defenses of the porcupine, caught a firm hold on the rodent's stomach, just behind the ribs. That ended the fight.

Having eaten a square meal, the wolverene scratched the itching quills and then forgot all about them as he strolled away seeking new adventures and more to eat. His rambling hunt took him in the direction of the trap line, which he found on the far side of Twin Falls River. He struck the trail and smelled it with satisfaction. The human had lately been along there.

The wolverene followed the man runway with all the interest and watchfulness of a connoisseur. He sniffed here, he sniffed there. When he arrived at one of the places where the human had once constructed a cubby, the wolverene smelled with utmost discrimination.

If ever a human smelled hot and mad, this one did. The ground around the cubby site was kicked up, and there were sticks turned over, there were leaves scuffled, and the little mound of rock on which the cubby had been constructed was kicked down and around.

There was not the least doubt about it. The human was angry; he was rearing, tearing angry. If a wolverene ever could enjoy the scent of a man, he enjoyed this scent. It showed that the human had a vivid appreciation of the work which the wolverene had done.

But the wolverene felt considerable disappointment. There were no steel traps at the cubby. There were no baits good to eat. In fact, the human had merely completed the devastation of the trap cubby, and the wolverene had a feeling of satisfaction on that account. Yet he was disappointed, too; at least the wolverene started to leave the trap line, but returned to it and followed the human along his raging course.

The human charged through the green timber, scuffling the leaves and tearing away branches that struck across the runway. The wolverene made up his mind that he would have to hurry up to overtake the human and see the perpendicular creature in his fit.

For a time the wolverene made haste along the good runway, and then, just as he was making a jump, a thought struck him—or perhaps it was that an odor struck his nostrils. At any rate, he threw himself violently to one side, and then, having fled a little distance, he crept cautiously back to where he had left the runway.

There was no doubt about it; the human's scent had changed a little. It was the same old human, but he was in a new mood; he was not so angry as he had been, perhaps, or he was thinking about something else. At least, his sweat had a different odor.

When a human's scent changes it behooves a wolverene to beware. This one blinked and crept along and studied; he observed everything. He saw that the man was walking a different gait. He was less sprawling in his footsteps; he was not scuffling things up so much; he was walking with care. At intervals he was stopping to look around, and the places where he stopped were significant.

Especially was one place significant. Here was the plain scent of smoke and steel. The trail led between two ledges of rock, and when the wolverene looked through this gap in a monster bowlder he climbed up over the top of the ledge and struck the trail on the far side. The odor of steel, however, was unmistakable, back in the gap through the rocks.

The wolverene went into the gap on tiptoes, and with his eyes blazing, his lips wet, and his every sense alert—so that when he found a place where the man had knelt in the sodden leaves, he carefully raised each leaf, carefully lifted each twig and tuft of moss. He smelled each thing as he raised it and carefully laid it to one side.

When he was through there lay be-

fore him a square-jawed jump trap of large and wicked size, with the pan hanging upon its catch by the breadth of a hair. The trap had been set with malignant, with magnificent care, and it was sticky with balsam with which it had been whipped, but the nose of the wolverene had penetrated all the things with which the trap had been coated and concealed.

Sitting back on his haunches, the wolverene's jaws lathered and he licked his lips nervously. He sat up anxiously, and at last he walked away from the trap step by step, inch by inch, smelling everything, for men are cunning beasts, and sometimes they set two traps where a wolverene is looking for only one, but this wolverene was looking for any number of traps. He went away out to one side of the trap-line runway and scratched his ear with a hind leg. He shook himself together and swallowed violently at frequent intervals.

It is quite a thing, when one has found himself subject of the particular attentions of a savage man; the wolverene could not help but think of what might have happened if he had been careless and had come running through the woods on that trail, not thinking about much of anything. It was one way of the wolverene to get the full spice of life—this shaking like a leaf, thinking about what might have been.

By and by, his nerves perfectly steady and his mind made up, the wolverene picked a chunk of wood that would weigh two or three pounds and carried it back to the exposed trap. On the way he stepped exactly where he had stepped on his way out of the gap, and when he reached the instrument he dropped the chunk of wood on the trap pan and then turned and rushed from the place, stepping exactly where he had stepped and smelled before.

It was some time before he ventured to return to look at the trap again. He found the chunk of wood—a rotten chunk—cut almost in two by the grasp of the steel jaws. He quietly worked around it until he had unearthed the clog on the end of the trap chain. He picked up both the trap and the clog and carried it a hundred yards out into the woods. Then he returned and removed all the chunks of broken wood with which he had sprung the trap.

This done, he laid back the pieces of stick, the little clots of moss and the leaves with which the trap had been covered. He laid them back exactly, and when he finally turned out of the place, one foot behind the other, there was not a sign or a track to show that he had been there, so carefully and casually had he worked and so perfectly had he restored everything except the trap and clog to its place.

The tension was not yet fully relieved, however. The wolverene had to carry the trap away and bury it and cover it safely. This he did, nearly half a mile distant, under a log. He dug a fine little hole for it and tucked it away with the clog and the chain.

With everything carefully and painstakingly done, the wolverene scratched his ears again and rolled his eyes as he looked along his own back trail, but he was at this time a mile from where he left the trap, and when dawn arrived an hour or two later he was still farther away, lying in a hollow out of which a tree's roots had been lifted by the wind's felling the top.

It had been, from the wolverene's point of view, a very successful night, beginning with rabbits and grouse, topping off with porcupine, and then caching a human's choice trap!

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF POPULAR, ON THE STANDS JANUARY 20TH.

NAMES AMONG THE SOLDIERY

One of the colonels in the new national army is named A. Hero, junior, and one of the privates is Olive Branch.

Featured!

By Henry Rucker

Author of "The One-Eyed Man," "Deuce Ex Machina," Etc.

The moving-picture business seemed about the last place in the world where Bull Mexico, retired pug, and his faithful Riordan would fit. Nature had been niggardly with him as to beauty and brains. But man can often best Nature especially when he calls to his assistance Art—spelled with a capital "A"

ONE of these days somebody is going to show up with a blue card, a fountain pen, and a strong desire to know why Archibald Hartley lost his job, so before all the details are mislaid it might be a good idea to hang them up in the sun.

It is correct, to start off with, to state that Archibald is now out of employment. He has become of no more use to the Blue Sky Film Company than a glass eye on a dark night, and, to make things even sweeter, Jimmy Parmalee is back where he belongs, which is close to the head of affairs for the company.

This is pleasing to a large number of people. Every one is glad, because Jimmy is a regular human being and deserves all the friends he has. Archibald, on the contrary, has no more friends than a dentist's drill, and if the Blue Sky people hear any bad news about him they will bear up under it without bursting into bitter tears.

You may remember the old saw, wherein it is claimed that if you cast your bread upon the waters you are likely to get it back in the form of angels' food. This is one of the oldest and truest saws in the hardware business, although any one caught in the act of casting his bread, in these times of three-dollar wheat, is more or less certain to find himself looking up at the judge. Anyhow, there is a deal of truth in the ancient saw.

Somewhere in one of his books a great and misinformed poet claims that there is nothing accidental in nature. Eddie Stowe, who is the camera man for Jimmy Parmalee, wishes to deny this and to add that the poet was completely off his nut the day he pulled that one.

"Nature is full of accidents," Eddie explains, "beginning with hat-check boys and shad roe and ending up with the kaiser. And the biggest accident that ever came my way in one lump is Bull Mexico."

If Bull Mexico was not one of nature's careless trip-ups, Mr. Stowe is prepared to consume his last year's fedora in an uncooked state. Bull was a striking illustration of what happens when nature wearies of the monotony and remarks to the bystanders: "Well, boys, I'm going to try shooting left-handed a while." The principal thing about Bull to cause wonderment in the casual mind was how any one could own such a round, large, and hard-looking head and not use it for any purpose other than parking his hat.

When Bull first came the Blue Sky way, seeking genteel employment for self and dog, little children clung to their mothers' skirts and whimpered, and if the automobile had never been invented several horses would have run away.

"Speaking only for myself," said Mr. Stowe, gazing in astonishment at Bull, "I contend that this face is the most remarkable human document I've seen."

Others argued that it was not a face at all and that Bull was wearing something. His dog's name was Riordan, which was a subtle courtesy, Bull having enjoyed friendly relations in New York with a bar hostler of that name.

Bull Mexico was not the newcomer's cradle gift. He had not been called that by the village priest or whoever tacked the starting tag on him, but in later years he took the title, picking it probably out of a Western time-table. Such changes are not unusual in any class of society. The right name, for example, of the Earl of Orford was H. Walpole, and the chances are that both Bull and the earl had excellent cause for making a change.

As a matter of record, it is known that Bull assumed his gladiatorial and geographical title for definite and business reasons. His correct name was Edward Longastucchio or thereabouts, but when Bull entered the roped arena, as they quaintly term it, he saw a clear white light. He discovered early that a young and aspiring pugilist named Edward Longastucchio had no chance whatever to crash in upon the sporting editors and the pages they controlled. He found that no sated Left Hook or Right Jab yearned to print the news that Edward Longastucchio was in town seeking fistic engagement, so Bull changed abruptly to the frijole title he now enjoys. Therefore, Bull Mexico he is and will be. The name will probably follow him to his grave and push him in.

Owing to certain painful circumstances now buried in oblivion, Bull was a retired fighter. He was an ex-battler and he had been exceedingly "exed" out of the calling some years before by a rough and two-fisted Jewish person named Pat Kelley.

Now, with the years gathering upon his brow, whereon any years feeling a yen to gather had to wear rubber heels or slip off, Bull turned to gentler paths. He determined to ease his way into the motion-picture industry, which, as he surveyed it from a distance, seemed to be spending money in a loose and regardless manner.

On this particular afternoon, he outgeneraled the grouchy gate tender of the Blue Sky lot, which is a Napoleonic achievement in itself, and planted himself before Jimmy Parmalee. He was accompanied, as he always was, by Riordan, and Eddie Stowe has since contended that it was the mutt that got Bull his job.

"Well, what do you want?" Jimmy asked, looking at Bull in amazement.

"Work," said Bull. "I want a job."

Almost any other director in California would have summoned the bouncers at this point, but Jimmy is not like other directors. He sees vases where others see clay, though you wouldn't accurately call Bull a vase, or safely, either. He examined the applicant more closely, and then turned an eye upon Riordan.

"All right," he said, making one of those blind Parmalee decisions. "Talk to that man over there in the blue shirt. Tell him I said to hire you."

Thus is was that Bull Mexico accepted a position, and likewise Jimmy Parmalee cast some bread upon the surging waters, little suspecting it. The job called for a cash stipend of fourteen dollars a week, and ten minutes later Bull hung his coat on a nail.

All Mr. Mexico had to do was to carry large, heavy objects from one part of the lot to somewhere else. He assisted the property men in overcoming the law of gravitation with such things as pianos, pillars, and walls, and, in a general way, he made himself useful at tasks wherein the human mind is not called upon to boil up and have thoughts. It was early recognized that Bull had no mind, but only a place for one. From the start he performed his duties with conspicuous success and he thought a great deal of Jimmy Parmalee.

II.

Besides Riordan and his three usable legs, the new assistant load lifter possessed a number of distinctions. He weighed two hundred pounds and was powerful, but you did not think of his frame or strength. You looked upon

his face and then wondered how the human countenance could go through so much real grief and still open up mornings.

Once upon a time, Bull had owned a prominent nose and a pair of large, fanlike ears. Those ears had suffered much during the embattled days. Likewise, that nose had lost some of its patrician qualities. It looked as though an elephant which had been walking a long distance that day, and was very tired, had sat down to rest upon Bull's nasal equipment and forever discouraged it. There it lay, squashed and retiring, upon Bull's profile, broken here and there, tilted out of position, and pointed down at entirely the wrong angle.

Similarly, his ears, once flapping in whatever wind might blow, were now pounded tightly against his head like a couple of turnovers made by a mad baker. They no longer even remotely resembled the human hearing apparatus, but stood against Bull's skull, humorous, formless, and discouraged blobs.

"I can figure a lot of things," Eddie Stowe said, watching Bull and Riordan at play on the lot, "but I can't figure out why you hired him."

"He fascinates me," returned Parmalee. "Besides, he's a good workman. Maybe, too, I can use him some day. He's a rare bird."

"In a picture?" demanded the camera man, simulating horror.

"Why not?" Jimmy asked. "He can't act, and he knows it. My main trouble around here is with actors who can't act and don't know it."

"What would you do with his face?" Eddie persisted.

"Feature it." Jimmy grinned. "Play it up. Nobody would ever forget a face like that."

Thus was Mr. Mexico's future discussed by those above him, and fortune cast a contemplative eye upon his huge bulk. In the course of time Bull began to observe the people about him and to copy. It gradually seeped through that iron dome that he was not as other men and that he dressed in a manner totally unlike the genteel actors.

It seemed to Bull, toiling in the sun, that he looked more like the foreign persons one sees manicuring railroad tracks. The Blue Sky actors, he observed, wore striped shirts of sheer silk and white shoes, as well as yellow gloves. One day Bull appeared on the lot in a pink silk shirt, which still holds the all-Western record for undiminished pinkness, and a pair of circus shoes with decorations designed to smite the eye. He displayed himself to Jimmy Parmalee and others, seeking laudation for his act.

"Somebody dead in your family?" Jimmy inquired politely.

"This shirt," said Bull, blinding his audience with an abrupt movement, "cost me four dollars."

"If you'll take my tip," suggested Eddie, "when the cop comes go along quietly. You never get anything resisting an officer."

However, Bull was unshaken in his resolve to improve his wardrobe, and it increased weekly in volume and violence.

"It's plain to me," Mr. Stowe told him solemnly, "you're going to be an actor. I can tell the signs. Nobody can stop you from acting."

"At that," Bull admitted in a hoarse whisper, "I could do as good as some of these hams."

"If I thought you couldn't," returned the camera man, "I'd poison you."

In the course of time, Jimmy Parmalee actually did put Bull into a picture in what you might truly call a meager part. Bull walked across the face of the film, carrying a cake of ice, and immediately walked out of the scene and never reappeared. From that instant he regarded himself as an entertainer of the public, and his vanity was overweening.

He bribed an employee of the cutting room to clip out his great ice scene, and if you liked, or didn't like, he would show you the few inches of celluloid like a fond mother holding up her child.

Moreover, when the picture reached town, Bull became a horrible annoyance to the management of the local theater. They had to keep chivvying him about the darkened auditorium, because he attended every performance to gaze upon his brief turn with the ice, and took up seats belonging to the paying public.

Thus far Riordan, of the three good legs, has been limned in only a casual way, but that should not indicate that Riordan was a casual object for the eye to fall upon. As a dog, he shared Bull's rising career with the Blue Sky outfit, just as he had shared other and less plenteous days, and Bull held Riordan in rare esteem. They were as intimate as the court-plaster and the new scratch, and when you observed the one the other was somewhere at hand.

Accurately speaking, Riordan had three and one-half legs, because his rear port propeller dangled, having been broken or sprained, and was no longer useful for locomotion. Neither was it beautiful. Nothing about Riordan was beautiful.

As Bull humorously explained, and it was his single jest, Riordan was a vehicle dog.

"What do you mean by vehicle dog?" you were expected to ask.

"Well," Bull would answer, preparing to chuckle, "he's mostly coach dog, exceptin' his tail, and that's generally waggin'."

Whereupon, if you did not join him in mirth, Bull would put you down as one lacking.

In his way, Riordan was as startling to behold as was Bull. In spite of being a vehicle dog, which suggests a certain dignity and decorum, it was apparent that Riordan must have spent a large part of his youth in ribald diversion. Just as Bull had fought and come away with scars, so had Riordan a career of battle and the marks to show for it.

He was the most used-up-looking dog west of St. Louis. One of his inconsequential ears no longer answered the roll call. One leg, as stated, was crooked and shortened so that it failed to touch earth, thus giving him a jerky progress. His starboard eye had been closed during some ancient mêlée, and had remained so, and, generally speaking, Riordan was a disreputable, rakish, and tough-looking animal, covered with scars, skinned of his natural fur here and there, and giving you the belief that he had at one time lost a desperate encounter with a forty-five caliber buzz saw. But he was a one-man dog, and Bull loved every hair that remained on him.

III.

Naturally Mr. Mexico bore a strong regard for Jimmy Parmalee, and when the crash came none felt it more keenly than Bull. That crash was long overdue, and among those who saw it coming was Eddie Stowe. For six years Eddie had labored at Parmalee's side.

"I've got the number of every director in California," Eddie was wont to say. "I know them all, and alongside Jimmy Parmalee they're all dead ones."

This also was the belief of J. B. Carney, president of the Blue Sky, as it was the opinion of all the employees, excepting Archibald Hartley. Archibald was Parmalee's assistant. He believed that Jimmy's experience and skill were greatly overrated and that he himself was a far better director and would demonstrate it when his chance came.

Yet there was one thing that kept Mr. Parmalee from being a still better director of films. You have heard of it before, and sometimes it is kept in bond.

"You'd better take a sudden tumble to yourself," Stowe had warned Jimmy often enough. "I'm telling you. Some day they won't stand for it. You may think you can beat this game of seeing just exactly what rum will do when hurled among the human insides, but you can't. No man lives who can drink whisky day in and day out and get away with his work, whether it's directing moving pictures or a large, greasy mop. You hear me. Old man Carney is going to hand you a swift jolt one

of these mornings, when you show up looking like meat for the cat."

"Much obliged for the kind advice," Jimmy had answered, without heat or rancor. Then he continued on his chosen path.

"It's tough," Stowe stormed to the calm Hartley. "There's no use in trying to keep some men away from alcohol, because they're no good stewed or sober. Jimmy Parmalee has so much stuff that it seems a crime for him to go on that way. I'd like to knock sense into him."

"Yes," said Jimmy's assistant, seeming to bear up cheerfully under the sad condition. "It's too bad about him, really. He's not nearly as good as he used to be. Sort of lost his punch."

"Yeah?" Eddie said, looking at Archibald. "Lost his punch, eh? Well, he can get a lot worse and still make some others around here look like those sad cases the State has to care for. If Jimmy ever gets half-witted, he'll only be twice as good as some I could hit by throwing."

Archibald strolled off, still calm, and Eddie continued to fret over his friend's weakness. That very day Parmalee appeared in a state easily seen and smelled, and his company was laid off for the afternoon. There was a reason for it. Jimmy's wife lived in New York, while he held to California. They had agreed to this manner of living and all because of that same mercantile product which is sometimes kept in bond.

Carney, it was known, was watching his star director with a worried eye. Carney liked him and sometimes chided him. On a certain Saturday morning it appeared that Jimmy had cost the company some five hundred dollars through a needless and foolish error of judgment. Carney wanted to see him when Jimmy came, and later, when the director walked across the lot, he was calm and defiant. He sauntered toward Stowe's camera.

"Well," said Eddie, studying his friend's face. "You got it, didn't you?"

"I did," Jimmy answered. "To tell the truth, I don't care a hang. I'm sick of this outfit. I'm particularly sick of Hartley, but I haven't had the heart to fire him. Now I'm going away, and I'm glad of it."

"You don't need to go away from anything, except the lads in the white aprons," Stowe said in parting. "Remember that."

Thus a good and efficient man, with lapses, severed his connection with the Blue Sky Company, and automatically Archibald Hartley got his chance. He was appointed the same afternoon.

"The polecat steps into the tiger's tracks," said Eddie Stowe, gazing upon his new boss without fondness.

"Hartley may be all right," a fellow director admitted, "but there's something sneaking about him. He walks on rubber heels, as though he'd killed a man once and expects to be caught."

The new director took hold of things where Parmalee left them, and the very first trouble that came his way was the much cussed and discussed Bull Mexico matter.

Prior to the smash, Parmalee had made certain plans affecting Bull's career. A picture had sprung into being, helped largely by Eddie Stowe's insistence that something unusual ought to be done with Bull before he died.

"Not that he's going to die," Eddie added, "but why don't you use him? There's a face that would look right peering out from a cell."

"You can't make a picture with only a face," Parmalee had answered. "I'll work Bull when I get a story."

Finally the story came. Jimmy called in Joe Sarver, the tame scenario wizard, and ordered him to take a long and thoughtful look at Bull's countenance and then seek some quiet spot and produce a film yarn involving Bull in dramatic tribulations.

"And," Jimmy warned at the time, "give Riordan a fat part in it. The dog has more brains than Bull."

Every now and then something unusual happens in the business, and this time it was the story Joe Sarver cooked up on his lame typewriter. It contained a leading part for one large man,

which was Bull, and a semilead for the dog, and it overflowed with everything expected by the lady about to squander the evening dime on genteel entertainment, including love, larceny, lingerie, and lobster palaces. There was also a generous sprinkling of those elements considered essential to flicker success, and Bull was kept busy from one end of the story to the other. So was Riordan. Joe Sarver surveyed his finished work and commented:

"There's a knock-out."

Bull was set down to be the honest fighter who goes wrong in reel one and struggles for the other four to return to the path of rectitude. There was also a peculiarly atrocious villain, who first steered Bull aside from honor, and then, not satisfied with his depravity, he sank to yet lower depths and lured Riordan into a life of crime.

Lastly there was a heroine and some twenty minor parts. It would be usual to say there was a beautiful heroine, but it happened that Jennie Hoeller was to play opposite Bull, and truth compels the statement that Jennie was only a good and charming girl. She was not beautiful. She had a sweet disposition and kind eyes, but nobody had named any talcum powder for her. And Jennie, like Bull, was very likely to clog up mentally whenever she started thinking faster than three miles per hour.

IV.

Bull had joined the Blue Sky organization long before Jennie came to live amid art, and her coming made the future different for him. She stepped in one day, attached herself to a job and a new name, all in the same afternoon, and became known thenceforth as Marguerite Capulet. Bull saw her and stared. Jennie was a nice little lady, but vastly different from Cleopatra, who, they claim, was the brainiest woman ever lived.

Before entering upon a career, Miss Hoeller had been with a paint and varnish company, where she had acted as day engineer on a fast adding machine. She weighed about ninety pounds and could cry without having pins stuck in her, and she took well in parts where she dressed in rags at the start and tatters at the finish.

"Who is that large man?" was her first question.

"That is Bull Mexico," some one informed her. "You want to be careful of him. He walks on a trail of broken hearts."

Jennie looked at Bull with interest. Up to that time, Mr. Mexico's relations with the opposite sex were formal and accompanied by a certain redness, which came out on his neck whenever a lady addressed him. He knew there were such things as women because he could see them walking around on the earth near him. When Jennie Hoeller moved into the Blue Sky lot something happened to Bull. He took a deep breath and fell in love. He sank clear up to where his ears should have been.

Not having any vast intellect before the event, Bull was now more useless than ever. Overcome by his new emotion, he wandered about in a daze, stumbling over objects and blushing when Jennie looked at him. He broke out with two shirts daily, which was his idea of a delicate compliment to an adored creature, wearing maybe his Red Riot during the morning and his pongee Crash of the Worlds from noon on.

The strange bashfulness of big Bull caused merriment among the hardened regulars, most of whom were, had been, were being, or would be divorced. The embarrassed love of the awkward man for Jennie Hoeller furnished one and all with a hearty laugh, but only the females twitted Bull over it. The males concluded, after some thought, that they would do all their twitting at night, when Bull was at home in bed.

More remarkable, perhaps, was Jennie's attitude. Her actions indicated that the presence of Mr. Mexico did not fill her with irritation. She could look at him and not fall in a swoon. In other words, she found Bull interesting, and presently, after a mental

wrench, Bull laid it before Jennie, and they began going out to lunch together.

"She likes him," said Hartley to Stowe, his voice betraying profound amazement at the workings of nature.

"Why not?" Eddie demanded. "I'd rather trust him than some that have all their ears left."

Therefore the honest fighter was ordered to play opposite his adored Jennie. At that point, fate stepped in and Parmalee went out. Bull fostered a scrupulous dislike for Archibald, but instructions came from headquarters, and the new director went ahead, picking up the preparations where Parmalee had left off.

Little will be said here about the picture itself, but it seems necessary to point to a few details. It was to be a five-reel spectacle, and in it Joe Sarver had worked out one point that impressed all hands as nifty and delicate.

Riordan was called upon to follow Bull about during the earlier scenes, and this was natural and easy because following Bull about was Riordan's daily life. In the second reel Riordan was abducted by the villain, a low scoundrel named Grimes. This Grimes person was apparently founded upon the immortal Fagin of the late Mr. C. Dickens, while Bull had been turned into a sort of genial Bill Sykes.

"I know where you grabbed this story all right," Eddie Stowe was unkind enough to say to Sarver. "You've just about been reading old man Dickens again."

"No chance," Joe answered indignantly. "This is an original story."

"Original sin!" Eddie went on. "You've been fooling around among the D's in your library. To me it looks a lot like you took Oliver and gave him a new twist."

"Yeah," snorted the irritated author, "and that part about the dog. I lifted that, too, didn't I?"

"If you didn't, then you got a new system I don't know about yet," the camera man went on, grinning. "But joking aside, Joe, that's a good story. That'll go over fine. Don't pay any attention to me."

Riordan was important because of the crime, which, of course, was nothing less than a snappy murder in the old limekiln beyond the squire's house. Grimes perpetrated this evil deed in the light of the moon, accompanied by Riordan, whom he had taken from Bull one reel before. Riordan, having three good legs, left exactly that many dog hoof marks in the soft clay, which immediately hardened and preserved the evidence. In the end Grimes was brought to justice through those same three marks. The detective took Riordan by a rope in the final reel, led him through some more soft clay, pointed to his three footprints, and said: "There stands the guilty wretch," pointing to Grimes.

"See," said Sarver with enthusiasm. "You take a close-up of the mutt's paws and the three marks in the clay. Great stuff and all new."

"Nothing in the world is new," Archibald said coldly, closing the discussion.

Mr. Hartley began winding in the Bull Mexico picture, and the employees found it diverting to watch Bull in the throes of acting. One fact made it a difficult picture to shoot, and it was that Bull appeared to stand in mortal terror of Jennie. There were several necessary love scenes, and when Bull finally could be persuaded to make love before the machine, the regular daily flow of traffic at the Blue Sky Company was shut off until he finished. When he first placed his arms affectionately about the lady, every one in sight had to move off the lot, and when the script called for a true lover's kiss the rest of the company went outside and stood on the curb.

"Say!" Archibald howled at the flushed and perspiring actor, who continued to retreat from his heroine. "Is that how you make love? Put your arms around her neck, you big hick! Stand close to her. Get in and make love like a human being."

"All right," Bull answered bitterly and pointing to the hard-working carpenters, stage hands, and others. "But

first run that gang outside. I don't want them looking at me."

In that manner, with numerous interruptions because of Bull's timidity, the picture slowly grew upon the celluloid. It was costing more than had been set down in the estimates, but Hartley was anxious to ring the bell with his first shot.

With the story three-fourths completed, Mr. Hartley suddenly announced to the company that there was a short vacation ahead. He said he was going East. Meantime all hands were permitted to sink into idleness.

"A vacation!" exclaimed Miss Hoeller delightedly. "And right at Christmas! Isn't it lovely?"

"Me?" Bull said, when asked about it. "I'm going away. I've got something I want to do, and this vacation hits me just right."

V.

It was learned presently why Hartley had stopped in the middle of an expensive picture. The Blue Sky people had been casting covetous eyes upon the person of a famous actor, habitat New York. This luminary had shown signs of wishing to leap into the movies. It was realized that the organization securing his signature on a contract would score a notable triumph, and half a dozen concerns were bidding.

The man's name was not Jerome, but that will do. It happened that Archibald Hartley had attended the same school with Jerome in the days of their youth.

"I know him well," Archibald remarked to Keeler, the general manager for the Blue Sky. "Let me go East. If anybody can sign Jerome, I can."

"You know him?" asked the lot boss a trifle dubiously.

"We're thicker than brothers," answered Hartley.

So Archibald started East, and in letting him go the general manager made a mistake which later caused him some worriment. President Carney was out of town, and when he heard what had been done he refrained from cheering about it.

That morning Eddie Stowe confronted Jimmy Parmalee on the street and observed that, for one who had lost a good job, Jimmy was not particularly downcast. Moreover, he bore no marks of dissipation.

"Heard the news?" Jimmy demanded.

"Tell it to me," replied Stowe.

"Mrs. Jimmy Parmalee has changed her place of residence."

"You mean she's out here?" asked the wondering Stowe.

"Just that," grinned Jimmy. "We're hooked up again, and you'll find us in a bungalow up on the hill. Three companies are offering me terms. And one more thing—I'm through with the well-known demon. From now on nothing but water for mine."

Eddie grasped his hand and shook it.

"Old Kid Parmalee," he said, "if you mean that, nobody can head you off. And when you sign up somewhere I want a job cranking for you. This Hartley guy is ruining one of the sweetest dispositions in California."

The morning of Hartley's departure for New York also saw Bull Mexico on his way somewhere else. Bull shook hands with Jennie Hoeller and looked unspeakable things. Jennie shyly returned his glances, and if you knew anything at all about love you realized that you stood in the presence of a wholesale shipment.

"Take good care of Riordan," Bull faltered, and Jennie promised that her life would be devoted to nothing else. Thereupon she led Riordan away on a string, and Bull gulped a fond and final gulp, picked up his yellow suit case, and faded away.

Hurrying swiftly over the facts, Mr. Hartley returned after a long delay and he came back without either Jerome or his signature. He was silent and glum. Jerome, it appeared, had been flitting about in the East, and Archibald flitted after him, catching up at Boston, where Jerome laughed and told Hartley it was too bad, but that he

had been signed up for a month or more with another and well-hated company. Archibald hurried West, having wasted a good many days and dollars. When President Carney got this report his previous irritation increased.

That was on Monday. On Tuesday Archibald's company was rounded up and ordered to resume daily toil. Every one was present to report except Bull.

"Where is he?" Archibald demanded. "Where did he go?"

"Out of town," some one answered, and that was as much as could be learned. About noon on that fatal Tuesday, Mr. Hartley was so warm under the collar that his brains had begun to simmer gently. At fifteen minutes past one Bull Mexico appeared on the Blue Sky property, and his entry still remains the largest single sensation for that year. He walked in about five minutes before Jennie Hoeller returned from lunch, and at first the hired hands gazed in open-mouthed wonder.

It was Bull, but not the same Bull who went away. It was a brand-new Bull. Archibald Hartley came suddenly around a corner, confronted the ex-battler, and staggered up against a paper castle.

"Where's Miss Hoeller?" Bull asked, and as he spoke nine new gold teeth flashed in the sun—nine teeth where before all had been vacancy and jawbone.

"What—what have you done?" Archibald roared at his leading actor.

Roughly speaking, Bull had used up his vacation to adorn and redecorate himself. He had gone down to San Diego, having only Jennie Hoeller in mind and the thoughts that fill one who is in love. Feeling that he would be a better-looking man with new ears, he had obtained new ears. The old ones were gone. In their place two perfect ears now sprouted.

Also the scars of battle had been removed by a surgeon in such things. For love of a woman and that he might appear more seemly in her eyes, Bull had sacrificed his old and battered nose, and a new one now greeted the public, correct down to the last detail. There was only one point that Bull had seemed to overlook in his warm enthusiasm. He had forgotten about that uncompleted reel. With his new decorations he only faintly resembled the fighter of the first four parts.

"Take him away before I kill him!" Archibald howled, thinking of the thirteen thousand dollars invested in the film and the advertising already prepared.

Bull turned in some astonishment. He had not expected such a greeting, but principally he wanted Jennie to see him, to look into his new-made face and observe the symmetrical beauties he had paid for.

Then Jennie came, sauntering in from a side entrance. She saw Bull and ran to him. She stopped and gasped. Finally, with a cry of delight, she threw herself into his arms, regardless of every one, and immediately thereafter the Blue Sky Company got its second shot of warm electricity. Behind Jennie something clamored for attention. It looked familiar, and the quicker minds saw that it undoubtedly was Riordan.

"Look, Bull!" Jennie exclaimed. "Look at Riordan!"

Bull looked along his new nose, and his astonishment was profound. Riordan returned the gaze, but there was a dubious hesitation in Riordan's tail. He doubted whether this was Bull.

"I thought," Jennie went on, looking fondly up at Bull, "I thought you'd appreciate it."

"My gosh!" said Bull admiringly. "He don't look like the same dog."

That was the living truth. Jennie had taken him to a well-known dog improver, and the gentleman had set to work upon Riordan with all the warm enthusiasm of an operator cast among cutlery. Jennie told the specialist that she wished to surprise Bull and she wanted Riordan restored at points where he appeared to be most worn. Thereupon the man had patched up Riordan's stringy ear and made it whole again. He had opened the starboard eye, which had been long closed. He glazed over the worn spots on Rior-

dan's hide, but his largest triumph was with Riordan's gimpy leg. That he straightened out through the cunning of bone science and made it as good as new.

"Look at him walk!" Jennie cried in a voice of happiness, and Riordan walked for the two fond ones. Better still, he walked on all four legs like any regular dog. When Archibald beheld this new miracle he moved his hands nervously in front of his eyes like one beholding black spots.

Nobody seemed to be thinking of that last reel, where Riordan walks through the limekiln on three legs and thus establishes the villain's guilt—the jolly old kick of the whole story.

"Two people around here have gone right out of their minds," a young actor suggested to Eddie Stowe.

"Yeh," Eddie replied, grinning toward the director, "and there's one other guy whose reason ain't fastened any too tight on its throne. Look at Archy."

President Carney learned that same afternoon that the Bull Mexico picture could not be completed, owing to certain things, and that all moneys therein invested were what you might call hopelessly lost. Hartley broke that news. Carney never heard of an ancient and royal custom whereby the king killed the bearer of woeful tidings, but he might as well.

"You went East and let us into this bust, didn't you?" he asked Hartley.

"I did," said Archy, "but I didn't know then that I had imbeciles working for me."

"Neither did I," said Carney, "and right here is where we chop down the visible supply."

"What do you mean?" asked Archy.

"I mean that from now on the Blue Sky Company will try to struggle along without you, Mr. Hartley. You go and see Keeler and settle up with him."

Hartley went out in silence, and within twenty-four hours there was a conference in the main office. One of those present was Jimmy Parmalee.

"Only one thing I demand of you," Carney said toward the end.

"I got you," replied Jimmy, and they shook hands. The first man he met when he came out was Eddie Stowe, who was there by intent.

"Now that you're back," Eddie grinned, "I suppose you're going to fire Bull and Jennie."

"Fire them?" said Jimmy. "Why would I fire them? I'm more likely to make a couple of stars of them. Furthermore, maybe you haven't heard the news."

"About them?" asked Eddie.

"I'm going to stand up with them Saturday," Jimmy went on. "They're going to be married and unite all that loose intellect."

THE CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAM

BEFORE James F. Smith was made governor general of the Philippines, and afterward became a member of the court of customs appeals, he practiced law in San Francisco.

At that time he was celebrated for the bulldog tactics he employed in fighting for his clients' rights in court. One day he became so rough-and-ready that the presiding judge sentenced him to serve twenty-four hours in jail. Just as he was on his way to the brief incarceration, one of his friends told him he had been appointed colonel in the First California militia.

A few minutes after he had received this news, and was trying to forget about the twenty-four-hour sentence, he got this telegram from one of his admirers up the State:

"Congratulations. The right man in the right place."

The Spartan

By Reynolds Knight

The battle in the soul of one American mother. Was her son going to be a slacker? Her father had failed the cause in the Civil War to the disgrace of the Salisburys, and it looked as if her son was going to repeat the shame. Would he—could he?

"THERE she goes again, Granny. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear her."

The fretful voice of the man was quiet for a while, and there was no sound in the room, except for the clock on the shelf.

"What can she be a-doin' it for?" he wondered peevishly. "Go see, Granny."

Granny turned her leathery face toward her son, removing her clay pipe from between her lips.

"She's queer, Ad," the aged voice said. "I've allus told you she was queer. I've said so from the time you first took up with her before you two was married. You didn't have no business a-marryin' a Salisbury, leastways not Mattie Salisbury. She'll do something yet that'll sp'il your name."

The rays of the setting sun came in through the west window. The mellow, amber light fell softly upon the man's hands where they rested in his lap. The bulging, twisted knuckles, swollen and inflamed, seemed almost to burst through the tender skin, which was drawn and pink from the effects of rheumatism. A shiny worsted suit covered the man's body, but even through its unyielding texture the harsh, rigid angle of his stiffened knee joints was visible. He did not move his head out of its painful position because he could not. Only his eyes were mobile. He turned them toward his mother.

"Mattie's been good to me, Granny," he said in his ragged, fretful voice. "You can't say nothin' agin' her on that score."

"Well—I don't know. Maybe not." She smoked a while thoughtfully, tiny puffs of smoke issuing from her thin, yellow lips. "She sets a heap o' store by you an' Van," she remarked, as though reluctant to admit so much, "and she does keep the place agoin', with Van's help. But then she's a Salisbury, and anybody that's a Salisbury is sort o' triflin' and no 'count, accordin' to my notion. Why shouldn't they be with her pa, old Abijah Salisbury, back in '61 a-shirkin' his duty—a-hidin' in a corn shock for a whole week—while they hunted for him for the draft? It's in the blood, say I ——"

The sound of a shot interrupted the voice, and the man's eyes flashed away from his mother's face to the window.

"There it is ag'in, Granny. Go see what she's a-doin'."

"Aye, like as not it's more o' her foolishness. She's that close-mouthed a body's got to guess at what she's up to. She'd never tell a word." She pulled at her clay pipe, tamping down the tobacco in the bowl with a lean talon of a forefinger. "Here she is for a whole month now shootin' in the evenin's like this an' sayin' nothin', except that maybe she'll want to kill a skunk——"

"Go see, Granny," the fretful voice of the man broke in.

"There's about as much sense to her shootin' like that as there is to her pickin' on Van all the time to jine the army. Here, with fightin' goin' on, she's a queer one that wants to run her only boy off to get killed in war. Let the Democrats do the fightin', say

I. It's them that ought to be made to go first; they brung it all on us."

She pushed back in her chair and picked her hickory cane from the floor. With a grunt she hoisted herself to her feet and stood uncertainly on her feeble legs. She took a step, her black alpaca skirt swirling about her ankles from the violence with which her twisted hip obliged her to walk, and then hobbled to the window.

The amber sunlight fell upon her yellow, wrinkled face, and bathed the head of tightly combed pepper-and-salt hair. She peered cautiously out of the window, as though fearful of being seen, holding to the window frame to steady herself the while.

"Aye, she's at it again," she said, taking her clay pipe from her lips and laying it in the window without knocking the ashes from it. "Standin' up stiff like she allus does, pluggin' away at the fence post. There it goes again!" she said quickly in her odd, metallic voice, as the sound of a shot broke in the hush. "What can she be doin' it for? Mattie Salisbury ain't the kind to do nothin' without they's a reason of some kind to it. It ain't her nature."

The invalid in the chair made no reply. But with his eyes he searched the rounded shoulders of the woman who stood at the window. Presently his glance shifted to the pink fluff of bloom in a peach tree outside in the sunset. The sunlight had crept upward from the man's twisted hands, and now broke softly about his face. His thin, auburn beard shone redly as the sun's rays sifted through it and searched out the lines of pain and suffering about his mouth. He did not look old, despite his fifty-five years; there was only here and there a gray hair in his reddish beard, and his great shock of auburn hair stood luxuriantly up on his well-shaped head. He wore no collar. His brown eyes were racked with pain. The sight of the peach tree pleased him, and a smile played about his lips. It moved him to speak:

"Granny, the peach tree 'minds me of the time Mattie and I got married. She was that full of ideas—ideals, I guess it is—as that tree. Aye, she was a woman!" The fretful voice for the moment forgot its pain.

The old woman at the window clung to the sash with her lean fingers.

"She was too notional, son, for common folks. She could spout Latin, but what good's it do her now? Aye, she keeps the place goin' with Van's help. I'll admit that——"

"Is she there yet, Granny?"

Granny peered through the window.

"She's goin' out to the barn now," she answered.

The sun sank beneath the edge of the prairie, and the empty sky glowed in the embers of the day. The old woman clutched her cane, and, with skirts swirling violently about her ankles, hobbled back to her chair. A robin began his evening song. The hush deepened. The distant bawling of a cow from the barns seemed to augment the stillness. The wind began to whine at the corner of the house as a child might whine of the solitude when left alone. The evening star emerged white-hot in the western sky.

"They'll be comin' in directly," remarked Granny as she sat, her cane across her knees, gazing out into the darkening peach tree.

The clock ticked on the shelf. The man said nothing.

A half hour passed and the room had grown quite dark. The two had ceased to talk. Granny rocked noiselessly back and forth in her chair, her spectacles mirroring dimly in tiny ovals the dying light from the window, but finally the dusk of the room gave way to darkness. Voices broke the stillness, and in a moment the sound of footsteps was heard approaching the door. The knob was turned quickly, and in the gloom two figures crowded into the doorway.

"Settin' in the dark again," said a heavy voice good-humoredly. "What good's a gas well on the place to you two, I want to know?" A match was raked along the door jamb, and the tiny flame curved through the air to the center of the room. The strong white light of the gas lamp flared violently,

harshly depriving the room of its soft shadows, revealing the newcomers—a tall, heavily built man of twenty-two and a middle-aged woman, thin, even gaunt.

"Here, Mam, give me the skunk killer," the young man said, taking a revolver from the woman and placing it on the clock shelf. "How goes it, Pop?" he asked as he paused before his father with his great shock of reddish hair. "Feel any better?"

"Oh, no, Van——" the invalid fretted, impatiently almost, as though the question were useless, even foolish. "There ain't no use to ask that. Turn me around, Van, so's I can see better."

"Sure, Pop," Van replied, and seized gently upon the invalid's chair and turned him so that he faced the interior of the room. "There you are. How's that?"

"All right, Van. Did you feed?"

"All done. Everything. Mam and me are the original farm hands. Ain't we, Mam?"

"I reckon so, son," was the laconic reply. The woman pulled a faded gray shawl from her shoulders and rubbed the backs of her hands briskly to take off the chill of early evening.

"How goes it, Granny?" And Van tapped his grandmother playfully on the shoulder. "Tobacco holding out?"

"About gone, Vannie——"

"Don't worry. I'll get you some more to-night over to the burg."

He straightened up to his full height and stretched as a sleeper just awakened. He was finely proportioned, blue of eye and with the ruddy hair of his father.

"Run you a race, Mam," he said banteringly. "I'll be cleaned up before you can get the supper on the table." Without waiting for her reply, he strode across the floor and entered an adjoining room. Through the closed door the sound of humming came now and then as he made his toilet.

The woman hung the shawl in the corner behind the door. She was tall; the mark of toil was in her stooping shoulders. There was grimness and austerity in her bearing. She walked mannishly, taking great strides. Her lips, once full, were thin and tight-drawn across her even white teeth. She did not smile; there was no humor in her eyes, which were large and blue. Her hair was combed back from her forehead and twisted in a harsh knot; there was no softening of the severity by so much as a bang. Her gray dress was plain. There were no relieving lines about it, no ornaments. The whole aspect of the woman—her manner, her features, her dress contributed to the single expression of grimness.

"One of the Wyandottes is coming off to-morrow," she said as she stood in the middle of the room. "Most of her eggs are pipped now. She ought to have fifteen little chickens." She looked first to her husband and then to Granny, but without expecting a reply apparently, for she walked briskly away to the kitchen.

The sounds of cooking followed shortly, accompanied by the noise of her coarse shoes as she walked about the uncarpeted floor at her tasks. At odd moments in the course of her preparations she entered the dining room, where the invalid and his mother sat, but she said nothing, and the while Granny rocked noiselessly in her chair, and the invalid, in his strange, stiff position, stared thoughtfully at the carpet.

"'Most ready, Mam?" came the heavy voice of Van through the closed door. "I'm about through myself."

"I'm about ready, too," was the answering call from the kitchen.

The evening meal at length was placed upon the table, and Van burst from his room, proclaiming that he had beaten his mother in the odd contest which he had proposed.

"Eatin' with us to-night, Pop?" he cried to the invalid.

"Yes, Van, I guess so. Push me up to my place. I'll make out somehow."

Granny struggled to her feet and hobbled to her chair at the table, and when they were gathered about the red cloth the woman bowed her head and uttered a short prayer. In the reaction that followed, the young man began

animatedly to comment upon affairs in the barnyard, of feeding and milking, of the activities of this animal and that, which, it seemed, he had studied as he might have studied the activities of a friend. Suddenly his conversation veered.

"Pop, do you know that Mam there is gettin' to be a regular sharpshooter? Yes, sir, she can crack a knot in the fence every time, and not half try. Can't you, Mam?"

"Yes, I do much better now." She had a quiet way of speaking that savored of refinement. She chose her words carefully and enunciated clearly. It seemed odd in the midst of such grimness.

"You just wait till old Mister Skunk comes around and Mam will sure pop him, eh?" The young man's spirits seemed irrepressible. His clean-cut, animated face, his large blue eyes, and his mass of reddish hair made him a striking figure in the hard white light of the gas lamp above the table. "In case o' war gittin' close to us, Mam, you sure could give a good account of yourself. There won't be no invaders monkey with this farm," he remarked lightly, and then busied himself with his plate.

"Aye, war's a-comin'."

It was Granny who spoke. She had been eating quietly to herself, paying no apparent heed to the conversation of the others. But of a sudden she laid down her knife, and her black eyes glowed from behind her silver-rimmed spectacles as she offered the prophecy. The remark set a new train of thought going in the young man's mind. He gave a short laugh.

"It is for a fact, Granny. And what do you think of Mam there, wantin' her young hopeful, which is me, to go marchin' off to war?" He was not serious; the twinkle in his eye gave the lie to his solemn face. "Wants me to march off to war," he repeated emphatically. "Treats me just like a stepchild. No, sir, not me. It's goin' to be a powerful good foot-racer that gets Van Hamilton to join the army. It's catchin' first, Mam, just the same as it is with hangin', you know. I'll leave it to you, Granny, if that ain't the earmarks of an unnatural mother——"

"Van, Van!" The light chaff brought the cry from the woman across the table. "How can you joke like that? You're no son of mine to say such things. You're no son of Mattie Salisbury to hang back when your country needs you!"

"Aye, Mattie, and I'm a-thinkin' you're gettin' things mixed up. It's his pa's folks that's fightin' stock—every one of them clean back." Granny interrupted in her strange, metallic voice. "On your side there's only your own pa, Abijah Salisbury, to do the fightin', and he hid in a corn shock, where they couldn't find him——"

"Don't fling that in my face again, Granny." The blue eyes blazed darkly. "All my life I've had that flung at me, again and again, not only by you, but by the women over in Galesburg—from the time I was a little girl. I regret it. But you keep grinding and grinding away at it——"

"Mam, Mam——"

"Keep still, Vannie, please. That old story they tell on father——"

"Aye, it's a true story, though. I know." And Granny laughed sarcastically in little gasps and shakings of mirth, and her small black eyes snapped with enjoyment. The woman in the gray dress closed her lips tightly, and the muscles of her lean jaws swelled with wrath. She was silent, stirring her coffee thoughtfully.

"Do you think I have no sense of duty?" she burst forth. "Because my father wasn't a soldier, do you think my own feelings are twisted and unworthy? You are unjust. You know I've tried to bring Van up as he should be. I've tried to inspire him with ideals of duty. I want him to go to war——" She paused. There had been the slightest quiver in the firm voice, and it seemed she paused so that she might take a stouter grip. "No mother, Granny, could send her boy away wantonly, indifferent of his ever coming back. I've tried to make Van see that. It's only that I want him to do the

right thing—possibly, too, that if he ever should have a daughter she would not have it thrown back at her all her life that her father had been a coward——"

There was a silence in which Granny sopped out her plate with a piece of bread, her black eyes alive with a cruel enjoyment of the situation. She laughed again in her gasping, shaking way.

"It's the Salisbury blood in him, Mattie," she said betwen gasps. "You'll see."

"Don't run it in the ground, Granny. Enough's enough of a thing." The fretful, ragged voice of the invalid spoke for the first time since the meal had begun. "There ain't nothin' to be gained by hashin' the thing over and over. I say it's for Van to decide. It's him that'll have to do the fightin' if he goes, not nary one of us at home here."

"Let's don't talk no more about it now, everybody." And with that Van attempted to banish the discussion that had sprung up. "I think Mam ought to tell us about the skunk she's goin' to kill. Have you see him yet, Mam?"

"Don't, Van; please don't. I hope there won't be any. But—I don't know. I can do it, though. I won't be afraid ——"

"Afraid?" Van laughed. The idea was amusing. "You're funny, Mam. You just shoot quick and 'straight, that's all. And Mister Skunk is done for."

"I'm practicing so that I can do that —Van," the voice changed abruptly. "But, Van, I want you to answer me, yes or no: Will you join? Don't put it off, please. You won't wait to be drafted?"

"You nag at me just like a little kid, Mam."

"Do be serious, son," the woman pleaded. "Don't take it so lightly. Tell me to-night—yes or no—whether you will choose to be a coward or a son we can be proud of."

"Running's too good, Mam, and now is the time to get a head start." The chaffing continued willfully. He finished eating and pushed back his plate, and sat smiling at his mother teasingly. "You see, I've always been a believer in my feet. You know what they say about the fellow who fights and runs away. That's me, Mam, every time."

The woman's lips tightened, and she began again with her eating, forbearing to reply.

"You goin' to town, Van?" asked the invalid.

"Yes, Pop. Thought I'd take the gas buggy and skid over toward the burg after a bit."

"Well, get Granny some of her kind of tobacco. Push me back away from the table now. I can't eat no more."

The evening meal was over. Granny had resumed her place in her rocking-chair beside her son, who sat stiffly in his tortured position. Mattie was picking up the supper dishes. She was silent and preoccupied, moving grimly about her task, the hard white light from the gas lamp throwing into relief the severe lines of her face. Van came out of his room, where he had gone for his cap and a final touch to his hair.

"I'm goin', Mam," he said, pausing where she stood at the table.

"Van!" the woman suddenly cried out, throwing her arms about his broad shoulders. Van embraced her awkwardly. "Will you think, Vannie, about what I've said while you're gone, and then tell me—yes or no—what you'll do? Yes or no, Vannie." She kissed him. In the moment she seemed to lose somewhat of her grimness. "Oh, Vannie, you know your mother loves you, don't you?"

"Sure, Mam, I do." They stood swaying slightly together.

"But, Vannie, answer me yes or no when you come back. But if you love me, son, it will be yes."

The solemn face of the young man gave way flippantly. "There you go again, Mam. Ain't I told you before that I'd rather be a live coward than a dead hero?" He hugged her boyishly, then released her. "So long, Granny. Good-by, Pop."

He was gone, and stillness settled

down upon the house. They heard the beating exhaust of the motor car as he left the farmyard and turned west down the road. Then the wind began again to pick at the corner of the house, and the clock on the shelf ticked quietly to itself.

Mattie Hamilton stood as if stunned when her son released her. The eager light in her eyes died out, the grim lines in her face emerged anew from the soft emotion she had experienced a moment before. She came to herself with a little start and went on with her task.

An hour passed; the evening's work was completed, and Mattie had taken her place under the white light. She sat crocheting silently. None of the three spoke for a long time. Finally Granny gave vent to a sigh.

"Aye, war's a terrible thing," she said. "I know, for I've seen war times." The clock ticked, the wind fingered at the corner of the house. "I don't like to think of Vannie goin'——"

"Would you have him stay at home?" The grim woman interrupted Granny.

"Ruther than see him go off and get killed I would."

Mattie Hamilton tightened her lips.

"You're no better than the womenfolk in the burg." Her tone was disdainful. "Faint hearts, all of them. Old Anne Huggins set up her squawk in the coöperative store Saturday. 'Oh, Mrs. Hamilton, have you heard the news? War's come and they're callin' for volunteers. Some says they will begin draftin' next week. What c'n we do? They mustn't have our boys. What can we do? If every mother of us, I say, should set her foot down flat and say: "No, you can't have our boys," we could put a stop to war for all time. We could for a fact.'

"And then George Mace's wife edged in. 'I'll tell you what I'll do,' she whispered. 'I'll take my two boys and go to Arkansas. I know a place back up in the hills where the government won't never find them. Do you think I'm goin' to let the only boys I got be sent out and butchered? No, sir, not by a jugful!'"

Mattie Hamilton's voice had taken on the twang of the voices she imitated, edging the words with contempt as she uttered them.

"Whom can we blame if we're a nation of cowards—women like that?" She expressed the disgust she felt.

"Arkansaw. That reminds me of the time when Ad there was a little feller and we moved down to Arkansaw——" Granny began irrelevantly. "He heerd us talkin' about it one day, and out he walks as big as life and looks up into the sky an' says, says he: 'Good-by, God, we're goin' to Arkansaw.'" Granny laughed in her short, gasping way. A slow smile spread over the drawn features of the invalid.

"I remember, Granny," he said with an attempt at cheerfulness. "Wa'n't that the place where they was so many skunks?"

"Yes. If Mattie'd lived on that farm she could get all the practice she'd want shootin' at 'em. There was a powerful lot of 'em."

"Yes, she would have had some reason to shoot there, Granny."

Granny's eyes quitted her son's face and fastened themselves upon her daughter-in-law beside her. There was something of the light in them which they had held at supper time, when she had teased her about her father, Abijah Salisbury. They seemed to bore through and through the woman who sat crocheting, unmindful of their gaze.

"You're not aimin' to shoot no skunks, Mattie," said Granny insinuatingly.

"I haven't said so. It's Van who said that."

Granny searched among the folds of her dress, and when she had found her pocket she filled her pipe.

"You ain't never said, then, what you're doin' it for?"

"No."

"I'd think it was a waste of money and time, and a pack of nonsense into the bargain." Granny tamped down the tobacco in the clay bowl of her pipe.

"There don't seem to be no reason

in it, Mattie." It was the invalid who spoke.

"Maybe not."

The rough, toil-reddened fingers moved deftly with their crocheting. The voice was noncommittal. Granny smoked a while in silence, turning over in her mind what had been said, now and then directing a swift glance at her daughter-in-law.

"Have you noticed much difference in Van lately, Mattie?" asked the invalid. "Kind o' seems to me that all to once he's gettin' straighter—like a soldier, maybe. He don't hump over like he used to——"

"Aye, there's the Hamilton blood showin' up in him, Ad." It was Granny who spoke before the woman had an opportunity to do so. "It will be the Hamilton in him and not the Salisbury, say I, if Van goes to war. Blood is what counts——"

The red fingers ceased their crocheting and crushed down into the lap. The thin form sat erect suddenly.

"Granny," came the voice, "have you lost your senses? Van is mine; my flesh and my blood. If he goes it won't be because he is either a Hamilton or a Salisbury, but because it is right for him to go, and he sees it is right. If he's a coward, then I'm not one. There will be no cowards, either Hamilton or Salisbury."

"What would you do, Mattie?" the invalid asked. "You can't make him go if he don't want to."

But Mattie shut her lips the more tightly and took up her crocheting again. In the silence the wind renewed the plaint at the corner of the house, and Granny turned her attention to her pipe. The invalid waited for the answer to his question, but at length gave it up, his eyes gazing abstractly at his twisted hands. It was Granny who broke the silence. Of a sudden she whipped her pipe from between her lips.

"Aye, what would you do? You'll see; it'll be the Hamilton that'll go and the Salisbury that'll stay, mark my words."

Mattie was stung by the remark. For a moment she sat silent; then she tossed aside her work, and the grim face grew grimmer.

"There'll never be another Salisbury coward, Granny," she said slowly, evenly. "Long ago I made up my mind to that. When the time comes Van will go."

"But what if he won't? Aye, you'll see. He's a Salisb——"

"He'll go, I say—or you'll see that the Salisbury women are not cowards."

"You couldn't go in his place, Mattie," fretted the invalid. "You don't talk sense."

Mattie Salisbury had risen from her chair. She loomed large in the room; her severely combed hair, her plain, harsh features, the simple gray dress gave her a terrible grimness.

"I said I knew my duty," she flashed. She took a step or two, urged to movement by the spirit that had risen within her. "Van will be coming directly." She paused near the clock shelf. "He won't stay late." She stood looking a moment at the revolver lying beside the clock, where Van had placed it, and then took it down and went back to her chair, a grim determination in her manner that made her seem all duty and will power.

"Aye, you'll see. You'll see," croaked Granny, almost as though the words were a refrain. It gave her pleasure to gird at her daughter-in-law; it was a choice morsel under the tongue of her spirit, and she relished its savor. Mattie did not answer; talk was idle. She steeled herself against the sarcasms of the withered little woman in the black alpaca dress.

Long moments of silence ensued, broken only by the complaining wind. Granny rocked and smoked to herself and said nothing. The invalid's eyelids grew heavy and he drowsed, stiffly erect in his chair. He wakened from time to time, returning again to sleep. The striking of the clock at length roused him, seeming to drive sleep from him entirely, for his eyes remained open. He stared at the pink roses in the green carpet at his wife's feet for several moments. Presently his eyes

lifted to the coarse shoes and then to the gray dress and the sharp knees, and finally, in their meditative way, they reached to the revolver lying loosely in the rough red hand. It was meaningless to him. The idea that his wife was holding the revolver did not penetrate his mind for some seconds. He had not seen her take it from the shelf. Of a sudden his eyes leaped, and he shot a glance at his wife's face, but his voice remained the same fretful, ragged thing it was.

"Mattie," he said, "I don't see what you got the gun down for." At the sound of his voice Granny left off her smoking and turned quickly in her chair. Her black eyes bored straight into the grim face.

"Aye, what you got that down for?" she demanded.

"They ain't no skunks to shoot this time o' night, Mattie."

Granny looked across to her son. "It's just like I've said all along, Ad; she's a Salisbury——"

"Keep still!" The grim face turned to Granny, and the voice rapped out the command. The withered little woman bridled, her snapping black eyes behind her silver-rimmed spectacles became coals of fire.

"I'll not keep still. I'll talk all I want to talk. You can't threat me with your gun. I'll speak my mind even if it is agin' ye, and you can't stop me. Tell us what you got it down for. Tell us that! You got it down to scare me with. I know ye. I know ye. You're a Salisbury—the meanest blood that ever run in mortal body——"

"Granny"—the fretful voice spoke with an effort at sharpness—"hush your mouth!" Granny subsided, and drew nervously on her pipe. Silence fell.

"What you got it down for, Mattie?" the invalid asked presently. The woman declined to answer for a moment, then changed her mind.

"Patience, Adam; you'll see. Maybe I won't need it. He'll be coming directly. It's past time now. He's going to answer me yes or no to-night."

The invalid meditated upon her reply. It seemed difficult for him to think.

"Van ain't aimin' to go, Mattie——"

"We'll see."

"What if he won't?"

"Aye, what if he won't?" croaked Granny. "You'll see. He'll be a Salisbury. There ain't no brat of yourn that's man enough to be a soldier."

Mattie opened her lips as though to speak and then shut them, and the muscles of her lean jaws swelled as she ground her teeth together in silent anger.

"What if he won't, Mattie?" The fretful voice was like that of the wind at the corner of the house—insistent, complaining. "What if he won't? What is the gun for? Why can't you talk, Mattie? Say something, Mattie. What is it you're calculatin' on doin'? You ain't—— Well, why don't you put the gun up?" A growing fear had sprung up in the stricken eyes of the invalid.

In the silence that followed Granny began to laugh; sardonic little gasps of mirth surcharged with the poison of ridicule escaped from her faded lips as she jeered at the grim woman sitting at her elbow.

"Aye—aye, Ad," she said between gasps, "don't get all het up. She ain't got the real nerve to do nothin'. She's a Salisbury."

"But what if he won't, Mattie? You ain't said what you'd do. Why don't you put the gun up? Why don't you talk?" A fevered flush spread beneath the thin beard and blazed at the temples of the man. "He's our boy, Mattie. You ain't aimin' to—to harm him, Mattie? Say something, Mattie."

"Aye, Ad, you heerd what Van said; he'd ruther be a live coward than a dead hero. That's the Salisbury——"

"Granny!" The thin lips opened in a flash and the rough hand gripped the butt of the revolver in her lap. "You've said enough. Van's going to war; he's going to blot out his grandfather's disgrace; he's going to do the right thing."

"But what if he won't, Mattie? What if——"

"Then I'll not be a coward. I'll

take the life I gave him. I'll spawn no cowards!"

"Mattie——" The invalid's cry was almost a sob.

"Don't, Ad! I'll be merciful. I'll shoot straight. I've practiced for that all along. One shot. There won't be any pain. I won't make him suffer—I'm his mother——"

The hard white light from the gas lamp beat down in the room upon the green carpet of pink roses; it etched even grimmer lines in the face of Mattie; it painted out what little glow of life there was in Granny's face; it filled the great shock of reddish hair upon the invalid's head with subtle, glistening lines of light. Silence had fallen, save for the wind at the corner and the faithful clock. Granny's laugh had ceased; the quiet voice of the grim woman had broken off softly; the invalid no longer fretted.

A faint murmur of sound entered the wind's note and was gone again. It came again, and again was lost. It was a fluttering noise, a tremor, a faint palpitating in the night.

"That's Van!" Of a sudden came the exclamation from the invalid as he recognized the sound of the motor upon the wind. Granny shifted in her chair, and her hands toyed with her heavy cane in her lap. She watched her daughter-in-law intently, but was silent.

The fluttering noise of the motor grew stronger, a full breath of the wind caught up the sound and hurled it through the darkness toward the house. It caused the invalid to cry out:

"Mattie, Mattie, put up the gun; put it up! Van's comin'! What can you be thinkin' of?" Then the wind closed over the sound of the motor as a blanket, and there was only the wind at the corner of the house and the clock ticking in the stillness. The invalid in his torture chamber of twisted limbs stared in agony at the grim face of his wife. "Mattie—please. You can't do—that."

But the woman had lapsed into silence again, and only sat and waited, saying nothing in reply.

"Aye, that'll be him comin' into the yard now." Granny spoke with a querulous note in her voice as the sound of the open exhaust roared closer at hand in the darkness. Granny had ceased her rocking. She gripped her cane tightly by the ferrule as it lay across her knees. Her skinny fingers were clutched about it till the tendons in her arm were drawn like whipcords. She did not move her eyes from the face of her daugher-in-law.

A shaft of light flashed into the window as the car turned in at the driveway, and was gone again. The open exhaust fluttered down the drive and past the house and on out to the barnyard. Fear had laid hold upon Granny with the approach of the car. Perhaps Mattie would do it. She was that stubborn, and she never could stand plaguing. Maybe she had gone too far with her daughter-in-law, maybe she had egged her on to do it.

Granny began planning something. She gripped her cane even more tightly in her fingers and settled herself in her chair firmly. She cast a hurried glance at the invalid, and the bright black eyes came back to their quarry.

"You'll not kill him, you lunatic, you!" she shrilled in her senile hysteria. "You'll not, I say!" Then she let fly with her heavy cane. She put all her aged strength into the heave of her arm, and the piece of hickory flew with deadly weight. But excitement spoiled Granny's aim. The cane glanced harmlessly across the gray shoulders, and fell to the floor far from Granny's reach. And Granny, with her twisted hip, was now rendered as helpless in her chair as was her son opposite her.

"Aye, Ad, screech when he opens the door. Holler for him to run from the lunatic. She's plumb crazy as a loon." Excitement pitched Granny's voice to a high staccato note that pierced like the shrilling of a fife.

"You'll keep still," said Mattie quietly; "both of you." There was the dead level of sanity in her tone. Granny was silenced by the ominous threat in the words, and a poisoned

hush settled again about her, stressed by the venom of the bright, black, little eyes that blazed in her wrinkled face.

Outside in the darkness the garage door rumbled shut on its rusty hinges. Van would be coming quickly. The invalid moistened his feverish lips.

"Mattie—turn me, please, so's I can't see you do it. I can't bear it—please, Mattie."

The grim woman rose at once and pushed the invalid's chair about so that the man was turned from the doorway.

Footsteps sounded on the pathway outside. A whistled snatch of a popular song rose and died away. The footsteps came rapidly toward the door. At the sound Mattie had turned, and stood waiting. Another moment and he would be in the room. She would demand an answer—yes or no. And if, and if—— She could do it. She had practiced. Her heart beat mightily in her lean breast. A bright spot began to burn in each of her thin cheeks. She swallowed. She could do it. She had practiced. The hard white light limned her out in the room as she stood grimly, one hand on the back of the invalid's chair, the other at her side, the revolver concealed in a fold of her gray dress.

The door knob was struck from without. A heavy weight lunged against the panels eagerly. With a snap the latch popped out of its fastening and the door flew inward.

"Mam!" The sudden cry rang through the room. The tall figure strode in and slammed the door behind him. His heels clicked sharply, his right arm went up to the brim of his broad felt hat, and he stood rigidly at attention.

A sudden silence fell, and out of the hush leaped the wind's plaint at the corner of the house outside. No one spoke. Mattie swallowed. Vaguely she brushed with her hand across her eyes, so curiously blurred they had become. Then the piercing note of Granny's voice burst in the stillness:

"Aye, Ad, look at the boy! It's the Hamilton, just as I said. Look, Ad!" Granny, in her excitement, grew shrill. "Look, Ad! Aye, look at the Hamilton in him! Look, I say!"

"What, Granny; what?" the fretful voice exclaimed impatiently.

With a laugh Van swung across the room and seized gently upon the invalid's chair.

"Turn around, Pop. You're missin' it all. Now take a squint at your soldier boy!" And the young man stood beneath the hard white light of the gas lamp.

"Why, Van! In soldier's clothes! You ain't——"

"Sure, Pop, I joined," and with the pride of youth he ran his hands over the surface of his uniform, expanding his great chest and feeling of his biceps through the crisp cloth. "A month ago—with the guard over to the burg; we've been drillin' evenings. How do I look——"

A broken sob cut like a knife through the young man's chattering talk, and he stopped short off. In a stride he caught the gray, grim woman behind the invalid's chair in his arms.

"Why, Mam! What's the matter, Mam? Don't cry, Mam, please. Please don't, Mam." He held the thin form tightly to his breast. "Mam, you said—— Sure enough, Mam, didn't you want me to go?" The woman could not speak for weeping.

"Oh, Vannie, Vannie, you know I did!" she said between sobs. "But why didn't you tell me before?" He let her weep softly upon his shoulder.

"I was keepin' it for a surprise, Mam," he said when she had grown quieter. "I wanted to wait till I knew something about it before I let you know. But, Mam"—he drew back from her slightly and reached into the hand hid in the folds of the gray dress—"what you got the skunk killer down for?" He took the revolver and slipped it into his belt.

An impulse seized the grim woman and she kissed him passionately.

"Oh, I'm so glad, so glad. I thought I heard a skunk, Vannie," she said, burying her face on his shoulder, "but there wasn't any, after all."

The Camden Town Mystery

By S. P. Steen and D. C. Lees

This story of a mysterious murder will be of peculiar interest to you, in that you can follow the methods of three different types of detective who are at work on it: Banning, of Scotland Yard; Glynn, of New York and Washington; and Monsieur Desprez of the Service de la Sûreté, of Paris

I HAD no idea how long I had slept, when I was awakened by the murmur of Glynn's voice close at hand. I sat up in bed, and saw, through the half-closed door which opened into my sitting room, the outlines of my friend's pajama-clad figure seated at the telephone. An abnormally light sleeper, he had been aroused first, and had answered the summons. I lay still in lazy comfort, awaiting his call, but his voice went steadily on:

"I shall come, most certainly—117 Holbrook Terrace, Camden Town—right. I have it. Would you mind my bringing my friend along? Newspaper man, you know—Oh, no, he'll make no use of it, except in the way of fiction. Does a story now and then. Well, it's deuced decent of you, Banning. I shan't forget it. Yes—yes. At once."

The receiver went up with a click, and Glynn peered around the door.

"Come in," I said, sitting up. "I've been awake for the past five minutes."

"Then you've just five more to get your clothes on," he said. "There's been a mysterious murder in Camden Town, and Banning has called us." He plunged back into his bedroom, and in something less than the prescribed time we were ready and on our way to the scene of the crime.

It was a twenty minutes' run from my lodgings to Camden Town. Our destination on this particular night lay in one of those sections of London which seemed doomed to the dry rot of gradual decay. Holbrook Terrace was putting forth its last claim to even a vestige of respectability. The pavements, where, on sunny and rainy days alike, the ragged, unkempt children of the neighborhood alternately fought and played at hopscotch, were full of pitfalls for the unwary pedestrian. Many of the houses which had been designed for finer uses had fallen to the shabby gentility of lodgings "to let." The iron railings of their narrow inclosures were twisted or missing. Their entrance steps were grimy and unscrubbed. From each linoleum-carpeted hallway the commingled odors of rubber and boiled mutton seemed perpetually to issue.

We found our address, 117 Holbrook Terrace, without difficulty. A plain-clothes man admitted us after a glance at the card which Glynn presented. He ushered us up a stairway at the end of the hall, and into a small bedroom on the second floor, which seemed already filled with the deftly moving figures of men.

"This is Banning," whispered Glynn, as a man in the uniform of a Scotland Yard official came forward to meet us.

"Ah, Glynn," he said without ceremony, "we had just been called up when I phoned you. This murder"—he gestured toward a bed which stood in a dimly lighted alcove—"of a young girl, Phyllis Tennant by name, a lodger in this house, was committed early in the night, probably between ten and eleven o'clock. It was not discovered until an hour or so later."

"By whom was it discovered?" asked Glynn quietly.

"By the lodging-house keeper, a Mrs. Ruggles, and the police constable on

this beat—X 500. He's a new man, comparatively speaking, from the country. We recruit the suburban police from the rural districts. It's his first case of the sort, I fancy, but he has his wits about him. I'll let him tell his own story. Just a moment, constable." He beckoned to a man in a policeman's uniform, who leaned with folded arms against the wall of the corner farthest from the shadowed alcove. Police Constable X 500 straightened himself deliberately, and, coming forward, confronted us. He was a young fellow of a powerful, stocky build, with a freshly colored face, and a stolid, unemotional expression which held no hint of interest or feeling. He saluted with a sort of rustic deference when Banning requested a repetition of his story, and proceeded without further prompting.

"I went on duty at six," he said. "The fog had come up, and it was a bit thick. I did my beat by counting the lamp-posts. At half past nine, or it might have been a quarter to ten, I was passing this house when a hansom drove up and a man got out. I saw him in the light of the street lamp. He was a toff—I could see his shirt front and the shine of his topper. He went up to the house door, and I listened for his knock, but I didn't hear it. I watched to see a light struck, but there was no light. He was gone four or five minutes."

"While you waited?" asked Glynn, as he paused.

"While I walked on to the next lamp-post," corrected the policeman. "When I turned he was coming out of the house. He got into the hansom, and it drove off."

"If a light had been made in this room, could you have seen it from the street?" asked Glynn.

"No, for the chief tried it after he got here."

"Go on," said Glynn.

"Well, I walked on for a minute or more, and I got to thinkin' that, when the toff came out, I hadn't heard the street door close. I went up to the house, and the door was ajar. I knew that wasn't the thing with the house asleep, so I knocked on the hall floor with my truncheon until I roused the missus, and hard enough she was to wake. When I told her what I'd seen she said that she'd gone to bed with the toothache after takin' somethin' for the pain. When it eased off she'd fell asleep, and hadn't heard nothin'. Well, when she'd struck a light and got her wrapper on and opened her door she was all of a tremble, and naught would do but I must go all over the house to see there was no thieves about."

There was a pause. Police Constable X 500 wiped his mouth with his cuff, as if reminded that all this unaccustomed effort at narration was dry work. Glynn, in default of anything in the way of liquid encouragement, offered a curt interrogative, "Well?"

"There was just the one lodger, the missus said, two families havin' moved out on her the day before. The girl's door was locked, so when we'd knocked and called, and got no answer, I set my shoulder agin' the panel and bust the lock. When the lights were turned on there she lay with the knife in her heart."

Again Glynn's eyes sought the bed. "A spring lock," he said, stepping over to the door and back again. "Now do you think it likely that the girl, upon going to bed, may have failed to spring the catch and that the murderer simply closed the door after him?"

But Police Constable X 500 had no theories to offer. His evidence, so far as we were concerned, had been given and finished. With another salute, he drifted away to resume his former stolid attitude against the farthest wall.

Banning came over to us from his station at the foot of the bed, accompanied by a dark, alert young man, whom he had introduced to us upon our arrival as Monsieur Desprez, of the *Service de la Sûreté*, of Paris. Monsieur Desprez, it appeared, was in London upon business connected with Scotland Yard.

"If you will look at the body," said Banning, "we will then consider the clews my men have been able to pick

up. There is but one in my opinion worth considering, though Desprez here does not agree with me. We have no footprints or finger marks to guide us. The deed was committed before the fog lifted or the rain fell, and the weapon was an Italian stiletto, which has been identified as having belonged, curiously enough, to the girl herself. Hold your lantern just a trifle closer, sergeant. You will notice the position of the body, Glynn? Not the slightest sign of a struggle. She had fallen asleep, never to awaken. And the blow, as you see, was struck just over the left breast with the force of a sledge hammer and the precision of an anatomist. Most of the bleeding was internal."

The body, that of a very young girl, lay slightly upon the right side, as if still in the easy unconsciousness of sleep. The suggested lines of the childlike figure had not yet stiffened into the rigidity of death. The steady, unwavering ray of light from the sergeant's lantern sought out and touched as with an illumining finger the satiny curve of the rounded cheek, the gleam of the thick lashes, the curling ends of one long braid of hair, the delicate hollow at the base of the slender throat. Even to me, inured as I had been in boyhood to scenes of crime and violence, it was a piteous sight. The Scotland Yard man turned his back upon it before he resumed his statements in a lowered voice:

"Now, as to these clews, Glynn. There is, as I said, but one which in my opinion is worth considering. My men, after a thorough search of this room, have found three things—two of them interesting, one significant. Upon the hearth they ran across some scraps of burned paper covered with writing which may or may not have been fragments of the dead girl's correspondence. The writing is classical, the 'e's' resembling the Greek epsilon."

He opened an envelope and sifted out upon his palm, which he extended, some fragments of half-charred paper. "Among these are one or two phrases intact, but unintelligible. Secondly an old album lay upon a table at the foot of the bed, opened at a particular place. It is just the sort of thing in which a country girl would preserve the pictures of her friends and associates. Strangely enough it was open at the only blank or unfilled page in the book. You may see it presently for yourself. The third is this post card, found under a newspaper which lined the top dresser drawer. You will observe that it is not dated and that the postmark is obliterated."

He held the post card up before us, and while the sergeant again lighted his revealing lantern we read: "Phyllis, darling, if it pleases you, meet me at eight-fifteen at the——" Here the cartoon of a rising sun was drawn upon the card. It was signed: "Yours to a cinder, Alice."

"You consider this the dominant clew?" asked Glynn.

"I am certain of it," was the decisive answer. "When we find the writer of this post card, or the person who instigated its writing, we shall have found the murderer."

The silence which followed the speaker's assertion was broken by Desprez.

"I would take my chances on the scraps of paper," he announced.

"Would you care to try your luck with them?" asked Banning, with a smile. "If you should, they are at your service."

The Frenchman accepted the envelope and its contents with a bow. "You are indeed amiable, monsieur," he said courteously. "You have added a new interest to my sojourn in your wonderful city."

"There is nothing left, I fancy, for you, Glynn, but the album," said Banning, as we moved over to the little table.

"It is not very suggestive—a blank page in an album," observed Glynn reflectively. He bent over the worn, plush-bound book with a microscope poised lightly between his fingers. "However, I shall be glad to look it over."

"And now, men," Banning turned

abruptly to his associates, "look alive and keep a sharp eye on the premises while I take these gentlemen down for a final talk with the landlady."

We followed as he descended the stairs to the kitchen, where we found Mrs. Ruggles, decidedly *en déshabillé,* seated at a table still cluttered with the remains of the past evening's meal, a handkerchief bound about her head, and a moist gleam in her eye, which may or may not have been connected with the scent of rum shrub which permeated the atmosphere. She looked up with a glance half stupefied, half defiant, as Banning advanced and seated himself opposite her at the uncleared table.

"Now, Mrs. Ruggles," he said sharply, "I shall expect you to answer very carefully in the hearing of these gentlemen the questions I shall put, some of which have already been asked you."

"An' if you was to arsk them questions till doomsday, horficer, I couldn't tell you any different from what I 'ave told. What with the troubles that 'ave befell this 'ouse, an' me a respectable widder woman, an' my hother lodgers movin' hout on me unlooked for, an' the larst one layin' hupstairs with a knife in 'er 'eart, I'm that worritted in my 'ead that I couldn't take my affidavy to anythin', not if 'twas hever so."

"How long had this girl, Phyllis Tennant, been a lodger in your house, Mrs. Ruggles?"

"A year, come Lady Day. She'd come hup from the country to find 'er a plyce, and find it she did with Swan & Edgars, 'aberdashers, limited, Regent Street, which you can arsk 'em for yourself. I kept an eye on 'er to set 'er stryte, which I'd orter, she bein' a 'igh-spirited young gell in 'er teens. An' stryte she was an' paid 'er wye reg'lar, if you arsk me."

"Had no followers?"

"None that come 'ere," declared Mrs. Ruggles flatly. "But I arsk you, horficer, if it wouldn't 'a' been a fair marvel if some o' them Johnnies in the city 'adn't 'a' come buzzin' about, an' she the 'arnsome gell she was? No 'arm in that, if the gell kept 'er 'ead. An' she did, leastwise befo' she got to runnin' to the Risin' Sun an' traipsin' about with one o' them gells that 'angs about the pubs. Hup to that she was as tidy a gell as you'd wish to see."

"You didn't consider the Rising Sun a proper place of resort for a respectable young woman, Mrs. Ruggles?"

"Now, horficer, you know, or you'd orter, that the Rising Sun ain't no plyce for a decent gell like Phyllis. As for 'er pal, I'd took stock of 'er long ago. So I says to Phyllis, says I, I don't mind doin' anythin' of a civil sort for a friend o' yours, but I dror a line at any gell as 'angs around a pub. Been in quod once, too, and a good job, too, if she'd been kep' in. So she warn't allowed to set 'er foot in this 'ouse, which she didn't."

"You may tell us, Mrs. Ruggles, all that you can recall of to-night's happenings."

Mrs. Ruggles retied the handkerchief about her head, folded her arms, and directed a bleared gaze toward the cuckoo clock that ticked upon the mantel.

"Well, Phyllis come in from the city around six some'eres—or it might 'ave been seven. I was 'avin' a bit o' supper 'ere on the table, an' I hoffered 'er a cup o' tea, but she'd 'ad one already, with a san'wich, so she went hup to 'er room in a fluster like, an' it warn't many minutes before she was down again, ready for goin' hout. I mistrusted where she was goin', an' I was in two minds to give 'er a talkin' to, but she was at the door in a flash, where she turned roun' an' fyced me. 'I'm goin' to the Risin' Sun, Mrs. Ruggles,' she said, 'an' for the larst time if things turn out as I think they will.' Well, I see there wasn't no manner o' use in my sayin' anythin' then, so I arsked 'er would she be back late or hearly. First she said hearly, an' then she larfed an' said that if she 'appened to be a bit late she 'ad 'er knife with 'er, and she'd 'ave company back to the 'ouse."

"Her knife?"

"Why, the syme knife she was killed with, horficer—that Heyetalian dagger thing. She'd 'ad it for a month or more. Let on as 'ow a friend 'ad give it 'er. She'd a fancy she was follered when she went hout o' nights, specially when a fog was on. Footsteps be'ind 'er, *she* said. Rubbish, I called it, but she'd mentioned it to a friend, and 'e'd give 'er the dagger. A hairloom, she called it. Hout of a pawnbroker's shop, if you arsk me."

"And who was this thoughtful friend?"

"An' now you're arskin' more than I know, horficer. I never saw 'im. An' she was a close one, was Phyllis. No lettin' 'er in to tell more than she'd a mind to. Shut 'er mouth like a trap when I arsked 'er the syme question."

"Well, cut on, Mrs. Ruggles. At what time did the girl get home?"

"It must 'ave been around nine some'eres. I'd dozed a bit in my chair, I know, sittin' 'ere by the fire, dreadin' to go to bed with the toothache. But the clock 'ad struck before I 'eard 'er voice houtside, talkin' to 'er pal—that gell that 'angs round the Risin' Sun."

"Did you hear what was said?"

"Well, they was quarrelin', accordin' to what I 'eard. At it 'ammer an' tongs. The gell was givin' Phyllis what for, for not w'ytin' longer at the pub for some one, but who 'twas I couldn't make hout, though I could 'ear 'er goin' on. The 'ole street might 'ave 'eard 'er, for that matter. The constable didn't, for I arsked 'im later. Says 'e was down at t'other hend of 'is beat. 'You might 'ave w'yted a bit longer,' the gell kept sayin'. 'No chance of *'is* not comin'.' An' Phyllis said she'd never w'yt longer for no man. She'd been a fool for w'ytin' as long as she 'ad. The t'other one come back at 'er with a cat's snarl. 'Think you're tantalizin',' says she. 'That's your gyme, is it? Drorin' 'im on, ain't yer? Think 'e'll set you up like a lydy in a viller in St. John's Wood?' An' then Phyllis said she'd 'ad 'is word for better than St. John's Wood. 'An' you'll see that 'e keeps it,' ses she. An' then she flings inter the kitchen to 'and me the pot o' porter she'd promised to fetch me from the pub. But I got no answers to questions. 'I'm too tired to talk,' she said, an' went hup to 'er room. An' I 'eard no more after I'd went to bed and to sleep till the constable waked me a-clatterin' of 'is truncheon on the 'all floor."

"And what then, Mrs. Ruggles?"

"Well, then I arsked the constable would 'e take a look roun' the 'ouse, me bein' a lone widder woman an' not knowin' was there thieves about. Though why thieves in 'Olbrook Terrace I leave it to you, horficer. 'E went hup the stairs, me be'ind 'im, an' clear forgettin' till, in the 'allway above, that I 'adn't fetched no matches to light the gas, which there was a jet on the first landin'. We'd come hup in the light from my bedroom door, which it 'ad swung to, so back I 'ad to crawl down them stairs in the dark, an' me thinkin' hevery minute——"

"Couldn't the constable have used his bull's-eye?"

"Which I arsked 'im the syme question. It smoked, 'e said. 'E'd tried it hearlier in the evenin', and the wick was that gormed hup with the hile——"

"I see. And when the lights were finally turned on?"

"When the lights was fin'ly turned on," repeated Mrs. Ruggles, "the door was found locked an' we couldn't rouse no one, though knocks and calls repeated. So the constable set 'is shoulder agin' the panel, and when the door give there she lay."

The purplish red in Mrs. Ruggles full cheeks faded slightly, and her loose mouth quivered. Banning drew the post card from the breast pocket of his tunic and studied it with a frown.

"What did you say was the name of this pal of the girl Phyllis?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, Hallice—Hallice Shaw, a nyme that don't stand for much accordin' to my wye o' thinkin'."

"A name that stands for a good deal, according to mine, though it's not written in a woman's hand," Banning reflected.

II.

We had left the kitchen, and Mrs. Ruggles to her reflections, and were standing outside the house in the chilly dawn of a new day. "At all events," he continued, "I am convinced that our course of action is clear enough. It would be a blunder to defer an inquiry at the Rising Sun. If it is asking too much of you gentlemen, however, to begin the morning without rest or breakfast——"

"I believe I am expressing the sentiment of the three of us," interrupted Glynn quietly, "when I say that we are not disposed to quit a hot trail."

"Then we'll take the Underground at Camden Road station for Highgate and the Rising Sun," said Banning briskly. "It's a twenty minutes' run. We'll beat the first delivery of the morning papers."

Day was just breaking when we reached the tavern. It had still a touch of the old-fashioned wayside inn, with its horse trough and post sign. A milk cart had just clattered away from the rear premises, and a yawning stableboy in a smock frock loitered about the horse trough. Smoke was rising from the chimneys, but the house had not yet been opened. We seated ourselves upon one of the benches, placed outside for the convenience of loungers, and awaited the first signs of life within. They were not long in coming. The heavy, nail-studded door opened behind us with a wrench, and a big, red-faced man stood on the threshold. His eyes were still swollen with sleep, his frowzy head and incomplete attire proclaiming that he had just left his bed.

"'Ello," he said, with a keen glance of recognition at the Scotland Yard official. "You're a hearly bird, horficer—or a late one. What's on?"

"A murder at Camden Town," answered Banning briefly.

A gleam of suspicion lightened the innkeeper's sodden eyes.

"An' wot's that got to do with me an' the Risin' Sun?" he asked gruffly.

"That's what I'm here to find out, Cartwright."

"You're at the wrong plyce, guv'nor. There ain't no murder been done 'ere, nor yet no fightin'. Ain't allowed. 'Shove along,' ses I to them as gets their blood up, an' 'ave it out some'eres where the ground's a free-for-all, and a copper won't spot yer.' I ain't runnin' no prize ring, and I ain't noways particular about bein' landed on by no horficers of the law. I'll let the law alone, if the law will let me alone."

"I have some questions to put to you, Cartwright," announced Banning curtly, "in regard to the frequenters of this house. Would you prefer to answer them here or at the lockup?" He stared straight into the man's shifty eyes. Cartwright's bustling truculency died down like the foam on a tankard. He hitched his trousers up, and leaned against the doorframe.

"Right you are, guv'nor," he acquiesced in a milder tone, "thought I don't 'old with no insinuations again' my 'ouse, which is a public, run straight an' respectable for the public. As for them as comes 'ere, I can't be 'eld accountable for 'em. Live an' let live is the ticket at the Risin' Sun. But who's been murdered?"

"Has a girl by the name of Phyllis—Phyllis Tennant—ever been around here?"

"Who?" A leer twisted the man's coarse mouth. "Lord Cecil's gal? Why, to be sure she 'as—along o' that pal o' hers, Hallice Shaw. Lord Cecil 'e trickles in, once in a wye, to chin 'em. Wot o' that? You carn't arsk me to shut my door in the fyce o' the toffs. There's no 'arm done. The country lass is str'yght enough anywye."

"*Was*, you mean," Banning corrected. "She was murdered last night after coming home from the Rising Sun."

The man's face changed, and he glanced nervously backward over his shoulder into the room behind him.

"Come in," he said hoarsely, "and arsk wot you've a mind to hinside."

He turned and led the way into the

empty room. The lady of the jug handles had already taken her stand behind the bar. The innkeeper motioned her to leave the room, and turned to confront us.

"Now, horficer an' gen'l'men," he said, "if you won't take a livener first, which you'd be welcome to it, on the 'ouse—just fire away with your questions."

"When were these three—the girl, her pal, and Lord Cecil—last here?" demanded Banning, without preface.

"Why, they were all three 'ere larst night. Leastwise, the country gal an' Hallice set in the parlor an' talked for the matter of an hour. Waitin' for a friend, as Hallice let on. But 'e didn't come, and around nine the gal Phyllis left in a tiff. Hallice went out with 'er, but she come back an' 'ung on till the toff showed up."

"Had they any conversation?"

"None that I 'eard. 'E didn't tarry. 'Ad Frenchy whistle 'im a 'ansom, and was druv off."

"And the girl Alice stayed here?"

"Sure she did, an' 'ad 'arf a pint, which 'e'd paid for. 'E'd a stood 'er a quart to get shut of 'er. No odds to 'im. 'E's free with 'is money."

"To get shut of her," Banning repeated. "Why did he wish to get shut of her?"

"Why, you see, Hallice was the toff's old flame before 'e dropped 'er for the country lass. She was a 'arnsome gal, Hallice was—a reg'lar topper—an' not so long ago, neither. Might 'ave been married an' settled, if she'd 'ad a mind to it. But——"

"And the three were still friends?"

"Oh, in a wye, yes. Phyllis, she 'eld the winnin' cards, an' through 'er t'other gal could see the toff once in hever so often. 'Twas a queer mix-up all round."

"At what time did Alice leave the house?"

"Now that I carn't say. I was out for an hour or so, an' when I come back she was gone. But I say, guv'nor, I'll 'ave in Frenchy, an' you can arsk 'im. 'E was 'angin' around. Called the 'ansom for the toff."

He was back in a few minutes with a white-aproned waiter behind him. The man spoke but little English, and Desprez, at Banning's suggestion, assumed the rôle of examiner.

At the sound of his native tongue a change passed over the man's dark, alert face, but he proved a reticent witness. He answered categorically the questions put to him, addressing himself exclusively to his interlocutor, apparently oblivious to our presence after the first guarded glance with which he had swept us.

Yes, he remembered having seen Alice go out with the girl Phyllis, and return before Lord Cecil's arrival. Yes, they had talked together for a few moments, and, at his lordship's order, he had called a hansom. He had not overheard the directions given the driver. He himself had served the girl with the ale which his lordship had paid for. He had not noticed the time of her departure from the Rising Sun.

The waiter's testimony had not added much to that of the landlord, but he had at least produced an impression which Banning voiced when he had boarded a train for the city.

"There's more to be gotten out of that fellow," he said. "It might be as well to keep an eye on him. However, the case is clear enough in my opinion. I happen to know Lord Cecil's record. You will hear from me, gentlemen, as soon as the coroner's inquest is over. You are at liberty, in the meantime, to follow out your respective clews."

An hour later Glynn and I were seated at breakfast in my comfortable lodgings. Under the cheering influence of tea and toast, the events of the past night were already assuming the vague proportions of a nightmare. And horrible as the experience had been it had furnished my guest the long-coveted opportunity of seeing Scotland Yard men at work in their native environment.

I had known Glynn in New York as a detective and secret-service man of exceptional ability. He had been associated with Banning in important international cases. His summons by the

Scotland Yard man had come as the fulfillment of a promise to let Glynn "in" on any case of interest which might come up during his stay in London. But I was soon to realize that this new interest would interfere with the pleasure which I had anticipated from the visit of my guest.

I watched Glynn sink day by day into that state of detached concentration which invariably marked his absorption in the problems of his calling. Certainly no priest could have studied his breviary with a more religious fervor than that which Glynn devoted to his examination of the old, plush-bound album. He guarded it as jealously as a miser secures his gold. When the book was not in his hands it was locked away in a stout, brass-bound desk, which I had cleared out and turned over to his uses.

And in the meantime the central-office squad was illuminating the life record of Cecil, Lord Hetherington, with the searchlight of a trained and merciless investigation. It resulted in the exposure of a rather commonplace career of debt and dissipation. A bankrupt in wealth and reputation, Lord Cecil still possessed as assets his youth, his lineage, a rather unusual share of good looks, and a plausible personality. It was well known that he had won the affections of the Lady Evelyn Manners, and that the announcement of their engagement might at any time be expected. Their marriage would rehabilitate Lord Cecil's fallen fortunes. The nuptials had been postponed until a period of probation, set the suitor by the father of his fiancée, should have elapsed.

"And it was no doubt because of this," said Banning, who had dropped in one evening to give us the information, "that my lord was amusing himself in a rather more obscure fashion than he usually affected. Oh, it's a clear case, Glynn. That girl had threatened him with exposure, and, as you Americans say, he was 'up against it.' He had to get rid of her. He followed her to the lodging house, with the idea, doubtless, of effecting some sort of compromise; found the door open, crept up to her room, discovered that she was asleep, and stabbed her with the stiletto he had given her."

"Has the knife been identified?" asked Glynn.

"By his own man, Jevens," answered Banning. "He had missed it a week or so back from Lord Cecil's writing desk. We are only waiting for the fitting of one or two minor links in the chain of evidence to make the arrest. You must be on hand, Glynn. I shall let you know, of course, before the decisive step is taken."

"Sorry, Banning," said Glynn, with a half-suppressed yawn, "but I shall be out of town for the next week or two."

A look of surprise, which must have been reflected in my own expression, flitted across Banning's face.

"If you could see your way to extending the same courtesy to my friend here," Glynn went on calmly, "I should consider it a favor. Thank you, Banning. You are most considerate. I've been interested in your handling of this case. Oh, yes, I shall be in England for a month or more. I'll look you up when I return to London."

"Feels it a bit—what?" said Banning, as I stood with him in the hall outside, while he waited for the lift. "All off in this matter, though, wasn't he? But he wiped me clean off the map over in New York in an international forgery case. Positively didn't leave me a leg to stand on. Good-by, old chap. I'll see that you're in at the death. You may expect to hear from me at any time."

I entered the room, to find Glynn lying listlessly back in his chair, his hands locked behind his head, an unlighted cigar drooping from a corner of his mouth. He regarded my rueful face with a hint of a smile.

"I'm sorry company, my boy," he said. "But you know my failings. I've made up my mind to run down to Kent for a day or two, and——"

"To Kent?" I echoed in amazement.

"Why, there's nothing in Kent. Not even a landscape—in winter."

"While you were out this morning I packed my bag," Glynn went on, ignoring my interruption. "I've about twenty minutes to make my train. We'll take a bus to the station, if you care to see me off."

I knew the futility of argument when Glynn had resolved upon any course of action. And I would never have dreamed of asking for an explanation which he did not volunteer. In the next few minutes we were seated on the top of an auto bus, on our way to Charing Cross Station.

It was a gloomy day, with a gray, overcast sky. There was a fine, driving mist, and the air was full of London "blacks." Glynn held out his right hand, upon which one of the greasy flakes had settled.

"Soot," he said. "Reminds one of Pittsburgh. Plain, grimy, oily London soot."

And during the remainder of that strange ride he discoursed whimsically upon the nature and quality of soot, soot of all kinds, from the finely divided carbon ejected from chimneys and smokestacks and locomotives to the greasy smudge of a kerosene lamp, while I listened in amazement to his enlargements upon this singular subject.

"Good-by," he said, with a crooked smile at my puzzled face, as the guard ran alongside to lock the door of his compartment. "You'll hear from me before you've had time to miss me."

I returned to my lodgings with a baffled sense of disappointment. Was it possible that Glynn had failed? I writhed at the thought. My faith in him had been grounded not only upon his individual ability, but upon that naïve confidence in all things American, which I possessed in common with the majority of my countrymen—the simple creed which leads us to believe that, pitted against any foreign system whatever, American enterprise and American cleverness must inevitably win out. But I was shaken—I was unbelievably shaken. I sat by my lonely fireside that evening after dinner, trying in vain to think of some possible reason for Glynn's desertion. And then I turned in and dreamed that the body of the murdered girl was wrapped in a winding sheet of the Stars and Stripes and that I was officiating as chief mourner at her obsequies.

III.

The days that followed were dull and monotonous enough. My own duties had become all at once distasteful to me. I had heard nothing from Glynn, and Desprez had apparently disappeared from the face of the earth. It was with a feeling of relief that I received Banning's summons to meet him in Trafalgar Square, on the third day of Glynn's absence. Anything that promised a definite result after such a period of suspense and waiting was welcome. The rendezvous was in a part of the city with which I was not familiar. When I reached the particular point which the chief had mentioned, and which was really the junction of several streets, I had the sensation of having been sucked into the vortex of that whirlpool of life and gayety which is the center of Piccadilly Circus. Motor cars shrieked and honked, and auto buses panted and vibrated at every corner. Throngs of extravagantly dressed women and men of fashion passed and repassed in a kaleidoscopic panorama of color and movement. Ragged newsboys shouted the latest sensations of their wares or tossed for pennies in the intervals of traffic. Flower girls, with the leathern straps of their baskets depressing their shoulders, displayed their frail merchandise, the beauty and freshness of the blossoms emphasizing the human ugliness of their venders. The pavements were strewn with dust, dirt, and refuse. I walked upon a carpet of omnibus tickets, torn newspapers, cigarette stubs, burned-out matches, the tissue wrappers from oranges, and all the inevitable chaff of the London streets, which the lightest wind can lift and blow into the eyes of pedestrians. The roar of London was in my ears, and the

desperate cockney wail of poor Private Ortheris came back to my memory: "I'm sick to go 'ome, to go 'ome. Sick for London again; sick for the sounds of 'er an' the sights of 'er and the stinks of 'er; orange peel and hasphalt an' gas comin' in over Vaux'all Bridge——"

A hand was laid on my shoulder. "You are punctual," said Banning. "Come this way."

We proceeded a few steps westward, and I was startled by the abrupt change in our environment. The transition was as sudden as that produced by the magic of a kinetoscope. We were in St. James Street, one of those quiet, trafficless thoroughfares which give access to the aristocratic clubs; those splendid, silent palaces, luxurious within and blackened without by the eternal smoke of London. An occasional hansom clattered past. At the entrance of the Wimpole, before which Banning halted, a match seller "cadged" for pennies, and a flower girl offered her wares. Men in correct afternoon attire passed quietly in and out of the heavy swing doors. Through the plate-glass windows we could see the leisured habitués of the club, smoking or reading or talking idly in shifting groups. At the curb, across the street, two plain-clothes men loitered. At Banning's signal they joined us, and, in obedience to his low-toned instructions, stationed themselves one on each side of the club entrance.

"I shall have to do a bunk here," said the chief, turning to me with a smile. "Just hang about and watch the game. Talk to the men, if you like. They know you're here by invitation."

He disappeared around a corner, leaving me in a rather nervous state of expectancy. I had seen many a man arrested before, but never a lord. I wondered that the station of the accused should render the occurrence so much more impressive. I sauntered over to the bulldogs of the law.

"Will there be any trouble?" I asked.

One of the men looked up at me with a stolid grin.

"No fear," he said. "Not with 'is sawt. 'E's a good plucked un, ain't 'e, Bill?"

"Right-o," agreed the other, with a straw in his mouth. "Steady as a clock 'e is. Mind your heye now. 'Ere 'e comes."

The heavy entrance door swung open once more, held back obsequiously by the alert, gray-haired attendant in his dignified uniform. A tall, slender, young Englishman, dressed with the inimitable correctness of the London clubman, emerged from the doorway. The plain-clothes men closed in upon him, but not before I had caught a glimpse of his high-bred face, the clear pallor of his skin, the military cut of the small mustache, the cool stare of the gray eyes. He recoiled slightly from the touch of one of the Bobbies, and flicked his sleeve with his handkerchief.

"You are under arrest, my lord, for murder!" said the officer, and tightened his grip.

"Hands off, my man!" the prisoner ordered curtly. "And call a hansom." He was the first in when the carriage reached the curb, the policemen crowding in after him. As the cabby gathered up his reins, something soft and fragrant thudded past my cheek, and through the open window of the hansom a heavy crimson rose fell squarely onto my lord's knee. I turned to find the white, distorted face of a flower girl at my elbow. We two were alone on the pavement. The club entrance was closed. The match seller had disappeared. The girl and I stood together in the gathering dusk of the London afternoon, staring after the cab until it became a vanishing speck in the distance.

The cab had disappeared before I turned to the girl, who still stood motionless at my side. She had thrown the rose as an expression, I supposed, of that impersonal sympathy for the under dog which is strongest in the unfortunate and the destitute. But as I glanced at her face its pallid despair amazed me. I bent toward her with some vague intention of accosting her, when suddenly, with a passionate move-

ment, she threw her heaped-up flower basket from her shoulders, and, turning swiftly, disappeared in the direction of Piccadilly.

I retraced my own steps like one in a dream. The brilliant crowds of fashionable idlers had thinned and dispersed. Already the streets were filled with a neutral-tinted throng, the toiling thousands of a great city, their ranks reënforced by those mysterious creatures who shun the day to come forth under cover of darkness, the human beasts and night birds of the underworld. London was girdling herself with lights as a courtesan dons her jewels for a coming orgy. I threaded my way through the brilliant streets, overcome by a feeling of loneliness and depression.

IV.

I had reached the door of my lodgings, when the mumbling whine of a street beggar attracted my attention. I fumbled mechanically in my pockets for a coin, but his touch upon my arm arrested my movements. I peered sharply at him in the gathering dusk. He was the cadger whom I had noticed at the club entrance.

"It is Desprez," he muttered with a chuckle. "Don't you know me? But how could you—in these accursed rags? If you will let me in for a moment——" But already I was pulling him joyously into the hallway.

"Let you in!" I cried. "Why, man, you were never surer of a welcome. Glynn is away. I was dreading the thought of dining alone. By the time you have changed your togs for a suit of my own the soup will be on the table."

Deprez's delightful qualifications as a guest made a festive occasion of my modest dinner. The good food and the good wine seemed to put him in the best of humors. We had reached the coffee and cigarettes before he referred to his startling appearance at the door of my lodgings.

"I have been a disguised hanger-on at the Rising Sun for the past week," he confided, leaning back in his chair. "You may imagine its atmosphere. When I recognized you this afternoon at that farce of an arrest before the doors of the Wimpole I could not resist the temptation of testing your hospitality."

"A farce!" I exclaimed. "Do you mean to say——"

"Oh, the arrest was real enough. The suspicion upon which it was made is ridiculous. Cecil, Lord Hetherington is no more guilty of murder than I."

"And is it possible that Scotland Yard—— Why, Desprez, you are attacking one of the greatest institutions of its kind in the world!"

"You are blinded by its reputation," retorted Desprez coolly. "Institutions are no more infallible than individuals. The men of the secret service have become obsessed with the clew which they have selected as the dominant one in this case. Backed by a little circumstantial evidence, they are assuming that a young fellow's philanderings would inspire him to murder their object."

"But it is supposed that he regarded the girl as the obstacle to his marriage."

"Precisely. But consider the girl herself. A simple country lass, with whom, according to the trend of evidence, he was not even criminally involved. Had murder been the solution of his difficulties, why did he not murder Alice, the woman whom he had wronged, scorned, and cast aside? She was by far the more dangerous of the two. She has beauty, force, and passion. Did you not notice her face to-day?"

"To-day?" I echoed blankly. "Why, I have never seen her!"

Desprez set down his glass with a laugh.

"Why, the flower girl, man, the flower girl!" he cried. "With the rose which she flung she was casting her heart, her life at the feet of the man who had been her lover. The act was a confession of her personal knowledge of his innocence."

"But—but," I stammered, "what of your own clew? What of the scraps of paper?"

"Ah, there, my friend, I must admit my own fallibility. I was on a false scent. I soon discovered that the handwriting upon those charred fragments was not Lord Cecil's. I faced an impasse. And then by the sheerest luck I discovered the identity of the writer. You must know that before I went to the Rising Sun I recognized the advantage of having a confederate in the house. It was improbable that the oaf of a landlord would penetrate my disguise. It would be another matter to deceive my shrewd compatriot, the French waiter. I confessed to him my identity, while permitting him to believe that my suspicions, like those of Scotland Yard, centered upon Lord Cecil as the murderer of the girl, Phyllis. This waiter, as you must have perceived, is a man superior to his position. He responded to my advances, became my friend, and finally made of me his confidant. It appears, from sheer loneliness, he became interested in the curious drama unfolding before his eyes. The girl Alice gave him a partial version of her own story. She sought his sympathy, and finally induced him to write the letters which threatened her rival with direful consequences if she continued to encourage Lord Cecil's advances. My compatriot's infatuation for Alice was a later development. He believes that the letters which he wrote at her instigation are still in existence. Since the murder he has been distracted by the fear that their discovery might result in an injury to the woman he loves. It is necessary to remember that he believes her to be an innocent woman—guilty of nothing more than a foolish fancy for a man above her in station and a natural jealousy of the girl who had come between them. In making me these confidences," continued Desprez after a pause, "my poor compatriot had no idea that he was disclosing the one motive which has inspired half of the great, the historic, murders in the annals of crime."

"And you believe that Alice Shaw ——"

"I believe," said Desprez, rising from the table, "that the hand which flung the rose was the desperate hand which plunged a dagger into the heart of a rival."

Long after Desprez's departure I sat before my fire, absorbed in fruitless speculations. The mystery of the murder no longer engrossed me. It had become a puzzle, susceptible apparently of varied and opposing solutions. That it had offered to Glynn the opportunity of extending and establishing his reputation had been its chief claim upon my interest. I was conscious of a national, as well as a personal, pride in his success. And now his strange disappearance, his stranger silence piqued and mystified me. I had chafed under the slighting construction which Banning had put upon his withdrawal. I resented the fact that Desprez had persistently ignored my friend's connection with the affair. The instinct to hide my hurt had alone induced me to accept the Frenchman's invitation to accompany him to the New Bailey on the day set for Lord Cecil's trial.

V.

As we neared our destination we found it increasingly difficult to make our way through the crowds that surrounded the entrance to the building. The trial of a man in jeopardy of his life must always be a moving spectacle. To the English middle and lower classes the defendant's exalted station would but add a piquancy to his crime. As I noted the arid curiosity in the faces about me I could well believe that in ancient days, when men were not only hanged, but drawn and quartered, the people had paid to witness the farce of justice played out in the Old Bailey.

I had never before attended an English trial. Accustomed as I was to the democratic atmosphere of American courts, the scene before me had all the unreality of a stage setting. The wigs and gowns of my Lord Chief Justice, and his satellites, Mr. Attorney General and Mr. Solicitor General, the uniformed bailiffs and supernumeraries, the prisoner in the dock, the jurymen,

whose solemnity seemed the effect of long-established precedent, all seemed parts of an unreal and illusory pageant. The witnesses in their box furnished the sole element of familiar and commonplace humanity. Police Costable X 500, Mrs. Ruggles, the host of the Rising Sun, the cabby who had driven my lord to the lodgings of the murdered girl, the floorwalker of the haberdashery in which she had been employed; Jevens, my lord's man, and the French waiter formed the sordid background against which the dark and tragic beauty of Alice Shaw glowed like a baleful star.

Mr. Solicitor General's address to the jury, a long and rather tedious arraignment of my lord's career of debt and dissipation, produced apparently but little impression upon the crowd, who doubtless understood that this blackening of the defendant's reputation would presently be washed white by the eloquence of his own counsel.

The examination of the witnesses, however productive of thrills in the audience, brought out no testimony with which Desprez and I were not already familiar. But when the last witness was called the sea of faces seemed to thrust forward by a common impulse, like the waves of an incoming tide. Mr. Solicitor General, affected perhaps by this tense expectancy, and half consciously resenting the dark defiance of the look which the witness bent upon him, voiced that resentment in his command:

"Alice Shaw, look upon the prisoner!"

She obeyed him, with such a long, earnest gaze that there rose a murmur which provoked the usual order of "Silence in the court!"

"Alice Shaw, have you seen the prisoner before?"

"Yes." Her voice was low, but steady.

"How long have you known him?"

"For more than two years."

An impatient movement on the part of the prisoner, who bent his blond head to whisper to the bewigged counsel at his side, diverted for a moment the attention of the crowd.

"When did you last see him? On the night of the murder?"

"Yes."

"Do you recognize this post card?"

"I do. It was shown me by Phyllis Tennant the day before she—died."

"Did you write this post card?"

"I did not."

"Why, then, was it signed by your first name?"

"It was understood among us three—Phyllis Tennant, myself, and Lord Cecil—that any post card that he should write her would be signed with my name."

"By whom was this post card written?"

"It was written by Lord Cecil in answer to a letter to him from Phyllis."

"Do you know the contents of that letter?"

"She had begged him to see her on that night."

The look of satisfaction with which Mr. Solicitor General had listened to the admission of a compact involving the signature of the post card faded out, and he dismissed the witness with a gesture which seemed meant to imply a profound conviction on his part of her utter unreliability. But the counsel for the defense bent forward with a deprecation of any such conviction in his suave tones.

"If my lord pleases, I will take the witness for cross-examination."

The witness turned toward him with a slight relaxation in her strained attitude.

"You were the intimate and confidante of Phyllis Tennant?"

"I was."

"Did you know of any improper relations existing between the prisoner and Phyllis Tennant?"

"I did not."

"Did you know of any promise of marriage made by the prisoner to Phyllis Tennant?"

A spasm of scorn curled the witness' lip. "I did not."

"When did you last see her alive?"

"When I went with her to her lodg-

ing from the Rising Sun on the night of her—death."

"Did you ever afterward go to the lodging house kept by Mrs. Ruggles?"

There was a pause. The counsel for the defense repeated the question.

The girl glanced once again at the prisoner, at my Lord Chief Justice upon the bench, at the stolid faces of the jury, at the sea of expectant faces below her.

"I went there," she said in a voice that was almost a whisper, "after Lord Cecil had left the Rising Sun."

"For what purpose?"

"To see—to see"—the girl's hands twisted desperately—"if he were still there. But he had gone. The house was dark. I did not try to get in."

"*Mon Dieu!*" breathed Desprez at my side. "She has put the noose around her own neck!"

I found it difficult after this to follow the arguments made to the jury. Excusing myself to my companion, I made my way out through the dimly lighted corridors and into the crowded streets. The courtroom, with its atmosphere of crime and contention, had become unbearable. I longed for the free air of the open country. Three hours later I was dining at the Queen's Arms in Richmond.

The stars were shining down upon the fever and fret of London that night when I returned to my lodgings. Upon my desk lay my mail and the evening papers. As I opened one, still damp from the press, its screaming headlines caught my eye:

CAMDEN TOWN MYSTERY STILL UNSOLVED.

Young Lord Released on a Scotch Verdict.—Alice Shaw Arrested and Committed Without Bail as Alleged Murderess.

So Scotland Yard had accepted its defeat, and Desprez's theory had been acted upon? I glanced down at the letter, which I had picked up, and which I still held unopened in my hand. It was addressed to me in Glynn's familiar writing. The inclosure was a characteristic scrawl of telegraphic brevity:

Take 5.30 train for Camden Town tomorrow (Thursday afternoon.) Wear dark brown wig and mustache, and plain business suit of New York clothes, hat and shoes. Will meet you at Camden Road station.

Glynn.

My rest that night was disturbed by a thousand futile conjectures. I fell asleep toward midnight, to awake next morning long after my usual breakfast hour. But the day seemed endlessly long. I managed to consume a part of it in assembling the various articles which Glynn had mentioned. Through a sort of sentiment I had kept a suit of clothes which I had brought with me to London two years before. They were hopelessly out of style and altogether different in cut and material from the clothes which I had been wearing since my arrival in England. When I had donned these antiquated garments, and carefully adjusted the wig and mustache—the best which a Bond Street costumer could furnish—I doubted that Glynn himself would recognize me. A soft, well-worn hat, slouched over my face, completed the transformation. When I was seated in my compartment on the train I had the curious sense of a changed identity.

Dusk had fallen, and it was raining in a half-hearted drizzle when I reached Camden Town. The passengers whom the train ejected upon the platform seemed to form for a moment into a dark pool which presently separated into diverging streams and trickled away.

VI.

As I took my stand in the yellow glare of a station lamp a man detached himself from one of the moving groups and approached me. He was noticeable, as a countryman is in a city crowd, a sturdy figure in the holiday attire of a small farmer or fruit grower. He wore a dark coat with brass buttons, light trousers, plaid waistcoat, with a full, old-fashioned tie secured by a horseshoe pin. His ruddy face glowed redder by contrast with his white, mut-

ton-chop whiskers, and his eyes glinted from behind a pair of dark glasses with shell rims.

"Eh, lad," he quavered in a high, thin voice, "and here you stand, wi' me lookin' hither an' yan for ye. An' how are ye? But we'll let the questions go, for the missus is waitin' tea for us, and it's comin' on to rain harder than ever."

He caught my arm, and hurried me to the rear of a tall building, the black wall of which stretched up above us. So perfect was Glynn's disguise that I must have betrayed the uncertainty I felt, for he muttered some assurance of his identity as we halted in the shadow.

"We have just a moment," he said hurriedly. "I am lodging with Mrs. Ruggles. She knows me as a hop grower from Kent. I am stopping here in Camden Town to engage pickers for the coming season and to meet my son, who has been living for the past year or so in the States. You are to play the rôle of the son. You are a shopkeeper, fairly prosperous in a small way. Drop your acquired English accent, and talk with a Middle West drawl, though yours is chiefly a thinking part. Just follow my lead, and keep your wits about you."

He turned, and we walked forward in the direction of Holbrook Terrace.

"But, Glynn," I said cautiously, "you've really told me nothing."

"My dear boy," he answered coolly, "if we fail to-night there'll be nothing to tell. One false move—— But there's one thing. The picture which was torn from the album has been found."

"Found!" I echoed stupidly.

"Not so loud," cautioned Glynn. "You see, it was twice stolen. First from the dead girl's album on the night of the murder. The second time from the pocket of the man who had stolen it. If I hadn't happened to run across the 'Shadow' in London, it could never have been managed."

"The Shadow! Why, Cummins went by that name in New York."

"Exactly. Cummins himself, the lightest-fingered dip in the States or in any other country, for that matter. For the mere consideration of a lapse of memory on my part he turned the trick. He got into a tussle with the man suspected of having the picture, and made the haul and his get-away while I played fence to the theft. Steady now! Not another word!"

As we hurried on, the rain, as Glynn had predicted, came down harder than ever. The street was deserted. It stretched before us with the hollow emptiness of a tunnel. At its farther end, we could see the plodding figure of a man in an oilskin coat, which glistened under the flare of the street lamps as he passed them. Glynn's pace slackened. We were a trifle nearer the lodging house than was the man who advanced from the opposite direction, as if to meet us. But it was evident that he had not seen us. His helmet was pulled far over his face. His shoulders sagged forward, as if with the weight of some invisible burden. His feet dragged in a slouching gait. There was something furtive in the occasional backward glance which he threw over his shoulder.

"Police Constable X 500," Glynn muttered, and went instantly on in that high, whining key in which he had first accosted me. "But as I was tellin' you, lad, you won't find things so changed, after all. We're not much older, if we're no younger. Holdin' our own, holdin' our own, as the cat said to the mouse. We've had no great store of rain for a year or two, and the pastures bein' short the sheep haven't done so well. But the hops is fine this season—fine. I come up a week or more ago to see about the pickers. I can always find 'em in Camden Town. The same ones pretty nearly year in and year out. And I drifted in here with Mrs. Ruggles, on account of my old lodgin's bein' full up. Why, allo, officer; I call this lucky, I do. Here's my John, which I was tellin' you about, just over from the States, but a Kentish lad just the same. Shake hands with the officer, John. He's from the old shire, too."

"From Essex," growled the man, and grudgingly extended his hand.

"Well, now—well, now, it's an odd thing that always I'm takin' ye for a Kentish lad. But, Kent or Essex or Sussex, they're all much of a sameness. And by the same token you must step up to the room and taste a drop of the punch that will be making for John and me. We'll find the kettle singin' on the hob. Na, na, you mustn't deny us. The street's as empty as a tomb. There's not a creature would be out for mischief in this rain. And a drop will warm you up for the night."

The man looked as if he needed warming, as he hung back, and then, seemingly about to yield, hung back again, until finally, with a great show of cheer and heartiness, we shouldered him up the stairway between us. The room was warm and bright and full of firelight. He got out of his oilskins after some diplomatic persuasion on Glynn's part, and cowered over the blaze in a corner of the fireplace, with the steam rising from the soles of his thick shoes and a show of color coming into his sodden face. But it was not until he had swallowed a glass of the delectable, strong punch that his tense attitude relaxed. With a shaking hand he took the glass which was offered him and drank it off greedily, eagerly, while I could see the hot stuff hearten and steady him. Glynn, bustling to and fro, talking and cackling, stirring and adding to the mixture, refilled the empty glass and deftly set it at his guest's elbow. When he had served me and himself, we settled down in a half circle about the fire.

"And this I call comfort," chirruped Glynn. "I've always been a master hand at makin' friends, as you know, John; always was, always will be, and the constable and I was friendly from the start. It 'peared to me that he had a Kentish twang to his talk, though I mistook him, mistook him. When I was a waitin' here for you, and wasn't busy lookin' out for the pickers, I'd 'a' gone off my head for lonesomeness if it hadn't been for this chap. Why, I've walked his beat with him more than a time or two, eh, officer?"

The man nodded, his dark gaze on the glow of the fire, sipping, sipping at his drink.

"A man needs a bit o' company in a house like this to cheer him up. If I'd 'a' known as much about it when I first come as I know now, I'd never 'a' chose it for a lodgin'. And I ain't sayin' as I didn't try to pull back, even after I'd paid my reckonin'. But the old woman downstairs set up such a cryin' and a beggin'—— 'It ain't me as has done the murder,' says she, 'and that poor gell ain't comin' back to worrit them as is helpin' a respectable widder woman to make a honest livin'.' So I says to myself, says I——"

"Murder!" I broke in, with a yawn. "Why, I heard it talked about as I came down. And this is the house, is it? Well, I shan't sleep any the worse."

"Eh, lad, but the thing don't come so nigh you as it does to the rest of us who've been livin' here the years you've been away. Why, the lass came from down around Shoreham way. When I came through Ash, where she was born, the town was fair buzzin' wi' it, for just two years back she'd run away from home."

"Run away from home! For what?" I asked.

"Why, for no harm, they say. She just flitted to the lights o' the city like a moth to the candle flame. She was a gay, pretty thing, and she'd tired most-like o' the country, and she'd heard the hop pickers that drift down to us talk about city sights and city ways. She got her a place, and she'd wrote home the first year, and then the letters stopped comin', and they got no more news of her until the news of the murder came."

"And did any of her folks come up to look for her?"

"Time and again, but nought come o' it, and they were poor folks, wi' no money to spend. Eh, eh, these children, we bring them up—some of us—for the beasts to devour."

"Had she no lovers?" I asked softly.

"Before she left her home? Why,

there was a lad they told me of. There'd been sweethearting between the two when they were children. When the letters ceased he went up to look for her and bring her home. But he never come back. Lost—the two o' them."

There was a pause. A coal broke on the grate with a little spurt of violet flame. The rain dripped from the eaves, and the wind whimpered in the chimney.

"They showed me the form in school, where them two young ones sat together, and the brook he pulled her out of once in a freshet time. Happen he gave her the earliest spring posies and the first apple that reddened in the autumn, and drew her on his sled maybe when the snow fell. Lads do them things and forget—to remember 'em again when they are men."

I shall never know what drew my eyes to the corner where the constable sat. He had ceased drinking, and leaned forward, his dry lips fallen apart as if he panted. Beads of sweat stood out upon the grayish pallor of his face, and his eyes stared. He was seeing visions.

"I promised the old folks that if I could learn anything new about their lass I would. The landlady has told me some things about her—that she was honest and sweet spoken and just fair carried away by her vanity and the notice of the man so far above her. I've a notion to see the room where she lived and—died. I've passed it these many days, and fancied sometimes that I could hear her step inside. 'Twas a foolish thought, I know, but if I could tell her mother——John, if you wouldn't mind, I'm sure the officer would be glad to go with us."

I shall always feel sure that the constable was acting under hypnosis, though there was really no reason why he should have refused to gratify the curiosity of a simple old man. He came forward like a sleepwalker, without a word, and together we walked down the dimly lighted hall and into the chilly air of the silent chamber. Glynn had found the gas jet and lighted it. He stood directly under it, near the bed in its shadowy alcove. I was content to take up my position with my back against the door, and, strangely enough, the constable assumed the same attitude which he had maintained on the night of the murder, in the angle of the wall farthest from the bed. The room and its furnishings had not been disturbed. Superstition on the part of Mrs. Ruggles, or her increasing infirmities, had prevented any tampering with the desolate surroundings. And as we stood there, the stillness of death reigned. Glynn's voice broke the silence, and it was no longer the assumed voice of the old countryman. It rang with a cold authority which made my fingers close involuntarily upon the automatic in my hip pocket.

"The murderer of Phyllis Tennant dogged her footsteps on the night of her death," he said. "He had made himself thoroughly familiar with the interior of this house. He had secreted himself on this floor, and had listened over the well of the staircase to the quarrel between the two girls when they returned from the Rising Sun. He had at first perhaps no other intention than to seek the girl for one more remonstrance against her folly, but her declared faith in her would-be seducer maddened him. He regarded her ruin as inevitable. He waited until all was still, entered her room, found a deadly weapon ready to his hand, and plunged it in her heart. When he looked about him to make sure that no incriminating trace was left of his presence, he found an old album, filled with the pictured faces of her childhood friends, and among them his own—perhaps the last upon which the eyes of his victim had rested. He tore it from the page. But it is here." Glynn stepped forward, and laid upon the table, at the foot of the bed, the old plush album which I had first seen on the night of the murder.

"The light is dim," he said. "Turn on your bull's-eye, constable, and examine the picture."

There was a moment's silence, and then the man's strange, hoarse voice. "I cannot," he said, with an almost childish simplicity. "It smokes."

"As it smoked on the night of the murder. As it smoked and left its smudge upon the hand of the assassin and upon the page from which he tore the picture away. Martin Claverly, I arrest you——"

But the man stumbled blindly forward with his hands extended.

"Take me," he said. "I killed her body to save her soul."

VITALITY OF THE GOLDEN RULE

THROUGHOUT the civilized world the recognized code of ethics is the unconscious living up to the Golden Rule. Self-effacement is the essence of true courtesy, as courtesy is now understood, and though war and oppression survive, in which cruelties may accompany even a struggle for liberty, yet in social life among people of ordinary breeding there is an unconscious recognition of the words of Christ in His sermon on the mount: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them."

This principle is centuries older than Christianity. Confucius, the great Chinese sage, who brought a new religion into life in China, taught it to his followers in the following form: "What you do not wish done to yourself do not do to others."

The wide world has been the arena of unspeakable cruelty for ages, yet this principle was taught among ancient peoples many centuries before Christ came on earth. In some of the more dignified religions, hoary with time before the Christian era began, the precept that it was braver to forgive injuries than to seek revenge was inculcated, if not lived up to.

There have been many times in the history of the world when among civilized nations the principle of evil seemed to hold absolute sway, but by degrees the influence of good overcame it, still advancing a little farther, at times retreating and later more than recovering the lost ground, as the tides of ocean gradually but surely advance.

Mankind on the whole has been becoming more humane, in spite of wars which at times looked like a relapse into savagery. This is a material world of struggle and competition, beginning with the primeval struggle for existence, where the evil is constantly fighting with the good in human nature. We are still far from the millennium; but, judging from all historical precedents, the wars of our own day will, as in the past, be followed by the revival of the good in human nature for a period at least, and the powers of evil will sustain another defeat.

TOO ROUGH ON THE CZAR

COLONEL FRANKLIN PIERCE MORGAN, the political wit, his gray eyes flashing, his white hair waving a little wildly, was expressing his sympathy for the former czar of all the Russias.

"I'm sorry they've locked up the czar," he declared.

"Sorry!" Senator Broussard, of Louisiana, exclaimed.

"Certainly I'm sorry," asserted the colonel. "What's the use of segregating a czar now? It seems to me that, in these times, czaring is not a contagious disease."

Shadow Mountain

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "The Soldier's Way," "Rimrock Jones," Etc.

(In Four Parts—Part Four)

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WAY OUT.

WHEN a woman treads the ways of deceit she smiles—like Mona Lisa. But was the great Leonardo deceived by the smile of the lady when she posed for him so sweetly? No, he read her thoughts, how she was thinking of another, and his master hand wove them in. There she smiles to-day, smooth and pretty and cryptic, but Leonardo, the man, worked with heavy heart as he laid bare the tragedy of his love. The message was for her, if she cared to read it, or for him, that rival for her love; or, if their hearts were pure and free from guilt, then there was no message at all. She was just a pretty woman, soft and gentle and smiling—as Virginia Huff had smiled.

She had not smiled often, Wiley Holman remembered it now, as he went flying across the desert, and always there was something behind; but when she had looked up at Blount and taken his fat hand, then he had read her heart at a glance. If he had taken his punishment and not turned back he would have been spared this great ache in his breast. But no, he was not satisfied; he could not believe it, and so he had received a worse wound.

She had been playing with him all the time, and when the supreme moment arrived she had landed him like a trout, and then, when she had left him helpless from his disaster, she had turned to Blount and smiled. There was no restraint now; she smiled to the teeth, and Blount and the directors smiled.

Wiley cursed to himself as he bored into the wind and burned up the road to Keno. The mine was nothing; he could find him another one, but Virginia had played him false. He did not mind losing her—he could find a better woman—but how could he save his lost pride? He had played his hand to win, and, when it came to the showdown, she had slipped in the joker and cleaned him.

The widow would laugh when she heard the news, but she would not laugh *at* him. The road lay before him, and his gas tanks were full; he would gather up his belongings and drift. He stepped on the throttle and went roaring through the town, but at the bottom of the hill he stopped. The mine was shut down, not a soul was in sight, and yet he had left but a few hours before.

He toiled wearily up the trail, where he had caught Virginia running and held her, fighting, in his arms, and the world turned black at the thought. What madness had this been that had kept him from suspecting her when she had opposed his every move from the start. Had she not wrecked his engine and ruined his mill? Then why had he trusted her with his money? And that last innocent visit, when she had asked for her stock and thanked him so demurely at the end! She would not be dismissed, all his rough words were wasted, until in the end she had leaned over and kissed him. A Judas kiss? Yes, if ever there was one; or the kiss of Judith of Bethulia. But Judith had sold her kisses to save her people; Virginia had sold hers for gold.

Yes, she had sold him out for money. After rebuking him from the beginning

she had stabbed him to the heart for a price. It was always he, Wiley, who thought of nothing but money, who was the liar, the miser, the thief. Everything that he did, no matter how unselfish, was imputed to his love of money, and yet it had remained for Virginia, the censorious and virtuous, to violate her trust for gain.

He raised his bloodshot eyes to look for the last time at the Paymaster, which he had fought for and lost. What had they done to save it, to bring it to what it was, to merit it for their own? For years it had lain idle, and when he had opened it up they had fought him at every step. They had shot him down with buckshot and beaten him down with rocks and threatened his life with Stiff-neck George. His eyes cleared suddenly, and he looked about the dump; he had forgotten his feud with George. Yet if his men were gone, who, then, had driven them out but that crooked-necked, fighting fool? And if George had driven them out, then where was he now with his ancient, filed-down six-shooter? Wiley drew his gun forward and walked softly toward the house, but as he passed a metal ore car a pistol was thrust into his face. He started back, and there was George.

"Put 'em up!" he snarled, rising swiftly from behind the car, and the hot fury left Wiley's brain. His anger turned cold, and he looked down the barrel at the grinning, spiteful eyes behind.

"You go to thunder!" he growled, and George jabbed the gun into his stomach.

"Put 'em up!" he ordered, but some devil of resistance seized Wiley as his hands went up. It was close, too close, and George had the drop on him, but one hand struck out and the other clutched the gun while he twisted his lithe body aside. At the roar of the shot he went for his own gun, leaping back and stooping low. Another bullet clipped his shirt, and then his own gun spat back, shooting blindly through the smoke. He emptied it, dodging swiftly and crouching close to the ground, and then he sprang behind the car. There was a silence, but as he listened he heard a gurgling noise, like the water flowing out of a canteen, and a sudden, sodden thump. He looked out, and George was down. His blood was gushing fast, but the narrow, snaky eyes sought him out before they were filmed by death. It was over, like a rush of wind.

Wiley flicked out his cylinder and filled it with fresh cartridges, then looked around for the rest. He was calm now and calculating and infinitely brave, but no one stepped forth to face his gun. A boy down in town started running toward the mine, only to turn back at some imperative command. The whole valley was lifeless, yet the people were there, and soon they would venture forth. And then they would come up and look at the body and ask him to give up his gun, and if he did they would take him to Vegas and shut him up in jail, where the populace could come and stare at him. Blount and Jepson would come and the board of directors, and, in order to put him away, they would tell how he had threatened George. They would make it appear that he had come to jump the mine and that George was defending the property, and then, with the jury nicely packed, they would send him to the penitentiary, where he wouldn't interfere with their plans.

In a moment of clairvoyance he saw Virginia before him, looking in through the prison bars and smiling, and suddenly he put up his gun. She had started this job and made him a murderer, but he would rob her of that last chance to smile.

There was a road that he knew that had been traveled before by men who were hard pressed and desperate. It turned west across the desert and mounted by Daylight Springs to dip down the long slope to the Sink; and across the Valley of Death, if he could once pass over it, there was no one he need fear to meet. No one, that is, except stray men like himself, who had fled from the officers of the law. Great mountain ranges, so they said, stretched

unpeopled and silent beneath the glare of the desert sun, and though death might linger near it was under the blue sky and away from the cold malice of men.

From his safe in the office Wiley took out a roll of bills, all that was left of his vanished wealth, and he took down his rifle and belt, and then, walking softly past the body of Stiff-neck George, he cranked up his machine and started off. Every doorway in town was crowded with heads, craning out to see him pass, and as he turned down the main street he saw Death Valley Charley rushing out with a flask in his hand.

"We seen ye!" he grinned as Wiley slowed down, and dropped the flask of whisky on the seat.

"You killed him fair!" he shouted after him, but Wiley had opened up the throttle, and the answer to his praise was a roar.

The sun was at high noon when Wiley topped the divide and glided down the cañon toward Death Valley. He could sense it in the distance by the veil of gray haze that hung like a pall across his way. Beyond it were high mountains, a solid wall of blue that seemed to rise from the depths and float, detached, against the sky, and up the winding wash which led slowly down and down there came pulsing waves of heat. The cañon opened out into a broad, rocky sand flat, shut in on both sides by knife-edged ridges dotted evenly with brittle white bushes, and each jagged rock and outthrust point was burned black by the suns of centuries.

He passed an ancient tractor, abandoned by the wayside, and a deserted, double-roofed house, and then, just below it, where a ravine came down, he saw a signboard, pointing. Up the gulch was another sign, still pointing on and up, and stamped through the metal of the disk was the single word: "Water." It was Hole-in-the-rock Springs that old Charley had spoken about, and, somewhere up the cañon, there was a hole in the limestone cap, and beneath it a tank of sweet water. On many a scorching day some prospector, half dead from thirst, had toiled up that well-worn trail, but now the way was empty, the freighters' house given over to rats, and the road led on and on.

A jagged, saw-tooth range rose up to block his way, and the sand flat narrowed down to a deep wash, and then, still thundering on, he struggled out through its throat, and the valley seemed to rise up and smite him. He stopped his throbbing motor and sat appalled at its immensity.

Funereal mountains, black and banded and water-channeled, rose up in solid walls on both sides, and, down through the middle, as far as the eye could see, there stretched a white ribbon set in green. It swung back and forth across a wide, level expanse, narrow and gleaming with water at the north and blending in the south with gray sands. The writhing white band was Death Valley Sink, where the waters from countless desert ranges drained down and were sucked up by the sun. Far from the north it came, when the season was right and the cloudbursts swept the Grape Vines and the White Mountains; the Panamints to the west gave down water from winter snows that gathered on Telescope Peak, and every ravine of the somber Funeral Range was gutted by the rush of forgotten waters.

The valley was dry—bone dry and desiccated—and yet every hill, every gulch and wash and cañon showed the action of torrential waters. The chocolate-brown flanks of the towering mountain walls were creased and ripped out and worn, and from the mouth of every cañon a great spit of sand and bowlders had been spewed out and washed down toward the Sink. On the surface of this wash, rising up through thousands of feet, the tips of buried mountains peeped out like tiny hilltops, yet black and sharp and grim. The great ranges themselves, sweeping up from the profundity till they seemed to cut off the world, looked like molded cakes of chocolate which had been rained on and half melted down. They

were washed down, melted, stripped of earth and vegetation, and down from their flanks in a steep, even slope lay the débris and scourings of centuries.

The westering sun caught the glint of water in the poisonous salt marshes of the Sink, but, far to the south, the great ultimate Sink of Sinks was agleam with borax and salt. It was there where the white band widened out to a lake bed that men came in winter to do their assessment work and scrape up the snowball borax. But if any were there now they would know him for a fugitive, and he took the road west. It ran over bowlders ground smooth by rolling floods and burned deep brown by the sun, and as he twisted and turned, throwing his weight against the wheels, Wiley felt the growing heat. His shirt clung to his back, the sweat ran down his face and into his stinging eyes, and as he stopped for a drink he noticed that the water no longer quenched his thirst. It was warm and flat, and after each fresh drink the perspiration burst from every pore, as if his very skin cried out for moisture. Yet his canteen was getting light, and until he could find water he put it resolutely away.

The road swung down at last into a broad, flat, dry wash, where the gravel lay packed hard as iron, and as his racer took hold and began to leap and frolic he tore down the valley like the wind. The sun was sinking low, and the unknown lay before him, a land he had never seen; yet before the night came on he must map out his course and stake his life on the venture. Other automobiles might follow and snatch him back if he delayed but an hour in his flight; but, once across Death Valley and lost in those far mountains, he would leave the law behind. The men he met would be fugitives like himself or prospectors or wandering Shoshones, and, live or die, he would be away from it all—where he would never see Virginia again.

The deep wash pinched in, as the other had done, before it gave out into the plain, and then, as he whirled around a point, he glided out into the open. The foothills lay behind him, and, straight athwart his way, stretched a sea of motionless sand waves. As far north as he could see the ocean of sand tossed and tumbled, the crests of its rollers crowned with brush and grotesque driftwood, the gnarled trunks and roots of mesquite trees. To the east and west the high mountains still rose up, black and barren, shutting in the sea of sand, but across the valley a pass led smoothly up to a gap through the wall of the Panamints. It was Emigrant Pass, up which the hardy Mormons had toiled in their western pilgrimage, leaving at Lost Wagons and Salt Springs the bones of whole caravans as a tribute to the power of the desert.

A smooth, steep slope led swiftly down to the edge of the Valley of Death, and as Wiley looked across he saw as in a vision a massive gateway of stone. It was flung boldly out from the base of a blue mountain, inclosing a dark valley behind, and from between its lofty walls a white river of sand spread out like a flower down the slope. It was the gateway to the Ube-Hebes, just as Charley had described it, and it was only a few miles away. It lay just across the sand flat, where the great, even waves seemed marching in a phalanx toward the south, and then up a little slope, all painted blue and purple, to the mysterious valley beyond. The sun, swinging low, touched the summits of distant sand hills with a gleam of golden light, and all the dark shadows moved toward him. A breath of air fanned his cheek, and as he drank deep from his canteen he nodded to the gateway and smiled.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ACROSS DEATH VALLEY.

The way to the Ube-Hebes lay across a low flat glistening white with crystals of alkali, and as his car trundled on Wiley came to a strip of sand piled up in the lee of a prostrate salt bush. Other bushes appeared, and more sand about them, and then a broad, smooth wave. It mounted up from the north,

gently scalloped by the wind, and on the south side it broke off like a wall. He drove along below it, glancing up as it grew higher, until at last it cut off his view. All the north was gone, and the gateway to his hiding place, but the south and west were there. To the south lay mud flats, powdery dry, but packed hard, and the west was a wilderness of sand.

A giant mesquite tree, piled high with clinging drifts, rose up before the crest of his wave, and as he plowed in between them the edge of the crest poured down in a whispering cascade. Then more trees loomed up and hundreds of white bushes, each mounted upon its pedestal of sand, and at the base of each salt bush there were kangaroo rat holes and the tracery of their tails in the dust. Men called it Death Valley, but for such as these it was a place of fullness and joy. They had capered about, striking the ground with their tails at the end of each playful jump, and the dry, brittle salt bushes had been feast enough to them, who never knew the taste of grass or water.

The sand wave rose higher, leaving a damp hollow below it where ice plants grew green and rank, and as he crept along the thunder of his exhaust started tons of sliding silt. His wheels raced and burrowed as he struck a soft spot, and then abruptly they sank. He dug them out carefully and backed away, but a mound of drifted sand barred his way. Twist and turn as he would he could not get around it, and at last he climbed to its summit. The sun was setting in purple and fire behind the black shoulder of the Panamints, and like a path of gold it marked out the way, the only way to cross the valley.

He went back to his car and drove it desperately at the slope, only to bury the rear wheels to the axles, and as he dug them out the sand from the wave crest began to whisper and slip and slide.

He cleared a great space, and started his motor, but at the first shuddering tug the sand began to tremble, and in a rush the wave was upon him. It buried him deep, and as he leaped from his machine little rills of singing sand flowed around it. So far it had carried him, this high-powered, steel-springed racer, but now he must leave it for the sand to cover over and cross the great valley alone. On many a rocky slope and sliding sand hill it had clutched and plunged and fought its way, but now it was smothered in the treacherous, silt-fine sand, and he must leave it, like a partner, to die. Yet if die it must, then in its desert burial the last trace of Wiley Holman would be lost. The first wind that blew would wipe out his footprints, and the racer would sink beneath the waves. Wiley took his canteen and Charley's bottle of whisky, his rifle and a small sack of food, and dared the great silence alone.

While his motor had done the work he had not minded the heat and the pressure of blood in his head, but as he toiled up the sandy slope, sinking deeper at each stride, he felt the breath of the sand. All day it had lain there drinking in the sun's rays, and now, in the evening, when the upper air was cool, it radiated a sweltering heat. Wiley mounted to the summit of wave after wave, fighting his way toward the gateway to the north, and then, beaten at last and choking with the exertion, he turned and followed a crest. The sand piled up before him in a vortex of sharp-edged ridges, reaching their apex in a huge pyramid to the west, and as he toiled on past its flank he felt a gusty rush of air sucking down through Emigrant Pass. It was the wind, after all, that was king of Death Valley, for whichever way it blew it swept the sand before it, raising up pyramids and tearing them down.

A luminous half-moon floated high in the heavens and the sky was studded thick with pin-point stars. In that myriad of little stars, filling in between the big ones, the Milky Way was lost and reduced to obscurity—the whole sky was a Milky Way. Wiley sank down in the sand and gazed up som-

berly as he wetted his parching lips from his canteen, and the evening star gleamed like a torch, looking down on the world he had fled. And even as he lay there, looking up at the stars and wondering at the riddle of the universe, the busy wind was bringing grains of sand and burying him each minute by so much.

He rose up in a panic and hurried along the slope, where the sand of the wave was packed hardest, and he did not pause until he had passed the last drift and set his foot on the hard, gravelly slope. The wind was cooler now, for the night was well along and the bare ground had radiated its heat, but it was dry, powder dry, and every pore of his skin seemed to gasp and cry out for water. There was water even yet in the bottom of his canteen, but he dared not drink it till the gateway was in sight and the sand wash that led to the valley beyond.

An hour passed by as he toiled up the slope, now breaking into a run from impatience, now settling down doggedly to walk, and at last, clear and distinct, he saw the gateway in the moonlight, and stopped to take his drink. It was cool now, the water, and infinitely sweet, yet he knew that the moment he drained the last drop he would feel the clutch of fear.

It is an unreasoning thing, that fear of the desert which comes when the last drop is gone, and yet it is real and known to every wanderer, and guarded against by the bravest. He screwed the cap on his canteen and hurried up the slope, which grew steeper and rockier with each mile, but the phantom gateway seemed to lead on before him and recede into the black abyss of night. It was there, right before him, but instead of getting nearer the gateway loomed higher and higher, and daylight was near before he passed through its portals and entered the dark valley beyond.

A gaunt row of cottonwoods rose up suddenly before him, their leaves whispering and clacking in the wind, and at this brave promise all fear for water left him and he drained his canteen to the bottom. Then he strode on up the cañon, that was deep and dark as a pocket, following the trail that should lead him to the spring, but as one mile and two dragged along with no water he stopped and hid his rifle among the rocks.

A little later he hid his belt, with its heavy row of cartridges, and the sack of dry, useless food. What he needed was water, and when he had drunk his fill he could come back and collect all his possessions. Two miles, five miles, he toiled up the creek bed with the cottonwoods rustling overhead, but though their roots were in the water the sand was still dry and his tongue was swelling with thirst.

He stumbled against a stone and fell weakly to the ground, only to leap to his feet again, frightened. Already it was coming—the stupefying lassitude, the reckless indifference to his fate—and yet he was hardly tired. The valley had not been hot, any more than usual, and he had walked twice as far before, but now, with water just around the corner, he was lying down in the sand.

He was sleepy; that was it. But he must get to water first or his pores would close up and he would die. He stripped off his pistol and threw it in the sand, and his hat and the bottle of fiery whisky, and then, head down, he plunged blindly forward, rushing on up the trail to find water.

The sun rose higher and poured down into the narrow valley with its fringe of deceptive green; but though the trees became bigger and bushier in their tops the water did not come to the surface. It was underneath the sand, flowing along on the bed rock, and all that was needed was a solid reef of country rock to bring it up to the surface.

It would flow over the dike in a beautiful waterfall, leaping and gurgling and going to waste, and after he had drunk he would lie down and wallow and give his whole body a drink. He would soak there for hours, suck-

ing it up with his parched lips that were cracked now and bleeding from the drought, and then—— He woke up suddenly, to find himself digging in the sand.

He was going mad, then, so soon after he was lost, and with water just up the stream. The creek was dry, where he had found himself digging, but up above it would be full of water. He hurried on again, and, around the next turn, sure enough he found a basin of water.

It was hollowed from the rock, a round pool, undimpled, and upon its surface a pair of wasps floated about with airy grace. He thrust in a finger, and the wasps flew away—and then he dropped down and drank deep. When he woke from his madness the pool was half empty and the water was running down his face. As he rose to his feet he tottered and fell down in the sand.

When he looked around he was in a little cove, shut in by towering walls, and, close against the cliff where the rock had been hollowed out he saw an abandoned camp. There were ashes between the stones and tin cans set on boxes and a walled-in storage place behind, and as he looked again he saw a man's tracks leading down a narrow path to the water. They turned off up the creek—high-heeled boots soled with rawhide and bound about with thongs—and Wiley rushed recklessly at the camp.

When he had eaten last he could hardly remember—it was a day or two back at the best—and as he peered into cans and found them empty he gave vent to a savage curse. He was weak, he was starving, and he had thrown away his food—and this man had hidden what he had.

He kicked over the boxes and plunged into the storeroom, throwing beans and flour sacks right and left, and then in the corner behind a huge pile of piñon nuts he found a single can of tomatoes.

Whoever had treasured it had kept it too long, for Wiley's knife was already out, and as he cut the top he tipped it slowly up and drained it to the bottom.

"Hey, there!" hailed a voice, and Wiley started and laid down the can. Was it possible the officers had followed him? "Throw up your hands!" yelled the voice in a fury. "Throw 'em up or I'll kill you, you scoundrel!"

Wiley held up his hands, but he raised them reluctantly, and the fighting look crept back into his eyes.

"Well!" he challenged. "They're up—what about it?"

A tall man with a pistol stepped out from behind a tree and advanced with his gun raised and cocked. His hair was hermit long, his white beard trembled, and his voice cracked and shrilled with helpless rage.

"What about it!" he repeated. "Well, by Jupiter, if you sass me I'll shoot you for a camp-robbing hound!"

"Well, go ahead then," burst out Wiley defiantly, "if that's the way you feel. All I took was one can of tomatoes."

"Yes! One can! Wasn't that all I had? And you robbed me before, you rascal."

"I did not!" retorted Wiley, and as the old man looked him over he hesitated and lowered his gun.

"Say, who are you, anyway?" he asked at last, and glanced swiftly at Wiley's tracks in the sand. "Well—that's all right," he ran on hastily. "I see you aren't the man. There was a renegade came through here on the twentieth of last July and stole everything I had. I trailed him, dad-burn him, clear to the edge of Death Valley. He was riding my favorite burro, and if it hadn't been for a sand storm that came up and stopped me I'd have bored him through and through. He stole my rifle and even my letters and valuable papers besides, but he went to his reward, or I miss my guess, so we'll leave him to the mercy of the devil. As for my tomatoes, you're welcome, my friend; it's long since I've had a guest."

He held out his hand and advanced, smiling kindly, but Wiley stepped back.

It was Colonel Huff!

CHAPTER XXX.

AN EVENING WITH SOCRATES.

How the colonel had come to be reported dead it was easy enough to surmise. Some desperate fugitive or rambling hobo miner seeing a crosscut to the borax mines below had raided his camp in his absence, and, riding off on his burro, had met his death in a sand storm. His were the tracks that the Indians had followed, and somewhere in Death Valley he lay beneath the sand dunes in place of a better man.

But the colonel—did he know that his family had mourned him as dead and bandied his stock back and forth? Did he know that the Paymaster had been bonded and opened up and lost again to Blount? And what would be his answer if he knew the man before him was the son of Honest John Holman? Wiley closed down his lips; then he took the outstretched hand and looked the colonel straight in the eye.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "that I can't give you my name or tell you where I'm from, but I've got a bottle of whisky that will more than make up for the loss of that can of tomatoes."

"Whisky!" shrilled the colonel, and then he smiled benignly and laid a fatherly hand upon his shoulder. "Never mind, my young friend, what you have done or not done, because I'm sure it was nothing dishonorable, and now if you will produce your bottle we'll drink to our better acquaintance."

"I threw it away," answered Wiley apologetically, "but it can't be very far down the trail. I was short of water and lost, you might say, and—well, I guess I was a little wild."

"And well you might be," replied the colonel heartily, "if you crossed Death Valley afoot, and worn out and hungry to boot. I'll just take the liberty of going after that bottle myself before some skulking Shon-shonnie gets hold of it."

"Do so," smiled Wiley, "and when you've had your drink, perhaps you'll bring in my rifle and the rest."

"Whatever you've dropped," returned the colonel cordially, "if it's only a cartridge from your belt. And while I am gone just make yourself at home. You seem to be in need of rest."

"Yes, I am," agreed Wiley, and before the colonel was out of sight he was fast asleep on his bed.

It was dark when he awoke, and the light of a fire played and flickered on the walls of his cave. The wind brought to his nostrils the odor of cooking beans, and as he rose and looked out he saw the colonel pacing up and down by the fire. His hat was off, his fine head thrown back, and he was humming to himself and smiling.

"Come out, sir; come out!" he cried upon the moment. "I trust you have enjoyed your day's rest. And now give me your hand, sir; I regret beyond words my boorish conduct of this morning."

He shook hands effusively, still continuing his apologies for having taken Wiley for less than a gentleman, and while they ate together it became apparent to Wiley that the colonel had had his drink. If there was anything left of the pint bottle of whisky no mention was made of the fact, but even at that the liquor was well spent, for it had gained him a friend for life.

"Young man," observed the colonel, after looking at him closely, "I am a fugitive in a way myself, but I cannot believe, from the look on your face, that you are anything else than honest. I shall respect your silence, as you respect mine, for your past is nothing to me, but if at any time I can assist you just mention the fact and the deed is as good as done. I am a man of my word, and, since true friends are rare, I beg of you not to forget me."

"I'll remember that," said Wiley, and went on with his eating as the colonel paced up and down.

He was a noble-looking man of the Southern type, tall and slender, with flashing blue eyes, and the look that he gave him reminded Wiley of Virginia, it was so open-hearted and friendly. He had been, in his day, a prince of entertainers, of the rich and poor alike, and the kick of the whisky had roused up those genial qualities which had

made him the first citizen of Keno. He laughed and told stories and cracked merry jests, yet never for a moment did he forget his incognito nor attempt to violate Wiley's. They were gentlemen there together in the heart of the desert, and as such each was safe from intrusion.

The rifle and cartridge belt, Wiley's pistol, and the sack of food were fetched out and placed in his hands, and then at the end the colonel produced the flask of whisky which had been slightly diluted with water.

"Now," he said, "we will drink a toast, my far-faring knight of the desert. Shall it be that first toast: The ladies, God bless them or——"

"No," answered Wiley, and the colonel laughed silently.

"Well said, my young friend," he replied, nodding wisely; "even at your age you have learned something of life. No, let it be the toast that Socrates drank and that rare company who sat at the banquet. To love they drank, but not to love of woman. To love of mankind—of man! To friendship, in short. Here's to you, my friend, and may you never regret this night!"

They drank it in silence, and as Wiley sat thinking the colonel became reminiscent.

"Ah, there was a company," he said, smiling mellowly, "such as the world will never see again! Agatho and Socrates, Aristophanes and Alcibiades, the picked men of ancient Athens, lying comfortably on their couches with the food before them and inviting their souls with wine. They began in the evening, and in the morning it was Socrates who had them all under the table. And yet, of all men, he was the most abstemious; he could drink or let it alone. There was a man, my friend, such as the world had never seen, the greatest philosopher of all time, but do you know what philosophy he taught?"

"No, I don't," admitted Wiley, and the colonel sighed as he poured out a small libation.

"And yet," he said, "you are a man of parts, with an education very likely of the best. But our schools and universities now teach a man everything except the meaning and purpose of life. When I was in school we read our Plato and Xenophon as you now read your German and French, but what we learned, above the language itself, was the thought of that ancient time. You learn to earn money and to fight your way through life, but Socrates taught that friendship is above everything and that truth is the ultimate good. But —ah, well, I weary you, for each age lives unto itself, and who cares for the thoughts of an old man?"

"No, go on!" protested Wiley, but the colonel sighed wearily and shook his head gloomily in thought.

"I had a friend once," he said at last, "who had the same rugged honesty of Socrates. He was a man of few words, but I truly believe that he never told a lie. And yet," went on the colonel with a rueful smile, "they tell me that my friend recanted and deceived me at the last."

"*Who* told you?" put in Wiley, suddenly rousing from his silence, and the colonel glanced at him sharply.

"Ah, yes! Well said, my friend. *Who* told me? Why, all of them—except my friend himself. I could not go to him with so much as a suggestion that he had betrayed the friendship of a lifetime, and he, no doubt, felt equally reluctant to explain what had never been charged. Yet I dared not approach him, for it was better to endure doubt than to suffer the certainty of his guilt. And so we drifted apart, and he moved away, and I have never seen my good friend since."

Wiley sat in stunned silence, but his heart leaped up at this word of vindication for Honest John. To be sure, his father had refused him help and rebuked him for heckling the widow, but loyalty ran strong in the Holman blood and he looked up at the colonel and smiled.

"Next time you go inside," he said at last, "take a chance and ask your friend."

"I'll do that," agreed the colonel, "but it won't be for some time because —well, I'm hiding out."

"Here, too," returned Wiley, "and I'm *never* going back. But say, listen; I'll tell *you* one now. You trusted your friend, and the bunch told you that he'd betrayed you; I trusted my girl, and she told me to my face that she'd sold me out for fifty thousand dollars. Fifty thousand, at the most, and I lost about a million and killed a man over it to boot. You take a chance with your friends, but when you trust a woman —you don't take any chance at all."

"Ah, in self-defense?" inquired the colonel politely. "I thought I noticed a hole in your shirt. Yes, pretty close work—between your arm and your ribs. I've had close calls myself."

"Yes, but what do you think," demanded Wiley impatiently, "of a girl that will throw you down like that? I gave her the stock, and to make it worth the money she turned around and ditched me. And then she looked me in the face and laughed.

"Women are cowardly all right," went on Wiley bitterly; "but that's better than when they fight. Because then, if you oppose them, everybody turns against you, and if you don't they've got you whipped."

"Put it there!" exclaimed the colonel, striking hands with him dramatically. "I swear, we shall get along famously. There is nothing I admire more than a gentle, modest woman, an ornament to her husband and her home, but when she puts on the trousers and presumes to question and dictate what is there left for a gentleman to do? He cannot strike her, for she is his wife and he has sworn to cherish and protect her, and yet, by the gods, she can make his life more miserable than a dozen quarrelsome men. What is there to do but what I have done—to close up my affairs and depart? If there is such a thing as love, long absence may renew it, and the sorrow may chasten her heart, but I agree with Solomon that it is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a scolding woman in a wide house."

"You bet!" nodded Wiley. "Gimme the desert solitude every time. Is there any more whisky in that bottle?"

"And yet," mused the colonel, "well, here's to our mothers! And may we ever be dutiful sons! After all, my friend, no man can escape his duty, and if duty should call us to endure a certain martyrdom we have the example of Socrates to sustain us. If report is true he had a scolding wife —the name of Xanthippe has become a proverb—and yet what more noble than Socrates' rebuke to his son when he behaved undutifully toward his mother?"

"That's all right and proper," agreed Wiley, "but," his mind on the widow, "let 'em keep in their place and not crush into business with their talk and their double-barreled shotguns."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the colonel, drawing himself up gravely, "but did you happen to come through Keno?"

"Never mind," grumbled Wiley; "you might be the sheriff. Tell me more about this married man, Socrates."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BROKEN TRUST.

The colonel was not hipped upon the subject of the ancients, for he talked mining and showed some copper claims as well, but a similar tragedy in his own domestic life had evoked a profound admiration for Socrates. And if Wiley understood what lay behind his words he gave no hint to the colonel. Always, morning, noon, and night, he listened respectfully, his lips curling briefly at some thought, and at the end of a week the colonel was as devoted to him as he had been formerly to his father.

Yet when, as sometimes happened, the colonel tried to draw him out, he shook his head stubbornly and was dumb. The problem that he had could not be solved by talk; it called for years to recover and forget, and if the colonel once knew that his own daughter was involved he might rise up and demand a retraction.

In his first rush of bitterness, Wiley had stated without reservation that Virginia had sold him out for money, and

the pride of the Huffs would scarcely allow this to pass unnoticed, and yet he would not retract it if he died for it. He knew from her own lips that Virginia had betrayed him, and it could never be explained away.

If she argued that she was misled by Blount and his associates, he had warned her before she left, and if she had thought that he was doing her an injustice that was not the way to correct it. She had accepted a trust, and she had broken that trust to gain a personal profit—and that was the unpardonable sin. For the killing of Stiffneck George he had no regrets, and the treachery of Blount did not surprise him; but he had given this woman his heart to keep and she had sold him for fifty thousand dollars. All the rest became as nothing, but this wound refused to heal, for he had lost his faith in womankind.

He sat silent one morning in the cool shade of a wild grapevine, jerking the meat of a mountain sheep that he had killed, and as he worked mechanically, shredding the flesh into long strips, he watched the lower trail. Ten days had gone by since he had fled across the valley, but the danger of pursuit had not passed, and as he saw a great owl that was nesting down below rise up blindly and flop away he paused and reached for his gun.

"Never mind," said the colonel, who had noticed the movement, "I expect an old Indian in with grub. But step into the cave, and if it's who you think it is you can count on me till the hair slips."

Wiley stepped in quietly, strapping on his belt and pistol, and then the colonel burst into a roar.

"It's Charley!" he cried, leaping nimbly to his feet and putting up his gun. "Come on, boy; here's where we get that drink!"

Wiley looked out doubtfully as Heine rushed up and snuffed at the pans of meat, and then he ducked back and hid. Around the shoulder of the cliff came Death Valley Charley, and behind him, on a burro, was Virginia. He looked out again as the colonel swore an oath, and then she leaped off and ran toward them.

"Oh—*father!*" she cried, and hung about his neck, while the astonished colonel kissed her doubtfully.

"Well, well!" he protested as she fell to weeping. "What's the cause of all this distress? Is your mother not well, or——"

"We—we thought you were *dead!*" she burst out indignantly. "And Charley there knew—all the time!"

She let go of her father and turned upon Death Valley Charley, who was solicitously attending to Heine, and the colonel spoke up peremptorily.

"Here, Charley!" he commanded. "Let that gluttonous cur wait. What's this I hear from Virginia? Didn't you tell her I was perfectly well?"

"Why—why, yes, sir; I did, sir," replied Charley apologetically, "but—she only thought I was crazy. I told her, all the time——"

"Oh, Charley!" reproached Virginia. "Didn't you know better than that? You only said it when you had those spells. Why didn't you tell me when you were feeling all right—and you denied it, I know, repeatedly."

"The colonel would kill me," mumbled Charley sullenly; "he told me not to tell. But I brought you the whisky, sir; a whole big——"

"Never mind the whisky," said the colonel sharply. "Now let's get to the bottom of this matter. Why should you think I was dead when I had merely absented myself——"

"But the body!" clamored Virginia. "We got word you were lost when your burro came in at the borax works. And when we hired trackers the Indians said you were lost—and your body was out in the sand hills!"

"It was that cursed camp robber!" declared the colonel with conviction. "Well, I'm glad he's gone to his reward. It was only some rascal that came through here and stole my riding burro—did they care for old Jack at the works? Well, I shall thank them for it kindly, and anything I can do—but what's the matter, Virginia?"

She had drawn away from him, and

was gazing about anxiously, and Charley had slunk guiltily away.

"Why—where's Wiley?" she cried, clutching her father by the arm. "Oh, isn't he here, after all?"

"Wiley?" repeated the colonel. "Why, whom are you talking about? I never even heard of such a man."

"Oh, he's dead, then; he's lost!" she sobbed, sinking down on the ground in despair. "Oh, I knew it all the time! But that old Charley——" She cast a hateful glance at him, and the colonel beckoned sternly.

"What now?" he demanded, as Charley sidled near. "Who is this Mr. Wiley?"

"Why—er—Wiley; Wiley Holman, you know. I followed his tracks to the gateway. Ain't he around here somewhere? I found this bottle——" He held up the flask that he had given to Wiley, and the colonel started back with a cry.

"What! A tall young man with leather puttees?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" answered Virginia, suddenly springing to her feet again. "We followed him. Isn't he here?"

The colonel turned slowly and glanced at the cave, where Wiley was still hiding close, and then he cleared his throat.

"Well, kindly explain first why you should be following the gentleman and ——"

"Oh, he's here, then!" sighed Virginia, and fell into her father's arms, at which Charley scuttled rapidly away.

"Mr. Holman," spoke up the colonel, as Wiley did not stir, "may I ask you to come out here and explain?"

There was a rustle inside the cave, and at last Wiley came out, stuffing a strip of dried meat into his hip pocket.

"I'll come out, yes," he said; "but, as I'm about to go, I'll leave it to your daughter to explain."

He picked up his canteen and started down to the water hole, but the colonel called him sternly back.

"My friend," he said, "it is the custom among gentlemen to answer a courteous question. I must ask you, then, what there is between you and my daughter, and why she should follow you across Death Valley?"

"There is nothing between us," answered Wiley categorically, "and I don't know why she followed me; that is, if she really did."

"Well, I did!" sobbed Virginia, burying her face on her father's breast. "But I wish I hadn't now!"

"Huh!" grunted Wiley, and stumped off down the trail, where he filled his canteen at the pool.

He was mad, mad all over, and yet he experienced a strange thrill at the thought of Virginia following him. He had left her smiling and shaking hands with Blount, but a curse had been on the money, and her conscience had forced her to follow him. It had been easy for her, with a burro to ride on and Death Valley Charley to guide her, but with him it had been different. He had fled from arrest, and it was only by accident that he had won to the water hole in time. But yet she had followed him, and now she would apologize and explain, as she had explained it all once before. Well, since she had come—and since the colonel was watching him—he shouldered his canteen and came back.

"My daughter tells me," began the colonel formally, "that you are the son of my old friend, John Holman, and I trust that you will take my hand."

He held out his hand, and Wiley blinked as he returned the warm clasp of his friend. Ten days of companionship in the midst of that solitude had knitted their souls together, and he loved the old colonel like a father.

"That's all right," he muttered, "and —say, hunt up the old man! Because he thinks the world of you still."

"I will do so," replied the coloned, "but will you do me a favor? By gad, sir, I can't let you go. No, you must stay with me, Wiley, if that is your name; I want to talk with you later about your father. But now, as a favor, since Virginia has come so far, I will ask you to sit down and listen to her. And—er—Wiley, just a moment!" He beckoned him to one side and spoke

low in his ear. "About that woman who betrayed your trust—perhaps I'd better not mention her to Virginia?"

Wiley's eyes grew big, and then they narrowed; the colonel thought there was another woman. How could he, proud soul, even think for a moment that Virginia herself had betrayed him? No, to his high mind it was inconceivable that a daughter of his should violate a trust, and yet there was Virginia watching them.

"Very well," replied Wiley, and smiled to himself as he laid down his gun and canteen. He led the way up the creek with her to where a gnarled old cottonwood cast its shadow against the cliff and smoothed out a seat against the bank. "Now, sit down," he said, "and let's have this over with before the colonel gets wise. He's a fine old gentleman, and if his daughter took after him I wouldn't be dodging the sheriff."

"Well, I came to tell you," began Virginia bravely, "that I'm sorry for what I've done. And to show you that I mean it I gave Blount back his stock."

Wiley gazed at her grimly for a moment, and then he curled up his lip. "Why not come through," he asked at last, "and acknowledge that he held it out on you?"

Virginia started, and then she smiled wanly.

"No," she said, "it wasn't quite that. And yet—well, he didn't really give it to me."

"I knew it!" exploded Wiley. "The dog-goned piker! But of course you made a clean-up on your other stock?"

"No, I didn't. I gave that away, too. But, oh, Wiley, why won't you listen to me? I didn't intend to do it, but he explained it all so nicely——"

"Didn't I tell you he would?" he raged.

"Yes, but listen; you don't understand. When I went to him first I asked for father's stock, and—he must have known what was coming—I guess he saw the bills. Anyway, he told me then that he had always loved my father and that he wanted to protect us from you, and so, he said, he was just holding my father's stock to keep you from getting it away from us. And then he called in some friends of his, and, oh, they all became so indignant that I thought I couldn't be wrong! Why, they showed me that you would make millions by the deal, and all at our expense, and then—I don't know—something came over me. We'd been poor so long, and it would make you so rich, and, like a fool, I went and did it."

"Well, that's all right," said Wiley. "I forgive you and all that, but don't let your father know. He's got old-fashioned ideas about keeping a trust, and—say, do you know what he thinks? I happened to mention, the first night I got in, that a woman had thrown me down, and he just now took me aside and told me not to worry because he'd never mention the lady to you. He thinks it was somebody else."

"Oh!" breathed Virginia, and then she sat silent while he kicked a hole in the dirt and waited. He was willing to concede anything, agree to anything, look pleasant at anything until the ordeal was over, and then he intended to depart. Where he would go was a detail to be considered later when he felt the need of something to occupy his mind; right now he was only thinking that she looked very pale, and there was a tired, hunted look in her eyes. She had nerves, of course, the same as he had, and the trip across Death Valley had been hard on her, but if she suffered now he had suffered also, and he failed to be as sorry as he should.

"You'll be all right now," he said at last, when it seemed she would never speak up, "and I'm glad you found your father. He'll go back with you now and take a fall out of Blount and —well, you won't feel so poor any more."

"Yes, I will," returned Virginia, suddenly rousing up and looking at him with haggard eyes. "I'll always feel poor, because if I gave you back all I had it wouldn't be a tenth of what you lost."

"Oh, that's all right," grumbled

Wiley. "I don't care about the money. Are they hunting me for murder, or what?"

"Oh, no; not for anything!" she answered eagerly. "You'll come back, won't you, Wiley? Mother was watching you through her glasses, and she says George fired first. They aren't trying to arrest you; all they want you to do is to give up and stand a brief trial. And I'll help you, Wiley. Oh, I've just got to do something or I'll be miserable all my life!"

"You're tired now," said Wiley; "it'll look different pretty soon, and—well, I don't think I'll go in right now."

"But where will you go?" she entreated piteously. "Oh, Wiley, can't you see I'm sorry? Why can't you forgive me and let me try to make amends, instead of making both our lives so miserable?"

"I don't know," answered Wiley; "it's just the way I feel. I've got nothing *against* you; I just want to get away and forget a few things that you've done."

"And then?" she asked, and he smiled enigmatically.

"Well, maybe you'll forget me, too."

"But, father!" she objected, as he rose up suddenly and started off down the creek. "He thinks we're lovers, you know." Wiley stopped, and the cold anger in his eyes gave way to a look of doubt. "Why not pretend we are?" she suggested wistfully. "Not really, but just before him. I told him we'd quarreled, and he knows I followed after you. Just to-day, Wiley, and then you can go. But if my father should think——"

"Well, all right," he broke in, and as they stepped out into the open she slipped her hand into his.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A HUFF.

The colonel was sitting in the shade of a wild grapevine, rapping out a series of questions at Charley, but at sight of the young people, coming back hand in hand, he paused and smiled understandingly.

"What now?" he said. "Is there a new earth and a new heaven? Ah, well; then Virginia's trip was worth while. But Charley here is so full of signs and wonders that my brain is fairly in a whirl. The Germans, it seems, have made a forty-two-centimeter gun that is blasting down cities in France, and the Allies, to beat them, are constructing still larger ones made out of tungsten that is mined from the Paymaster. Yes, yes, Charley, that's all right; I don't doubt your word, but we'll call on Wiley for the details."

He laughed indulgently, and poured Charley out a drink which made his eyes blink and snap, and then he waved him graciously away.

"Take your burros up the cañon," he suggested briefly, and when Charley was gone he smiled. "Now," he said, as Virginia sat down beside him, "what's all this about the Paymaster and Keno?"

"Well," began Virginia, as Wiley sat silent, "there really was tungsten in the mine. Wiley discovered it first—he was just going through the town when he saw that specimen in my collection—and since then; oh, everything has happened!"

"By the dog!" exclaimed the colonel, starting quickly to his feet. "Do you mean that crazy Charley spoke the truth? Is the mine really open and the town full of people and——"

"You wouldn't know it!" cried Virginia triumphantly. "All that heavy white quartz was tungsten!"

"What? That waste on the dump? But how much is it worth? Old Charley says it's better than gold."

"It is," she answered. "Why, some of that rock ran five thousand dollars to the ton!"

"Five—thousand!" repeated the colonel, and then he whirled on Wiley. "What's the reason, then," he demanded, "that you're hiding out here in the hills? Didn't you get possession of the mine?"

"Under a bond and lease," explained Wiley shortly. "I failed to meet the final payment."

"Why—how much was this pay-

ment?" inquired the colonel cautiously, as he sensed the sudden constraint. "It seems to me the mine should have paid it at once."

"Fifty thousand," answered Wiley, gazing glumly at the ground, and the colonel opened his eyes.

"Fifty thousand!" he exclaimed. "Only fifty thousand dollars? Well, what were the circumstances, Wiley?"

He stood expectant, and as Wiley boggled and hesitated Virginia rose up and stood beside him.

"He got the bond and lease from Blount," she began, talking rapidly, "and when Blount found that the white quartz was tungsten ore he did all he could to block Wiley. When Wiley first came through town and stopped at our house he knew that that white quartz was tungsten; but he couldn't do anything then. And by and by, when he tried to bond the mine, Blount came up himself and tried to work it."

"He did, eh?" cried the colonel. "Well, by what right, I'd like to know, did he dare to take possession of the Paymaster?"

"Oh, he'd bought up all the stock, and mother she took yours and——"

"What?" yelled the colonel, and then he closed down his jaw, and his blue eyes sparkled ominously. "Proceed," he said; "the information first—but, by the gods, he shall answer for this!"

"But all the time," went on Virginia hastily, "the mine belonged to Wiley. It had been sold for taxes—and he bought it."

"Ah!" observed the colonel, and glanced at him shrewdly, for he saw now where the tale was going.

"Well," continued Virginia, "when Blount saw Wiley wanted it he came up and took it himself. And he hired Stiff-neck George to herd the mine and keep Wiley and everybody away. But when he was working it—why, Wiley came back and claimed it under the tax sale, and he went right up to the mine and took away George's gun—and kicked him down the dump!"

"He did!" exclaimed the colonel, but Wiley did not look up, for his mind was on the end of the tale.

"And then—oh, it's all mixed up, but Blount couldn't find any gold, and so he leased the mine to Wiley. And the minute he found that the white quartz was tungsten and worth three dollars a pound he was mad as anything and did everything he could to keep him from meeting the payment. But Wiley went ahead and shipped a lot of ore and made a lot of money in spite of him. He cleaned out the mine and fixed up the mill, and oh, father, you wouldn't know the place!"

"Probably not," returned the colonel; "but proceed with your story. Who holds the Paymaster now?"

"Why, Blount, of course, and he's moved back to town and is simply shoveling out the ore."

"The scoundrel!" burst out the colonel. "Wiley, we will return to Keno immediately and bring this blackguard to book. I have a stake in this matter myself."

"Nope, not for me," answered Wiley wearily. "You haven't heard all the story. I fell down on the final payment—it makes no difference how—and when I came back Blount had jumped the mine and Stiff-neck George was in charge. But instead of warning me off he hid behind a car, and—well, I don't care to go back there now."

"Why, certainly! You must!" declared the colonel warmly. "You were acting in self-defense, and I consider that your conduct was justified. In fact, my boy, I wish to congratulate you; Charley tells me he had the drop on you."

"Yes, sure," grumbled Wiley; "but you aren't the judge—and there's a whole lot more to the story. It happens that I took an option on Blount's Paymaster stock, but when I offered the payment he protested the contract and took the case to court. Now—he's got the town of Vegas in his inside vest pocket—the lawyers and judges and all—and do you think for a minute he's going to let me come back and take away those four hundred thousand shares?"

"Four hundred thousand?" repeated

the colonel incredulously. "Do you mean to tell me— –"

"Yes, you bet I do!" said Wiley. "And I'll tell you something else. According to the dates on the back of those certificates, it was Blount that sold you out. He sold all his promotion stock before the panic, and then, when the price was down to nothing, he turned around and bought it back. I knew from the first that he'd lied about my father, and I kept after him till I got my hands on that stock, and then, when I'd proved it, he tried to put the blame on you."

"The devil!" exclaimed the colonel, and paced up and down, snapping his fingers and muttering to himself. "The cowardly dastard!" he burst out at last. "He has poisoned ten years of my life. I must hurry back at once and go to John Holman and apologize to him publicly for this affront. After all the years that we were pardners in everything, and then to have me doubt his integrity! He was the soul of honor, one man in ten thousand, and yet I took the word of this lying Blount against the man I called 'my friend!' I remember, by gad, as if it were yesterday, the first time I really knew your father, and Blount was squeezing me then. I owed him fifteen thousand dollars on a certain piece of property that was worth fifty thousand at least, and at the very last moment, when he was about to foreclose, John Holman loaned me the money. He mortgaged his cattle at the other bank and put the money in my hand, and Blount cursed him for an interfering fool. That was Blount, the Shylock, and Honest John Holman, and I turned against my friend."

"Yes, that's right," agreed Wiley, "but if you want to make up for it make 'em quit calling him 'Honest John.' "

"No, indeed!" cried the colonel, his voice tremulous with emotion. "He shall still be called 'Honest John,' and if any man doubts it or speaks the name fleeringly he shall answer personally to me. And now about this stock—what was that, Virginia, that you were saying about my holdings?"

"Why, mother put them up as collateral on a loan, and Blount claimed them at the end of the first month."

"All my stock? Well, by the horn spoons—how much did your mother borrow? Eight—hundred! Eight hundred dollars? Well, that is enough, on the face of it—but never mind, I will recover the stock. It is certainly a revelation of human nature—the moment I am reported dead these vultures strip my family of their all."

"Well, I was one of them," spoke up Wiley bluntly, "but you don't need to blame my father. When I was having trouble with Mrs. Huff he wrote up and practically disowned me."

"So you were one of them," observed the colonel mildly. "And you had trouble with Mrs. Huff? But no matter!" he went on. "We can discuss all that later; now to return to this lawsuit with Blount. Do I understand that you had an option on his entire four hundred thousand shares?"

"For twenty thousand dollars," answered Wiley, "and he was glad to get it; but, of course, when I opened up that big body of tungsten, the stock was worth into millions. That is, if he could keep me from making both payments. He fought me from the start, but I put up the twenty thousand, and the clerk of the court is holding it yet, unless the case is decided. But Blount knew he could beat it if he could keep me from buying the mine under the terms of my bond and lease, and now that he's in possession, taking out thirty or forty thousand every day, I'm licked before I begin. In fact, the case is called already and lost by default, if I know that blackleg lawyer of mine."

"But hire a good lawyer," protested the colonel. "A man has a right to his day in court and you have never appeared."

"No, and I never will," spoke up Wiley despondently. "There's a whole lot to this case that you don't know. And the minute I appear they'll arrest me for murder and railroad me off to the pen. No, I'm not going back."

"But, Wiley," reasoned the colonel, "you've got great interests at stake—and your father will help you, I'm sure."

"No, he won't," declared Wiley. "There isn't anybody that can help me, because Blount is in control of the courts. And I might as well add that I was run out of Vegas by a committee appointed for the purpose." He rose up abruptly, rolling his sullen eyes on Virginia and the colonel alike. "In fact," he burst out, "I haven't got a friend on the east side of Death Valley Sink."

"But on the west side," suggested the colonel, drawing Virginia to his side, "you have two good friends that I know——"

"Wait till you hear it all," broke in Wiley bitterly, "and you're likely to change your mind. No, I'm busted, I tell you, and the best thing I can do is to drift and never come back."

"And Virginia?" inquired the colonel. "Am I right in supposing——"

"No," he flared up. "Friend Virginia has quit me, along with——"

"Why, Wiley!" cried Virginia, and he started and fell silent as he met her reproachful gaze. For the sake of the colonel they were supposed to be lovers whose quarrel had been happily made up, but this was very unloverlike.

"Well, I don't deserve it," he muttered at last, "but friend Virginia has promised to stay with me."

"Yes, I'm going to stay with him," spoke up Virginia quickly, "because it was all my fault. I'm going to go with him, father, wherever he goes, and——"

"God bless you, my daughter," said the colonel, smiling proudly, "and never forget you're a Huff!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FIERY FURNACE.

To be a Huff, of course, was to be brave and true and never go back on a friend, but as the colonel that evening began to speak on the subject, Virginia crept off to bed.

She was tired from her night trip across the Sink of Death Valley, with only crazy Charley for a guide, but it was Wiley, the inexorable, who drove her off, weeping, for he would not take her hand. His mind was still fixed on the Gethsemane of the soul that he had gone through in Blount's bank at Vegas, and, strive as she would, she could not bring him back to play his part as lover.

Whether she loved him or not was not the question—not even if she was willing to throw away her life by following him in his wanderings. Three times he had trusted her, and three times she had played him false—and was that the honor of the Huffs?

She was penitent now, and, in the presence of her father, more gentle and womanly than seemed possible, but next week or next month or in the long years to come was she the woman he could trust?

They passed before his eyes in a swift series of images, the days when he had trusted her before, and always, behind her smile, there was something else, something cold and calculating and unkind. Her eyes were soft now, and gentle and imploring, but they had looked at him before with scorn and hateful laughter, when he had staked his soul on her word. He had trusted her—too far—and before Blount and all his sycophants she had made him a mock and a reviling.

The colonel was talking, for his mood was expansive, but at last he fell silent and waited.

"Wiley, my boy," he said when Wiley looked up, "you must not let the past overmaster you. We all make mistakes, but if our hearts are right there is nothing that should cause vain regrets. I judged from what you said once that your present disaster is due to a misplaced trust; in fact, if I remember, to a woman. But do not let this treachery, this betrayal of a trust, turn your mind against all womankind. I have known many noble and high-minded women whom I would trust with my very life, and since Virginia, as I gather, has offered to bind up your wounds I hope you will not remain embittered. She

is my daughter, of course, and my love may have blinded me, but in all the long years she has been at my side I can think of no instance in which she has played me false. Her nature is passionate, and she is sometimes quick to anger, but behind it all she is devotion itself, and you can trust her absolutely."

He paused expectantly, but as Wiley made no response he rose up and knocked out his pipe.

"Well, good night," he said. "It is time we were retiring if we are to cross the valley to-morrow. Have a drink? Well, all right; it's just as well. You're a good boy, Wiley; I'm proud of you."

He clapped him on the shoulder as he went off to bed, but Wiley sat brooding by the fire. Death Valley Charley took his blankets and rolled up in the creek bed, so that his burros could not sneak off in the night, and Heine lay down beside him, but when all was quiet Wiley rose up silently and tiptoed about the camp.

He strapped on his pistol and picked up his gun, but as he was groping in the darkness for his canteen Heine trotted up and flapped his ears. It was his sign of friendship, like wagging his tail, and Wiley patted him quietly, but when he was gone he lifted the canteen and slung it over his shoulder.

In the land where he was going there were more dangers than one, but lack of water was the greatest. He stepped out into the moonlight, and then from the cave he heard a muffled sound. Virginia was there, and he was running away from her. He listened again; she was crying! Not weeping aloud or in choking sobs, but in stifled, heartbroken sighs. He lowered his gun, and stood scowling and irresolute; then he turned back and went to bed.

In the morning they started late, resting in the shade of the gateway until the sun had swung to the west, and then, as the shadow of the Panamints stretched out across the valley, they repacked and started down the slope. In the lead went old Jinny, the mother of the bunch, and Jack and Johnny and Baby; and, following behind his burros, paced Death Valley Charley with a long, willow club in his hand.

The colonel strode ahead, his mind on weighty matters, and behind him came Virginia on her free-footed burro, with Wiley plodding silently in the rear. At irregular intervals Heine would drop back from the lead and snuff at them each in turn, but nothing was said, for the air was furnace dry and they were saving their strength for the sand.

At sundown they reached the edge of the first yielding sand dune that presaged the long pull to come, and Death Valley Charley stopped and opened up a water can, while the burros gathered eagerly around. Then he poured each of them a drink in his shapeless old hat, and started them across the Sink.

"Now, you see?" he said. "You see where Jinny goes? She heads straight for Stovepipe Hole. She knows she gits water there and that makes her hurry—and the others they tag along behind."

He took another drink from the colonel's private stock, and smiled as he smacked his lips. "It's hot to-day,'" he observed, squinting down his eyes and gazing ahead through the haze. "Yes, it's hot for this time of year. But, Virginia, you ride, and when Tom won't go no farther git off and he'll lead you to camp."

He went on ahead, swinging his club and laughing, and Heine trotted soberly at his side, and as he followed the trough of sand wave after sand wave the rest plodded along behind.

A dry, baking heat seemed to rise up from the ground, and the air was heavy and still. The burros began to groan as they toiled up the slope, and their flanks turned wet with sweat, and then, as they topped a wave, they felt the scorching breath of the Sink.

It came in puffs like the waves of some great sea upon whose shores they had set their feet; a seething, heaving sea of heat, breathing death along its lonely beach.

It struck through their clothes like a blast of wind or the shimmering glow of a furnace, and at each drink of

water the sweat damped their brows and trickled in streams down their faces. A wearied burro halted, and, as Charley chased him with his club, the rest rushed ahead to escape, and then, as they came to the crest of the wave, Virginia's burro stopped dead.

"I'll lead him," she said as Wiley came up, and started after the pack. Wiley walked along beside her, for he saw that she was spent, and as her slender feet sank deep in the yielding sand she lagged and slowed down and stopped. Then as she turned to take her canteen from the saddle she swayed and clutched at the horn.

"You'd better ride," he said, and, taking her in his arms, he lifted her to the saddle like a child. Then he walked along behind, flogging the burro into action, but still they lagged to the rear.

The moon rose, gleaming, and cast black shadows along the sand dunes, and in the lee of the wind-racked mesquite trees, and from the darkness ahead of them they could hear crazy shoutings as Charley belabored his fleeing animals.

They showed, dim and ghostly, as they topped a distant ridge, and then Wiley and Virginia were alone. The pack train, the colonel, and Death Valley Charley had vanished behind the crest of a wave, and as Wiley stopped to listen Virginia drooped in the saddle and fell, very gently, into his arms.

He held her a moment, overcome with sudden pity, and then in a rush of unexpected emotion he crushed her to his breast and kissed her. She was his, after all, to cherish and protect; a frail reed broken by his hand; and as he gave her water and bathed her face he remembered her weeping in the night.

Her tears had been for him, whom she had followed so far only to find him harsh and unforgiving, and now, weak from grief, she had fainted in his arms, which had never reached out to console her. He gathered her to his breast in a belated atonement, and as he kissed her again she stirred. Then he put her down, but when she felt his hands slacken she reached up and caught him by the neck. So she held him a while, until something gave way within him and he pressed his lips to hers.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A CLEAN-UP.

A cool breeze drew down through Emigrant Pass and soothed the fever heat of Death Valley, and as the morning star rose up like a blazing beacon Wiley carried Virginia to Stovepipe. They had sat for hours on the crest of a sand hill, looking out over the sea of waves that seemed to ride on and mingle in the moonlight, and with no one to listen they had talked out their hearts and pledged the future in a kiss. Then they had gazed long and rested, looking up at the countless stars that obscured the Milky Way with their pin points, and when the colonel had found them Wiley was carrying her in his arms as if her weight were nothing.

They camped at Stovepipe that day while Virginia gained back her strength, and at last they came in sight of Keno. She was riding now, and Wiley was walking, with his head bowed down in thought, but when he looked up she reached out, smiling wistfully, and touched him with her hand.

But the colonel strode ahead, his head held high, his eagle eyes searching the distance, and when people ran out to greet him he thrust them aside, for he had spied Samuel Blount in the crowd.

Blount was standing just outside the widow's gate, and a voice unmistakable was demanding in frantic haste the return of certain shares of stock. It was hardly the time for a business transaction, for her husband was returning as from the dead, but a sudden sense of her misused stewardship had driven the widow to distraction.

"What now?" demanded the colonel, as he appeared upon the scene, and his wife made a rush to embrace him. "Is this the time for scolding? Why, certainly I was alive—why

should anybody doubt it? You may await me in the house, Aurelia."

"But, Henry!" she wailed. "Oh, I thought you were dead—and this devil has robbed me of everything!"

She pointed a threatening finger at Blount, who stepped forward, his lower lip trembling.

"Why, how are you, colonel!" he exclaimed with affected heartiness. "Well, well, we thought you were dead."

"So I hear!" observed the colonel, and looked at him so coldly that Blount blushed and withdrew his outstretched hand. "So I hear, sir!" he repeated. "But you were misinformed; I have come back to protect my rights."

"He took all your stock," cried the widow vindictively, "on a loan of eight hundred dollars. And now he won't give it back."

"Never mind," returned the coloned; "I will attend to all that if you will go in and cook me some dinner. And next time I leave home I would recommend, madam, that you leave my business affairs alone."

"But, Henry——" she began, but he gazed at her so sternly that she turned and slipped away.

"And you, sir," continued the colonel, his words ringing out like pistol shots as he unloosed his wrath upon Blount, "I would like to inquire what excuse you have to offer for imposing on my wife and child? Is it true, as I hear, that you have taken my stock on a loan of eight hundred dollars?"

"Why—why, no! That is, Colonel Huff——"

"Have you the stock in your possession?" demanded the colonel peremptorily. "Yes or no now, and no 'buts' about it!"

"Why, yes, I have," admitted Blount in a scared voice; "but I came by it according to law."

"You did not, sir," retorted the colonel, "because it was all in my name, and my wife had no authority to transfer it. Do you deny the fact? Well, then, give me back my stock or I shall hold you, sir, personally responsible."

Blount started back, for he knew the import of those dread words, and then he heaved a great sigh.

"Very well," he said; "but I loaned her eight hundred dollars——"

"Wiley!" called the colonel, beckoning him quickly from the crowd. "Give me the loan of eight hundred dollars."

And at that Blount opened up his eyes.

"Oho!" he said. "So Wiley is with you? Well, just a moment, Mr. Huff." He turned to a man who stood beside him. "Arrest that man!" he said. "He killed my watchman, George Norcross."

"Not so fast!" rapped out the colonel, fixing the officer with steely eyes. "Mr. Holman is under my protection. Ah, thank you, Wiley; here is your money, Mr. Blount, with fifty dollars more for interest. And now I will thank you for that stock."

"Do you set yourself up," demanded Blount with sudden bluster, "as being above the law?"

"No, sir, I do not," replied the colonel tartly. "But before we go any further I must ask you to restore my stock. Your order is sufficient, if the certificates are elsewhere——"

"Well—all right!" sighed Blount, and wrote out an order which Colonel Huff gravely accepted. "And now," went on Blount, "I demand that you step aside and allow Wiley Holman to be taken."

The colonel's eyes narrowed, and he motioned the officer aside as he laid his own hand on Wiley's shoulder.

"Every citizen of the State," he said with dignity, "has the authority to arrest a fugitive—and Mr. Holman is my prisoner. Is that satisfactory to you, Mr. Officer?"

"Why—why, yes," stammered the constable, and as the colonel smiled Blount forgot his studied repose. He had been deprived in one minute of a block of stock that was worth a round million dollars, and the sting of his great loss maddened him.

"You may smile, sir," he burst out, "but as sure as there's a law I'll put Wiley Holman in the pen. And if you knew the truth, if you knew what he has done, I wonder, now, if you would

go to such lengths? You might ask your wife how she has fared in your absence—or ask Virginia there. Didn't he send her as his messenger to make a fake payment that would have deprived her and her mother of their rights? If it hadn't been for me your two hundred thousand shares wouldn't be worth two hundred cents. I ask Virginia now—didn't he send you to my bank——"

"What?" demanded the colonel, suddenly whirling upon his daughter, but Virginia avoided his eyes.

"Yes," she said, "he did send me down—and I betrayed my trust. But it's just because of that that we'll stand by him now——"

"Virginia!" said the colonel, speaking with painful distinctness. "Do I understand that you were—*that* woman? And did Mr. Blount, here, by any means whatever, persuade you to violate your trust?"

"Yes, he did!" cried out Virginia. "But it was all my fault, and I don't want Mr. Blount blamed for it. I did it out of meanness, but I was sorry for it afterward—and—oh, I wonder if I've got any mail." She broke away and dashed into the house, and the colonel brushed back his hair.

"A Huff!" he murmured. "Lord, what a blow! And, Wiley, how can we ever repay you?"

"Never mind," answered Wiley as he took the old man's hand. "I don't care about the money."

"No, but the wrong, the disgrace," protested the colonel brokenly, and then he flared up at Blount.

"You scoundrel, sir!" he cried. "How dare you induce my daughter to violate her sacred trust? By the gods, Sam Blount, I am greatly tempted——"

"It's come!" called Virginia, running gayly down the steps, but at sight of her father she stopped. "Well, there it is," she said, putting a paper in his hand. "It shows that I was sorry, anyway."

"What is this?" inquired the colonel, fumbling feebly for his glasses, and Virginia snatched the paper away.

"It's a letter from my lawyer," she said, smiling wickedly, "and we'll show it to Mr. Blount."

She took it over and put it in Blount's hands, and as he read the first line he turned pale.

"Why—Virginia!" he gasped, and then he clutched at his heart and reached out quickly for the fence. "Why—why, I thought that was all settled! I certainly understood it was, and what authority had you to interfere?"

"Wiley's power of attorney," she answered defiantly. "I fired that crooked lawyer, after you'd got him all fixed, and hired a good one with my stock."

"My Lord!" moaned Blount. "And after all I'd done for you!" And then he collapsed and was borne into the house. But Wiley, who had been so calm, suddenly leaped for the letter and read it through to the end.

"Holy—jumping—Judas!" he burst out, running over to the colonel, who was standing with lackluster eyes. "Look here what Virginia has done! She's won all Blount's stock, under that option I had, and cleaned him—down to a cent. She's won back the mine, and we can all go in together——"

"Virginia!" spoke up the colonel, beckoning her sternly to him. "Come down here; I wish to speak to you."

She came down slowly, and as her father began to talk the tears rose quickly to her eyes, but when Wiley took her hand she smiled back humbly and crept within the circle of his arm.

THE END.

Beginning in the next issue, a novel by Henry Herbert Knibbs

"TANG OF LIFE"

A Soldier of the Stables

By J. H. Greene

Author of "The Snake Lover," Etc.

Of a real lover of horses, to whom the clatter of hoofs, tossing tails and the feel of a horse's mouth on the reins are more thrilling than anything else. His big day comes when he gets a job on the transport *Geelong*, which is scheduled to take a load of animals over the Atlantic

MANUEL SILVA trudged along the old board walk, lifting his rubber boots with the hoisting shoulders of a fisherman.

It was summertime, and he had been working in the trap boats, shoveling slithering heaps of fish into the elevators that dipped at the end of the long pier and ran back with their dripping freight to the packing houses. His day began at dawn, when the crew sailed out to the traps to scoop the fish from the nets festooned over the poles, bulging and alive with gleaming shoals.

He stopped to buy a paper at the little shop filled with souvenirs of shells, windmills, and keepsake sacks of cape sand.

A mile down-along brought him to the gateway—without a gate—of the old, gabled cottage with its green shutters and porch ablaze with ramblers, and he passed along the side planks to the woodshed packed with winter kindling of sweet-smelling spruce logs. Every fagot had been cut from driftwood carried up from the beach, and the salvage and the cutting had been his. The strength old Pete Silva, his father, brought from the Azores was ebbing, and more distasteful work was falling on Manuel. His brother John was out on the Banks in the *Lucia,* appearing at intervals with a money roll from the Boston markets.

"Mah-nuel, is tha-t you?"

It was his father's deep-water voice. Manuel had slipped off his boots and hesitated.

"Yes, father," he finally replied, knowing his father had recognized even his rubbered footsteps.

"Ta-ake up some mashes in thah-t net in the yarr-d—a blah-ck fish tore it this morning."

Manuel replied dutifully, but inwardly rebellious, and his mother read his knitted brows as he leaned over the faucet in the kitchen.

"What is it, Manuel?"

She was younger than Peter, and village bred, and, though Portuguese, was fair, blue-eyed, and thoroughly of Massachusetts.

Manuel of late had troubled her. She gently closed the door to the sitting room, where Peter was making a fo'c's'le bunk of the narrow couch.

"Mother, I want to earn my living my own way—staying ashore is worse than trawling on the *Lucia;* you don't have to keep watch all the time on the Banks. I've done a week's work, and I promised Sam Aitken this afternoon——"

He hesitated with the bashfulness of a boy over his dreams, and the mother suspiciously reached for the paper protruding from his rear pocket.

"Is it these women, Manuel?" she whispered in horror, holding at a distance the front-page picture of a large-limbed lady in tights. "Ye've been buying this paper for months, and you're a changed boy. Is it that kind of women, my son?"

Her distress touched him. He patted

her shoulder, and in pitying her grew man enough to declare his desires.

"No, mother, you know I only go with Lena. It's this."

He opened the sheet in the middle at the double page of the finale of a steeplechase showing cuts of the competing horses.

His mother was relieved, only to recall an older pain.

"You don't want to be a jockey; you're not still thinking of that?"

"No, mother, I'm too big, but I do just want to work with horses; I don't want the sea. I promised Sam Aitken I'd drive his wagon out to the Light this afternoon, and now I've got to stay home and mend nets——"

He sat on the bottom of a battered dory long fallen to pieces in the high grass between the huge and ancient willow trunks, after stringing the net to the branches. He had learned to net before he could read, and flung the loop of tarred twine over his clenched thumb, and with the needle of shark bone drew the knot at the right place with an automatic accuracy. He could space the holes with the right number of meshes despite the interruption of slapping mosquitoes, and at the same time pore over the lines of the racers in the paper on his knees as his father and brother and all his kin would study a schooner.

When he was ten Manuel had shocked his family by declaring he would be a jockey. It was after a visit to Boston in the *Lucia,* when he had first seen the big draft horses on the water front. He had screamed with terror and delight when one fell near him and tried to rise, the huge, wet flanks rising like a wave and the fore legs striking sparks from the cobbles.

The boy's sea legs had come first in those early days when his mother took trips with Peter, and baby Manuel kicked in the berth and tore at the pink and yellow scalloped curtains.

He could pull a dory before he went to school, and he had seen the lifeboat leap the surf and his father edge the last point of offing in a northeaster so easily and so often that the power and majesty of the sea became a commonplace to be forgotten like a tiresome lesson.

But the clatter of hoofs on the oiled road, sweating shoulders and tossing tails, with the rank, rich smell of stables, grew yearly of more interest to him. He learned to ride and to drive, and the first feel of a horse's mouth on the reins was more thrilling than the bite of a thirty-pound cod.

He did not hear Lena creeping on him from the grass that ran from the trees to the back street.

"Manuel, do you mind if my cousin from Halifax goes with us to the dance on Tuesday? He's going to the war, and—and I don't care if you do mind, he's coming with me and can have all the dances he wants." The pretty little spitfire, half Portuguese, half Scotch-Canadian, resented Manuel's preoccupied air. She was woman enough to demand instantaneous attention.

"What's he going to the war for?" said Manuel.

"He says he ought to, and he's right; and he says I can go, too, as a nurse."

Manuel dropped his needle, and the paper blew into the grass.

"No—don't you go, Lena."

"Why not?" she asked with her voice, with her eyes, with every line of her clipper-built womanhood.

But the time had not come for Manuel to speak, and she flushed at his slowness as though he had scorned her.

"I will go; I will—I will——" she said, stamping her feet in the sea-sand soil as though he were part of it.

Manuel might have taken fire from her—they had paddled barelegged together from their earliest memories—but a new sound caught his ears, the leisurely trot of a new horse on the back road.

He could recognize all the hoofs in the village, and here were strange ones.

Lena left him with a taunt, when a roan mare in a surrey appeared with a young man driving, and a pleasant-looking old couple in the rear seat. The old gentleman inquired the way to the post office, and Manuel advised

the driver to take the side lane down to Commercial Street.

The lane was not much wider than the surrey, and Manuel resumed his netting, noting that the young man was a poor driver and that the mare knew it.

A scream cut into the stillness, with angry voices and lashing of a whip, and Manuel leaped the privet hedge and ran along the lane to see that the roan had shied at the white bows of a catboat projecting from the cottage garden opposite, and was backing down the sands to the old pier with every prospect of precipitating herself and the occupants of the surrey into high water.

Manuel saw the lines scored on the mare's sides, and, catching the descending whip on his open palm, ripped it from the driver's hands.

"Loose the rein, you fool; loose it or I'll cut yer!" he cried.

The driver, astounded, obeyed the dark-skinned, black-eyed apparition that sprang from under his wheels, and Manuel caught the bridle and led the tremulous mare past the dazzling, sunlit catboat.

"Thank you, lad," said the old gentleman. "If ever you want a job, look me up in Boston; I need men that can handle horses. There's my card and a trifle. Drive on, Billy, and remember that reins are not a steering wheel and the mare is flesh and blood, not gasoline."

The roan went along, reassured as to the bows, sterns, spars, booms, and sprits that stuck from every angle of the crooked shore-winding road. Manuel stood watching it disappear, scarcely heeding the dollar in his hand, but reading and rereading the address of the Robert Elliot Express Company, Boston.

When the surrey had disappeared, Manuel boldly turned as if he, too, were bridle led past something he had shied at, and entered the front door under the blazing ramblers and faced his father.

"Father, I'm going to Boston; I've got a job, and I won't go to sea any more. John can stay on the *Lucia;* I'm going to work ashore. I ain't a bad boy; I've given you all I make, and I don't go drinking in Gloucester and Boston. 'Tain't that. I just want to go—like you wanted to come to America from Santa Cruz—and Boston's only four hours' sail——"

The big-beamed fisherman looked up at his son with his steady, sea-searching eyes. The mother had come from the kitchen and stood by the door, waiting, as only fishermen's wives can wait, and then Peter remembered his own youth.

"All right, boy, you go, but come home sometimes. If you get tir-ed remember there's always fishing. Ah was two years younger when Ah broke away; you're a good boy."

Manuel had been driving for the Elliot Express long enough to know the most contradictory of Boston streets.

He earned good money and the praise of Dennis, the big foreman. He was sober, quiet, and had been in only one fight. This arose from a war argument in the neutrality days, when Hugo, the Dutchman, wanted to prove that Germany would win, by lifting more than any man in the shed. He certainly managed to hoist a huge trunk on his shoulders, and grinned patriotically from under the weight. Manuel told him he was muscle-bound and could not lift half that over his head. A fight was being staged when Dan, a little South Boston rat and a drinking mate of Hugo's, called out for him to look out for the dago's knife.

Manuel struck Dan in the mouth.

"That's my knife," he said, proceeding to prove to Dan that a Portuguese New Englander fights with nature's weapons.

After this the boys got along with Manuel, who grew accustomed to collars, crowds, cross streets, staying up till eleven, and a town with more than one policeman.

The war was nearer in Boston than

in the old village, and Dennis had trouble to keep peace between the many nationalities handling the heavy tide of trunks and baggage flowing in and out of the sheds.

Manuel heard the village news from Lena, and when she wrote that she was going to Halifax to qualify as a nurse he took a day off and caught a home gasoliner at the fish wharf. He had been home many times before, sometimes by the fishing boats, sometimes by the excursion steamer. This time he did not visit his people first.

"Why must you go? Let them do the fighting! Why should you go?"

The girl had risen from her table in the Red Cross shop where she was directing girls to fold compresses by rolling them round the regulation tin cylinders. She drew Manuel into a back yard surrounded by the old, peaked gables and many nasturtium beds. She had grown quieter and older.

"Don't you remember what I wrote to you about my cousin? You don't. How could you forget? He was gassed at Ypres; his lungs are burned away. He can't live—and you've forgotten."

"Yes—now I remember; there's so much war talk in Boston."

"War talk—my cousin, Manuel—and there are thousands of other girls' cousins and brothers——"

She closed her eyes and held them closed, as though what she saw there strengthened her. Manuel grew impatient.

"See here, Lena, I'm saving every dollar I can, and I'm going to start a little express of my own with Dennis, and I want you to marry me."

The girl opened her eyes at this and laughed, her breast rising like the swell of a nearing storm.

"Express company—marry. Manuel, my cousin was gassed—choked—strangled—and the captain of his company lost his legs and arms and was sent home to his wife in a basket. I could marry that man—yes, that bit of a man. I could marry my dumb, dying cousin——"

"You're nervous, hysterical."

Her hands caught his shoulder like the bite of a steel wrench.

"I am physically fit and passed by the doctors, and I want to give every ounce of this strength to my cousin's side. I'd give this body to the Germans to do what they pleased with if it would do any good; that's what I think of your love and your marrying. Good-by!"

Then the steel clutch softened, her face melted, she suddenly kissed him, and fled indoors, sliding the bolt as though she had locked out an enemy.

When Manuel returned to work he told Dennis that the old village was as war-crazed as Boston.

Some days later, while delivering trunks in an apartment house in Tremont Street, one of his horses brought him into an altercation with a fruit vender. They had stepped onto the sidewalk to chew his bananas, which the fruiterer wanted Manuel to pay for, but Manuel blamed the dealer for dangling his fruit and tempting the horses.

A tall, erect, bronzed man was watching the dispute, and caught up to Manuel, who was driving off after some hot exchanges with the fruit vender.

"Who owns these horses, young man?" he asked.

"Elliot Express Company, address on the wagon; I told that feller to take the name," replied Manuel sulkily, thinking the man some variety of plain-clothes officer.

"Never saw horses do that before; even your horses have initiative," said the man, taking the address.

That afternoon Manuel saw the same man enter Mr. Elliot's office. Later he was shown over the stables, and Dennis learned he was an English commissary officer buying horses for the Allies.

Next day Mr. Elliot announced he had sold the entire stable and henceforward would use motor wagons, and only men with chauffeurs' licenses could be employed.

Manuel and the others were out of a job.

"It's the war has hit us, men," said Dennis, over their parting beer when they were paid off, "and there's only one thing to do do; we've got to hit the war. I knew this was coming. The old man has been talking autos for a year, so I had my lines out fishing for war brides like the rest of them. Which of you men would like to go to Europe as 'ostlers on a horse transport—seventy-five dollars for the trip, seventy-five bonus if you land the horses, everything found, and a return trip on a liner?"

"How about the submarines?" said Dan.

"I said everything found; you get free life belts, and them twelve hundred horses is guarded by the whole British navy."

"Twelve hundred?" said Manuel. "Count me in, Dennis."

The transport *Geelong* rolled heavily in the swell of yesterday's gale, and as the bulwarks rose and fell the long lines of horses' heads bobbed simultaneously in and out of their stalls like automatic toys.

A gun barked from the stern. It was practice time, and the two bluejackets, assisted by a quartermaster, were aiming the 6.4 at a barrel floating astern as it rose on the seas.

The horses were used to it, and there was no attempt at stampede from the near stalls. Their shoeless feet padded softly on the decks, and occasionally one fell, but most of the twelve hundred had caught the ship's rhythm.

The gale had incapacitated the landsmen among the hostlers, and to Manuel fell the extra work, carrying the food down the lines, pouring it into the can at the headboards with the spray in his face and the wind blowing the chaff to leeward.

There were fifty hostlers besides Dennis, the foreman, who was making three hundred for the trip.

Manuel liked the job from the moment he saw the long lines of patient backs sprawling up the gangway.

The work had been easy till last night, as they did not clean stables till near landing, but the gale had given trouble. Some of the horses had been badly knocked about, and Manuel had to go the rounds over the bucking decks with the two veterinaries. There had been little sickness among them, and Manuel had learned something of lung fever, strangles, and pneumonia, and tending the sick beasts made him think of Lena and her hospital work.

As he held the lantern high while the animals cluttered, scrambled, and kicked on the failing foothold, their white, rolling eyeballs filled him with pity. One had got his foreleg over the front bar, helped by a jerking roller, and was badly cut; others had kicked through into adjoining stalls, many were violently seasick, and all were frightened and seemed anxious to break away and gallop out over the sea.

This morning he had learned that one of the horses had broken a leg and had to be shot, and he stood watching the men hauling the body out of the stables.

He avoided being called on to help; he had never handled a dead horse, and the sight of the blood streaking the deck nauseated him.

The gun barked again, and a whiff of the powder stung his nostrils as the slings lifted the huge, black carcass over the side, its legs sticking out in the grotesque attitude of an instantaneous photograph.

He saw the body disappear in the lee foam, and presently shoot to the surface astern in the ship's wake, the black legs first.

"Look like periscopes," remarked the quartermaster.

That was enough for the gunners. Their barrel had been sunk. The gun was sighted on the black, bobbing carcass, and with the next shot disappeared in the splash.

Manuel, furious at their callousness, said something and made a move toward the gunners.

Luckily Dan caught him and threw him behind a ventilator.

"This is war, sonny; keep your mouth shut—or maybe you'll be the next target."

The gunners cleaned the gun and covered it, pleased with good practice in a difficult sea. They were nearing the proscribed zone, and quick and certain shooting was their business.

But Manuel was in revolt again at the whole sickening business of war, and he swabbed out the bloody stable with the soul of an anarchist.

Next morning at dawn the *Geelong* was torpedoed.

Manuel and the others tumbled on deck, slipping on their life belts. The gunners were steadily firing, but he saw nothing save the gray seas, which seemed to be rising skyward as the *Geelong* listed to port, and the starboard stables seemed bursting with horses as though they were being poured out over the canting deck.

"Into the boat, son," said Dennis, making forward.

"What about the horses?"

"Hell, they're insured; we're not."

Before following him, Manuel ran along the deck lifting the bars. Some of the horses slid forward, falling in cluttering heaps against cabins and hatchways; others threw themselves back and balanced as though circus bred. From the sinking port side came a horrible splashing from the drowning animals.

The delay made him miss the boats, and he had to jump as the ship made a sidelong plunge, and he went under despite his belt. He came up, and for a moment was swimming beside a panting chestnut blowing the sea water from its nostrils.

Dennis pulled him into the bows of a boat, cursing him for a fool.

"The swine!" said Manuel passionately. "The swine!" as a wave rose with a crest of lifted heads, blown manes, and futile, kicking feet. The animals passed to leeward, vainly trying to keep up with the boats, and one by one disappeared.

"The swine! Did you get the submarine?" asked Manuel.

"Dunno; hope so," said the gunner.

"Then they'll drown between decks, the swine!"

"Hello, lad, I thought you were pro-German."

The word fell among that derelict crew of indignant men like a bomb.

The men at the oars stopped rowing and turned on their seats.

A little Scotch stoker, all grime and oil, with a badly scalded chest, caught Manuel by the arm.

"Don't fight, Manuel," warned Dennis hurriedly, sizing up the ugly temper of the crew.

"I'm not pro-German," said Manuel.

"You made a pro-German remark when we were using the dead horse for a target," said the gunner.

"The boy is crazy over horses," interjected Dennis.

"Yes, I did," said Manuel. "I did call you swine, too."

His words seemed put into his mouth, and in some vague way he thought of Lena and his parting with her among the nasturtiums. A fury came over him, and he threw off the stoker and stood up as he would have on the *Lucia's* deck and faced them.

"I ain't pro-German; I'm American, and if you want me to fight I'll enlist right now, army or navy—don't give a damn! What do you have to say to go under the Union Jack—God save the king? And to hell with you!"

This last was to the Scotchman, who had risen and was coming at him with a clenched right, which, however, opened and took Manuel's in a friendly grip.

"Mon, ye're dom strange, but ye've got the speerut of a Hielander."

There were shells dropping round the battalion depot, but Manuel's business was to carry supplies on his lorry without heeding them. The boxes, cans, and barrels stood in huge dumps by the roadside and were being packed and checked off by the A. S. sergeant as methodically as the shipping clerk of that old express office that seemed centuries behind him.

War was a familiar routine to him by this; he knew the badges on the advancing men to his right, and he waved his hand to the mud-caked, relieved men limping back from the ridge ahead with its smoke and thunder.

There was one of the daily big-little battles on, and outside a hut with half a roof stood groups of red-capped staff officers.

High in air over the ridge were the aëroplanes, the sun lighting their wings till they reminded him of horse flies over the cape dunes, and the shrapnel bursts recalled the foam of northwesters.

A plane was slanting toward them, and he knew enough to see it was in trouble. It plunged nose deep in the mud near by, but the orderlies went on packing, and his horses quietly champed their bits.

A staff officer hurried up, and Manuel saw a pale-faced schoolboy try to lift himself from the seat of the fallen plane and then collapse. The staff officer left the wreck without the desired information and passed Manuel, swearing to himself calmly and gentlemanly, and some bearers lifted out the dying aviator.

Manuel was loaded, and took his place in the long supply line, the last thread of a gigantic web stretched over the world's wheat fields and cattle ranches guided by tireless brains in a London office to feed the fighters on yonder ridge.

The lines split into units when nearing the trenches, and he had to drive carefully to avoid the dead and the badly wounded waiting for stretchers.

An ammunition wagon blew up on his right, but other wagons filled the gap.

The enemy was counterattacking heavily, and had set a heavy barrage.

A shell burst near, and the wind blew Manuel from his seat. He was stunned, but revived as he felt the reins dragged from his fingers. He was not wounded, but his face was wet. The shell had killed one of the grays, and the sight of the ghastly, shattered neck oddly reminded Manuel of the red ramblers on the porch at home.

Manuel's business was to clear the road and carry what supplies he could by hand through the barrage. The other gray had completely disappeared. The driver ahead touched Manuel with his whip; the man was shouting at him, but Manuel could not hear him above this Niagara of noise.

The man pointed with his whip, and Manuel saw his own gray, apparently unhurt, calmly trotting into the barrage.

Manuel dropped his armful, and ran after the horse, heedless of the muddy earth that the shell fire spluttered around him like surf on the knees of a bather. The gray saw him coming and quickened to a trot. The smoke cleared, and Manuel saw a line of men with extended rifles flat on the ground behind a hastily improvised cover. The gray jumped the shallow trench and galloped out into No Man's Land.

Manuel followed, trying to grab the ends of broken harness cut by a freak of shell fire.

An officer tried to hold him back, but Manuel broke away; he could see that the men were grinning and cheering, but he could not hear anything above the shell fire.

The gray pranced like a foal, and was making for the British barrage right ahead, where the earth was boiling as though the fires were internal. He felt stings on his shoulders, and again he thought of home, for they reminded him of the cape mosquitoes. He managed to leap and catch the dragging reins and turn the gray's head.

Out of the crackling sky an aëroplane plunged down beside him apparently in silence, though the wings were shattered to fragments. It was a British biplane. The pilot was killed, and the wounded observer was holding out a camera to Manuel. But the gray was tugging him, and Manuel did not seem to be able to hold him. There were more mosquito stings. The earth began to rock, and he found himself using

his sea legs. It was like hauling in a dory against a head swell. Then he became aware of the wounded aviator clinging to his neck and shouting something in his ear about observation.

Manuel gave him a lift with his left arm—he did not seem able to find his right—and the observer crawled on the back of the gray, clinging to the collar and his camera, while Manuel took off his belt and began lashing the gray with the buckle and back to the lines.

His trousers slipped down about his knees as he ran, and the rotted, weather-worn khaki tore at the crotch.

"What kind o' kiltie are you?" said a sergeant as Manuel's bare knees leaped the trench.

"To headquarters! To headquarters!" gasped the aviator as they tried to lift him from the horse.

Manuel belted the gray back through the German barrage, with the roar of loud waters in his ears and his last ounce of life in his swinging arm swaying the buckle on the horse's hind quarters. He fancied he was swimming, a big black wave rose over him, and he dropped through unfathomable depths into a great and silent darkness.

This time the waters were ripples breaking silverly under a fo'c's'le, but the darkness held, and he could not move.

"Lena," he tried to say, but he could not hear himself, nor did he know why he tried to.

The waters changed to a gentle swell, the *Lucia* was rounding the point into the smooth bay.

"Lena!" This time he heard himself.

"Yes, Manuel, it's I. You're all right."

Her voice scattered his rallying senses. Again he was tossing on deep waters, for Lena had never sailed on the *Lucia*.

"Where am I? What light is that?"

"The Race; you're headed home with a big catch."

Something soft brushed his forehead, not the scalloped edge of the bunk curtains, and he scented nasturtiums instead of galley coffee.

"The beggar brought important information that saved the position."

"And he bust his bloomin' pants to do it."

These voices did not belong to the *Lucia*, either, and in his effort to think the jig-saw pictures in his mind flew apart, and there was no more thought in him.

When he awoke, saner and sounder, the bandages were taken off his eyes, and the fo'c's'le became a hospital, and the rippling waters were the voices of many wounded and their attendants. Over him bent Lena.

Again she promised him a speedy recovery and read him telegrams of congratulation and sympathy from the old village and a glowing newspaper account of his exploits.

"But it's all wrong; it's all wrong," he said, amazed.

"You saved the aviator, Manuel, and his information broke up a big attack. Hush! No more talking; I'm C. O. now."

He obeyed, as rebellious as his strength would allow.

There was admiration and pride in her eyes, the surgeons pointed him out to visitors, then men in the adjoining cots greeted him hilariously.

"'Ope you ain't caught cold, matey?"

"Why didn't you do it in pajamas?"

But under this raillery of the maimed, this badinage in bandages was a note of brotherhood admitting him to their fellowship of fighters, and he was ashamed.

An orderly entered, announcing a lady, bearing one of England's proudest names, who wished to see and thank personally the man who had saved her son, the last of his line.

Manuel almost rose in protest, but when the stately lady from out of her mourning for her husband and another son lost on service stood by his bed and spoke he was silent.

He could not check the gratitude of this beautiful presence. She reminded him of the Madonna in the church at home, and her voice was low and com-

pelling, and the ward was as hushed as that church. It would have been sacrilege to contradict her.

"Thank—you, my lady," he murmured. "I am glad, but I didn't hurt him, did I?"

"No, indeed."

"Those buckles are heavy," he whispered, and only Lena understood him.

"You're to get the Cross—and you must come home to us to convalesce."

The lady passed out, and Lena's eyes were shining, for the barelegged fisher boy she used to go crabbing with had proved himself her man.

But Manuel moaned resentfully:

"I'll never wear that Cross thing; I only went after the gray."

AN ECHO FROM AN OLD WAR

THORNTON CHESLEY, the Washington automobile man, on one occasion took a trip into Maryland to buy a piece of property. When he had reached the farm, the only person he could find was an old colored man.

"Henry," said Chesley, "where's your boss?"

"Up at de house, drunk," answered Henry.

"Well," sighed the would-be purchaser, "I guess I had better wait until he sobers up before I try to talk business with him."

At this, the old colored man was seized with hysterics. He laughed and shrieked, beating his knees with the palms of his hands. Finally he lay on the grass and rolled over and over, the sound of his mirth carrying far out across the fields and woods. He seemed to be having the best laugh of his life.

"Say!" exclaimed Chesley. "What's the matter with you?"

"Jes' laffin'," panted the colored man between gales. "Laffin' at you waitin' foh ole marster to sober up."

"Well, what about that? Won't he sober up?"

"Good Lawd!" yelled the old man. "He ain' been sober sence Gen'al Lee surrendered."

CRITICISM FROM AN EXPERT

SENATOR JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS, of Mississippi, who is one of President Wilson's strongest supporters in the Senate, was talking to one of the "business kings" who had arrived in Washington to help the government conduct the business of the war.

"How do you size up these government officials?" inquired the senator. "I mean, when it comes to business efficiency, how do they stack up?"

"Well," answered the business king meditatively, "I believe that, after looking them over carefully, I am warranted in saying I've found none of them who is a Barney Oldfield for speed, a Gotch for getting a trick hold on an elusive proposition, a Sandow for carrying weight, a Solomon for solving a problem, a Tom Longboat for endurance, or a Jess Willard for having a punch."

"PENNY SCOT'S TREASURE"

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IV.—THE CHRISTABEL

ONE of my most out-of-the-rut experiences commenced when a customer in a chemist's shop near Hyde Park Corner asked the salesman if he kept "Hurby's Golden Salve."

To me the query signified nothing, but when the customer, on receiving a negative answer, remarked casually that he had seen the salve advertised at the corner of a certain back street in Knightsbridge I became so interested that I went out of the shop without stopping to effect a purchase.

I wanted to see that advertisement. And I did see it. It was quite a small affair, in black letters on white paper, pasted on a hoarding among others.

Curiosity satisfied, I sought the park and the military band, and sat on an iron chair under a plane tree and smoked cigarettes and thought of nothing but "Hurby's Golden Salve."

The customer had not got it; no, and he never would get it. There were only two similar advertisements in London. One would be in the Holloway Road; the other on a wall in the East India Dock Road. It was a code used by a smart set of jewel crooks. There never was any Golden Salve made by a Hurby. The message simply meant, "Haggers—Guildford—Street." That was what the first letters of each of the three words represented.

Who would have guessed it? No one. The thing was impossible unless one was in the secret. But I *had* been in the secret. You know me very well for an ex-jewel thief granted liberty by the police in exchange for my invaluable services, my knowledge of diamond sharks, that highly specialized and exclusive set.

Well, in my bad days I had worked with Haggers and the rest of that gang. When a big thing called us together we used a secret code by way of communication. The magnitude of the proposed coup made the most absolute secrecy highly desirable. The police eye pierces the ordinary post, sees through the "Personal Column" message in the newspaper. So we chose the harmless-seeming "ad," to be pasted in those three London localities. It varied, of course. If I—Acton Dawes—wished to call my fellow vultures, I should have used my own message, quite different from the one under consideration. If this method strikes you as needlessly profound, my reply is that you haven't the ghost of an idea of police surveillance of suspected jewel crooks who play for fortunes in precious stones.

The military band was executing, with considerable verve, the "Dances from Henry VIII.," and I was pondering just what sort of prey Haggers and company were menacing with their talons, when I caught sight of a very pretty, girlish figure in a filmy green dress, holding an open parasol fringed with a gossamer lace. Our eyes met, and in a moment I was upon my feet.

It was Myrtle—fresh and sweet as this early summer morn.

She blushed charmingly as we shook hands, and in the same moment I noticed that she wore a wedding ring. Myrtle Cadman was the only one of my old set—a shameful set, if you will

This series began in the POPULAR for November 20.

—whom I should have accosted. But she was so very pretty, and at one time, in those bad days which forbade sentiment, I thought a great deal of her.

"I did not know you were in town, Acton," said she nicely.

"Such is my good fortune," I answered, and again my eyes dropped to the gold circlet.

"Sharp as ever," she smiled, pulling back her glove, which had fallen forward truantly. "Yes, I have been married since we met last."

"Have been?"

"Yes. I am—a widow."

"Good heavens, Myrtle! And you look like a schoolgirl yet."

"I was married just over a year ago," she answered demurely. "I wedded a Frenchman—Monsieur Octave Lemoin."

The name brought a shadow of remembrance. I repeated it.

"You have heard of him?" still smiled Myrtle. "It is possible. He owned a beautiful collection of old china. I have it still."

"I congratulate you heartily. I am distressed to hear that he is dead, and I am more than pleased to know that —that——"

I broke off, embarrassed. Myrtle took up my thought.

"That I have broken with the past?" she murmured, avoiding my eyes. "True. The necessity for that sort of thing is now removed from me. But we are not going to discuss those times, are we?"

"Certainly not."

And so I refrained from any reference to the matter which had been in my thoughts when Myrtle appeared. I gave myself up to the enjoyment of her society. We chatted; we looked continually into each other's eyes; we listened to the music; we bathed in the sunlight, and we parted the best of friends.

At fifteen minutes past one I entered my favorite restaurant to lunch. I am very regular in my habits, and the waiter there usually contrives to keep a small table for me and a possible friend. As I walked toward it I saw that it was occupied; the man glanced up. He was my old friend, Inspector Jackerman, of New Scotland Yard.

"Pardon the liberty, Dawes. I wanted to see you," he grunted.

"That is quite all right, Jackerman," I said as the waiter dusted my chair.

The inspector and I were rubbing along very nicely, you perceive. This was the second time he had called upon me. When first he held me in the hollow of his hand—with thumb pressed down hard—he commanded me to his presence with peremptory notices and watched me with an eye glittering with hard suspicion. But much water had flowed under London Bridge since then.

"Look here," said he bluntly, "what about this Christabel ruby?"

"Well, what about it?"

"Hammond House isn't satisfied. The trustees of the Hammond collection seem to think that all has not been done to find the stone. There's a letter in this morning's *Times* about it."

"I know. I read it. Pardon me for remarking that you are approaching me rather late in the day. That ruby was lost six weeks ago, remember."

"Yes. But the manner of the loss was so vulgar. A visitor to the collection suddenly goes mad, or has a fit, smashes the thick glass case with the horn handle of his cane, flings about the contents—including the magnificent Christabel—shatters a few of the glass doors of the cases round the walls containing specimens of valuable china, and is finally dragged out. Everything is picked up—smashed or otherwise, except the ruby. The perpetrator—now in an asylum—turns out to be a common or garden tobacconist, as much interested in precious stones as you are in—in cheeses. *Voilà tout.* It was not a case calling for your—er—finesse."

I bowed over my soup in acknowledgment.

"Continue, my dear Jackers," I begged.

He frowned at the familiarity. They called him that at the Yard.

"We were asked to find the stone. As you know, it was an exceedingly fine ruby, and was being exhibited at Hammond House because it was the first stone of its kind dug out from a part of the world where such things have never been found."

"In southern Borneo. I saw it on exhibition. Weighed just over twenty-seven carats, did that superb red sapphire, or ruby. Flawless, though its shade, being a trifle darker than the true pigeon's blood, subtracted from its value. It was worth about eight thousand pounds. Its owner named it after Coleridge's mystic poem. What have you done?"

"Everything possible. The museum was closed instantly after the outrage, and every one in it allowed themselves to be searched. No one escaped. That is certain. The police officers on duty there have been watched for weeks. The boards of that particular room were taken up; the grounds outside the window subjected to a minute examination; every case in the room turned inside out. All to no purpose. Every likely jewel thief in the country has been the unceasing object of surveillance. The Christabel remains unfound."

I leaned back, as the waiter removed my soup plate.

"And as I know that you did all these things in a manner which spells perfection, the mystery becomes a very real one," I answered. "Possibly the jewel was flung, and became lodged in some fissure in the walls?"

"They are paneled walls. Every panel was removed. The men who did all this elaborate searching were watched with the utmost closeness both at the time and for long afterward. Even the ceiling, of carved Colnaghi work, was microscopically examined."

"Excellent! And yet the very fact that the Christabel was not located seems to suggest some underhand work."

"That is your opinion, Dawes?"

"I am inclined to it. I assume that among the visitors in Hammond House there was not one known to your department?"

"Not one. We took every name and address, and all turned out to be honest citizens."

"So that even if one of them had picked up the ruby and contrived to conceal it on his or her person it would have been enormously difficult to dispose of it afterward. Why, even a first-class crook would find such a stone in the nature of a white elephant."

"Not if he split it up."

"Ah, your first-rate crook would rather split his heart, my dear Jackerman."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"We have come to a stop," he admitted. "Can you do anything?"

"Good heavens! What have you left me to do?"

"So much the finer if you can assist us," said the inspector.

The flattery was rather bald. I smiled.

"At any rate, Dawes, you have all the data," said he, not without gloom.

He got up, paid his bill, and went out.

I finished my lunch slowly and called for a cigar.

"When I have finished this," I meditated, "I will pay a visit to Mr. Haggers at his residence in Guildford Street."

It was a desperately dangerous move. I should never have even dreamed of making it if Jackerman had not convinced me that everything else had been done. Since I had turned down crime in my specific line of diamond lifting, I had avoided my ancient set as represented by Haggers, Dippy—who was in prison—Myrtle Cadman—who had become wealthy and quitted—and one or two others. I had made a primal rule of letting them alone. Firstly, because I did not choose to round up one-time pals; secondly, because I was perfectly well aware that if they felt I was doing so they would speedily send me into the lasting dark. But I meant to get the Christabel ruby from their clutches. True, but that was not

quite the same thing as betraying them to the police.

And I felt that Haggers and company had, by some extraordinary means, got hold of that superb stone. No, I had no reason to think that. I was as much in the gloom as the inspector. I should never have ventured to put my head in the lion's jaws but for the advertisement to which my attention had been called. All that the latter indicated was that some extra big coup was in course of procedure. Now the getting away with a forty-thousand-dollar ruby is a very big coup indeed. I felt that it had been stolen, and not just lost, and as the theft showed amazing cleverness I naturally linked it with my old friends who flew only in high flights of the sort.

With my hand on the well-polished knocker of the street door, I paused. My peril was terribly real. Supposing the lion's jaws snapped down? Then I beat a flourishing tattoo.

A minute later a servant maid had ushered me into a cozy sitting room and I was waiting for her master. If you have pictured Haggers living in some dark lair of a top-back room, that picture must be corrected. He was a family man, husband and father of four children whom he idolized, and on Sunday mornings he was to be seen taking round the plate at his church—a familiar figure with a bald head and gold glasses.

I put my hat and stick down on a chair and waited his entry. I felt my pulse. It was steady as the beat of a pendulum. From some room in the house I heard children's merry laughter.

Still he did not appear. I wondered if he was looking at me in some secret, stealthy fashion. He probably was.

Upon an old-fashioned, round walnut table in the middle of the room were scattered a few periodicals. They were all current numbers. I turned over, somewhat idly, a copy of the *Illustrated*. Halfway through its pages, I received a shock of astonishment. There was a group of photographs on the glossed page, men and women momentarily in the limelight, and among them was the face of Myrtle!

Below was an inscription which ran as follows:

> Madame Lemoin, the charming widow of the late Monsieur Octave Lemoin, whose collection of old china is known to connoisseurs. This lady has announced her intention of presenting to the Hammond House collection a beautiful deep dish of Giorgio. In the recent lamentable outrage at Hammond House when the Christabel ruby was lost, some rare Italian pottery was smashed in one of the side cases—the famous Loden vase of that period having a narrow escape. Madame Lemoin is giving this fine piece of enameled ware from her late husband's collection in token of her regret at the loss sustained.

I stared at the printed words as if they were on fire. Now what in Heaven's name did the thing mean? Here was Myrtle's name linked, though indirectly, with the missing Christabel! It made me gasp. Here were deep waters calling for a sounding lead fathoms long.

Had she lied to me when she said she had turned down the old life? That assumption did not seem likely, since she had no need to steal. Yet possibly the glamour of the thing had caught her once again. Yes, I could understand that. The insidious fascination of playing for jewels of great price was ever burning in my own blood more or less.

Could I possibly imagine that her action in making this gift to Hammond House was purely disinterested? That it was entirely a coincidence? That it had nothing in the world to do with the wonderful, valuable ruby? No—a hundred times no! Then——

The sound of a footstep shattered swift reflection. I had just time to turn over a few pages, concealing the photograph, when in came Haggers, a little child seated across his shoulders.

"Ah, is that you, Dawes?" said he lightly. He put down the child. "Run away, Bob," said he affectionately.

He closed the door upon the youngster and turned to me.

"Well?" said he with a snap of his jaws and a flicker in his eyes like sparks.

I put my hands in my trouser pockets and swung round upon him.

"Haggers," said I easily, "I want that Christabel ruby."

He did not wince or change color or even start. I did not think he would. He threw up his chin with a laugh.

"You mean that you want your brains," he answered coldly.

"Not yet. You never found me a fool, Haggers, and I am not here to play that rôle. I come with a proposition entirely friendly. Anything less than that would mean—well, it would not do me any good. Grip that before we go further. You know whom I serve, and you know that I always let you and the others alone. I want the ruby not for myself, but to restore it to Hammond House. Keep it, if you choose; but I am going to show you that it will pay you well to let it slip."

He jerked up a chair and sat astride, his arms on the back of it, his eyes boring into mine like corkscrews.

"How did you know I was here, Dawes?"

"I saw your ad. 'Hurby's Golden Salve' told me. You are not surprised, of course."

"Of course not. Not at that. But when you link that with the Christabel then you plunge me into a very considerable astonishment."

"Ah! You have not got it?"

"Certainly not."

I extracted a cigarette from my case and lighted it slowly.

"Nevertheless, here is my proposition." I continued blandly. "Whoever has this stone carries a white elephant in his waistcoat pocket. It has been so advertised that every dealer, straight or crooked, will know it at a glance. One would have to wait fifty years before attempting to sell it. Fifty years is a long time. You will be decently old in less than half that. Now the reward for recovery of the Christabel has mounted to five hundred of the best. That would be worth having. Now if we suppose merely that you know where to lay hands upon it, the matter of bringing it forward for the sake of five hundred pounds would, in your case, be not unattended with risk. It would, in fact, spell danger with a 'D' in colors of flame. In that case I should suggest that you pass the ruby to me. I should not give you away. You know me too well for that, and I have a certain regard for my life. I should see the stone restored, and the five hundred which I should claim would go straight to you. I think you can trust me. As I said, I am not playing a fool's game."

When I was halfway through my proposition I commenced turning over the pages of the *Illustrated* in a casual, seemingly absent-minded fashion.

Haggers got up, as I thought he would, putting his hands on the edge of the table.

"To hell with your 'supposes!'" he whipped out venomously. "Do you think that if I had the Christabel I'd play into your hands like that?"

"They are clean hands so far as you are concerned," I remonstrated, while I continued to turn over the leaves as if unaware of my action.

"Well, I haven't got the ruby," he snapped.

At that moment I came once more to the page containing Myrtle's picture.

"And what is more," added Haggers, leaning forward so that his spread palms almost covered the page, "I don't relish your insinuations that I know anything about it. You're a damned cool card to come here, anyhow. If I were you I wouldn't repeat the visit."

He pulled the paper toward him and closed it.

I wanted nothing more. I was absolutely certain that I was on the right track. I cared not a snap of the fingers for the hot blaze in his eyes and the wolf's snarl in his tone. All the same I forced my voice to its most polite, its mildest pitch:

"I understand, Haggers. No bones broken."

And I took up my hat and went out.

I breathed rather more easily when I found myself clear of the house. I walked away very deliberately, very

slowly, paused to look up at the clouds, which were drizzling a fine rain, unrolled my umbrella, shook it, and put it up with studied unhurriedness. And all the time my eyes were here and there, watching for any spy upon my movements. I had done a very rash thing when I entered that house, though I was keenly glad of it. At the end of an hour's stroll, I was sure that I was not shadowed, and I went home to my rooms in Clarges Street.

I may have been, in some back time, more mystified, but I do not readily recall the occasion. Right under my nose a game was being played for the peerless Christabel, and I could make neither head nor tail of it. I did not know how many were in it, but I perceived that Myrtle was, also Haggers. They were playing in a masterly fashion, that was certain, in a manner only to be expected of such "stars" of the profession. They were so well aware of the intense vigilance of the police in the matter of the lost jewel that they would not even communicate through ordinary channels, but chose a cryptic advertisement. I could never tell for certain if the criminal-investigation department ever had an eye on Haggers. Myrtle Cadman never came under their lens. But they were taking no chances, these two; and they were winning the Christabel.

Had they already won it? I could not convince myself of that. If the gem was actually in their possession they would not have been in town. But beyond a shadow of a doubt they were closing in upon it. What could I do? I had never felt so helpless. The conundrum was worse than an Assyrian hieroglyphic. Why was Myrtle giving her Giorgio deep dish to Hammond House? The act of supposed generosity *must* have connection with the ruby. I felt it in my bones. Haggers had proved it by his anxiety to keep the printed paragraph and portrait from my eyes. Could it be just coincidence that Myrtle was making this presentation to a museum which had lost a forty-thousand-dollar jewel? Impossible. True, Myrtle had married—or said she had married—a rich man, but that did not clear her in my eyes of complicity in the case in hand. Old Lemoin might not have left so very much money, after all, and the Christabel ruby was a ruby worth a neat little fortune. Besides, there was the fascination of the thing.

It had occurred to me that the inscription below the portrait of Myrtle might contain a code, a hidden cipher intended to be a guide to the rest of the gang. Myrtle dared not communicate with them, so she might have written the inscription herself to be printed in the *Illustrated*. I had bought a copy on my way home, and I spent three solid hours groping for that cipher. But I did not find it.

I gave it up for that day, and next morning I sought the address of Madame Lemoin. It was not hard to get. At half past eleven o'clock I presented myself at the hotel where Myrtle was staying. I had no clear idea of what I meant to say, but I was spared the trouble of saying anything. Myrtle was out. She had left, a quarter of an hour ago, "for Hammond House, where she was formally to present her gift."

The news sent an electric thrill of excitement right through my nerves. What! Myrtle had gone to that very room which had contained the Christabel ruby, and was even then making a hidden, masterly move in the game which I *knew* she was playing.

The prize was actually passing from my hope. With a most certain intuition I felt this. But what could I do? I jumped into a cab by way of some sort of reply to the question, and was driven swiftly toward Hammond House, Piccadilly.

Suddenly I heard a shout. We had almost knocked a careless pedestrian down. I looked out and saw him—red-faced and mad. His countenance suggested a vague familiarity. Where—where—— Ah, yes; he was the man I had seen in the chemist's shop asking for Hurby's Golden Salve.

A second or two later I thrust head

and shoulders from the lowered window.

"Faster—faster!" I called, utterly regardless of attention, of notoriety, of speed limit. "Two sovereigns if you get there in five minutes!"

The taxi leaped forward as if it had been violently propelled from the rear. We tore on with a howl of speed.

Should I reach Hammond House in time? Should I? Should I?

I gripped the door, ready to jump out. A flame of excitement, of feverish eagerness, was burning up my nerves.

For I knew just where to lay hands on the Christabel.

The cab stopped with a screech of protesting tires under the brake. I was out in a twinkling. As I ran up the steps I was not sorry to see old Jackerman coming down them. I learned afterward that he had called to see one of the heads there to suggest to him that the writing of acid letters to the *Times* was unfair to the police. But I didn't go into that then. I caught him by the lapel of his morning coat.

"Come with me," I urged gently. "It is possible I may have something to show you."

He obeyed without a word.

As we entered the room which had contained the jewel in one of the center cases I saw three or four officials gathered round Myrtle Cadman, chatting pleasantly. She looked very charming and radiant. Our eyes met, and suddenly the roses, I fancied, faded from her soft cheeks.

Quite near to the group was one of the side cases, which had been opened to receive the Giorgio dish. My heart leaped with an extravagant joy when I saw that it was not already there. I strolled easily toward it so as not to attract attention. There were many beautiful articles of *vertu* in the shining mahogany case. Jackerman stuck by my side. I wanted him to look away. Suddenly one of the officials spoke to him, and he averted his eyes from me for a moment.

I joined the group. In a minute or two the general attention quitted Myrtle for a second or two. I stepped to her side and whispered:

"You have lost. Take my tip and leave town quickly. I never blab, but best make yourself safe."

She treated me to a single glance. Of hate? Of fury? By no manner of means. You see, Myrtle once cared for me. Her eyes sparkled with admiration, sparkled like diamonds of the purest water.

Jackerman extricated himself from the others and came up to me.

"What's in the wind, Dawes?" he asked in an undertone.

"This," I answered.

And I slipped the splendid Christabel into his palm.

"Good God! Where did you find it?" he flashed, red as fire.

"Inside the Loden vase!"

The newspaper boys were bawling the tidings into the dark streets when I saw Inspector Jackerman again. Naturally he wanted the interview, his curiosity being very thirsty. But I wasn't going to let him drink up full information, finding still a certain satisfaction in the act of living. No names must be mentioned.

"Dawes," said he stoutly, "I want to know how you found that ruby."

"Easily answered, my dear Jackerman. The Loden vase—that justly famous piece of ornate, early-Italian pottery—has a beautifully enameled lid quite three inches deep. I lifted this lid—and that is how I found the jewel."

The flicker of a grim smile moved his mustache.

"Concerning the beginning of the trouble," I continued, "there was nothing in it save the outrage of a lunatic, as you supposed. I believe, however, that the Christabel was picked up during the tumult, not necessarily by a jewel crook, but by some ordinary sort of person who suddenly found the lustrous stone in his palm and felt a momentary insane desire to stick to it. We do not know his name; we never shall. But he retained sufficient wit to warn him that he was up against a tough proposition if he wished to steal

the ruby. What did he do, therefore, but lift the lid of the famous Loden vase—the window of its case being smashed at the time, remember—and drop the stone inside the deep receptacle. A flash of inspiration, you will allow."

Jackerman grunted.

"After the search," I continued, "this unknown person went out safe and sound. Of course you had his name and address along with that of every other person in the room, and doubtless you had an eye upon him with the rest. But you learned nothing.

"Now although no smart jewel crook chanced to be present at the time of the actual outrage, yet the loss of the priceless ruby must have moved many of those gentlemen. I believe that a member of one of the cleverest gangs in town got upon the right trail. He probably argued that since the ruby was certainly not found in the room, it *must* have been taken away by one of the visitors who had been present during the uproar. He decided to get into communication with each one. It is extremely likely that he contrived to obtain the police list of the persons who had been present. I cannot be sure; but he went the right way to work, found the actual man—or was possibly approached by him, and so learned the full facts of the case. Doubtless he paid a sum down for those full facts, and he got to know—it is quite sure—that the Christabel was concealed in the Loden vase."

Jackerman opened his lips as if to ask a question, then shut them again. I was glad. I was determined not to mention Haggers' name, for I had been speaking of Haggers, of course.

"The vital information was now in the hands of a crook—of a first-class crook," I wound up. "He wanted to get at the ruby, but dared make no move toward it himself, not being sure—what gilt-edged thief *is* sure?—that the police microscope was not over him and his tiniest action. So he advertised. Don't laugh. I tell you he did. I will show you the advertisement myself when you like. He meant it to reach the eye of some other member of this infernally clever, this infernally cautious, gang. He was sure that it would, and it did. This latter was much sharper than I. I thought I saw through the simple code, but I didn't—properly. I only read half of it, and was foolishly content."

I paused to collect my sentences. I was now speaking of Myrtle, and I had to be careful indeed if I was not to betray her. Clearly I could not speak of her as "she," so I adopted the masculine pronoun.

"The code message was seen and translated aright by another member of the set," I repeated. "He had to create some special occasion which would give him liberty to handle the Loden vase for a minute or so, some occasion when not the remotest reason for suspicion could attach itself to his action. He *did* create the opportunity, and very well sh—he did it. I do assure you that if inspiration had come to me a minute or so later the Christabel would now be lost to us everlastingly."

"Inspiration?" echoed Jackerman, with a touch of skepticism.

"Yes—the true reading of the code message in the advertisement."

"Will you tell me what the advertisement was?"

"With pleasure. It was 'Hurby's Golden Salve.' Subtract one letter from each of these three words and transpose the others. Drop the 'H' from 'Hurby' and form 'ruby' from the rest; deduct the 'G' from 'Golden' and transpose into 'Loden;' knock out the 'l' from 'Salve' and form 'Vase.' There you have the key to the conundrum: 'Ruby—Loden—Vase!'"

Jackerman lifted surprised brows.

"Damned clever," said he laconically.

But I never knew if he was referring to me or to the code.

The next story in this series is entitled "The Khorassan Turquoises," and will appear in the January 20th issue.

A Chat With You

SOME people count for more than others—and it is sometimes hard to tell why. It isn't the money they have, the education they have; it isn't cleverness or brilliancy or eloquence; often it is not even the reputation of past accomplishment. The gold in them seems to have a clearer ring, what they say means more than if uttered by another in the selfsame words. Why, at the start of a new organization, is one man voted at once into the chair? Why, at a political convention, do some names come to mean more than others? Why do people demand one man for governor although he has not sought the office, and pass by another who has worked for it and apparently deserves it?

WE are accustomed to say that this quality which lends weight to a man and to all he says and touches is character. So it is character, but that definition is not close enough. Many a man is blameless and noble in character, and no one will pay any attention to him. What really counts in a man is a certain deep earnestness and sincerity, an absence of pose, a profound feeling behind the words. It means that the man is so much in earnest and so deeply impressed by what he says that he is giving no thought as to the impression he is making on those about him. He is not playing to the gallery, he is not speaking some other man's thoughts or words because they have once been applauded—he is simply being himself sincerely. Every man of force has something of this quality. Men like Cromwell or Luther, Washington or Lincoln had it in the superlative degree. They were altogether sincere, while lesser men were only partially so. If you really mean anything so much that you forget all about yourself and everything else while you are saying it, people are sure to pay attention to you.

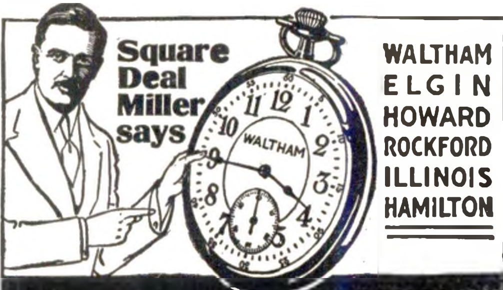
THE same quality with the same results runs all through the confused and varied fabric of life. The painter who is thinking of the popular whim of the moment, who is trying to do a girl's face something like the work of some other man who has won success, will perhaps get his work on calendars, or even on magazine covers, but there are no laurel wreaths awaiting him in the temple of fame, and he is not likely to see any of his things hanging in the Metropolitan Museum. In ship building, in farming, in anything you can think of—even in buying and selling—sincerity and insincerity bring the same rewards. Insincerity often makes the best start, but sincerity finishes a mile ahead.

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

PLEASE don't think we are starting to preach you a New Year's sermon. We simply suggest the topic for any one who feels equal to it. We are more concerned at present with its application to fiction. Sincere *fiction?* Certainly there is such a thing! All good fiction is sincere. A good story is not a string of made-up happenings. Sometimes it is a picture of life as it is. Sometimes—still better to our way of thinking—it is life, seen as it is, indeed, but seen through that rosy illusion that is really the most exalted form of truth, seen with young eyes that have no defects as yet, and can vision the beauty and happiness as well as the harshness and disappointment. A sincere writer is a writer who describes things as they are, who never takes the easy path of describing things he has not seen or truly imagined for himself, who writes his own tale, and never rests his mind and spirit on the work of some other man. When we print a Western story we must feel that the man who has written it knows the West; that he has laid the scene of his story there, not because he thinks Western tales are likely to be popular, but because his story, his own particular story that he wants to tell, is a story of the West, and must have happened there. Such a story is "Waring of Sonoratown," by H. H. Knibbs, which will appear in four numbers of THE POPULAR, starting in the issue out two weeks from to-day. It is the biggest book Knibbs has ever written. The author has punched cattle and lived in the West everywhere from Montana to the Rio Grande. For thirteen years THE POPULAR has had the reputation of publishing the best Western stories written. This story, coming close upon "Shadow Mountain," by Dane Coolidge, means that we are fully living up to that reputation.

IF you are ever at a loss to know why the stories in THE POPULAR seem to mean so much more and taste so much better than the stories you may happen to read in some other magazine, test them by this touchstone of sincerity. It is easy to know that you like one thing better than another, but sometimes it is hard to tell why. Sincerity is what gives real flavor and strength and tang to a narrative. Cullen, who has another story of the navy in the next issue, isn't just trying to make his sailors funny, or pretending that they are. His sailors really are funny, and he lets you find it out for yourself. Stacpoole's amazing narrative, "The White Eye," which also appears in the next number, is so convincing and arresting in its earnestness that we wrote him about it. All the stories, you will find, have something honest and genuine about them.

THE word "sincere," as you probably know without our telling you, was, two thousand years ago, a piece of ancient Roman slang, and meant "without wax." When a Roman millionaire bought marble to finish up his new atrium, it sometimes happened that the quarryman found flaws in the marble, and filled them up with wax to make it look sound. When Cicero and Cæsar signed themselves "yours sincerely" they meant that there was no wax in the goods they were handing out, that it was the solid, marble truth. So do we mean the same thing.



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Infantile Paralysis

made it impossible for this boy to stand, so he crawled on hands and knees. Four and a half months' treatment at the McLain Sanitarium "put him on his feet." Read his parents' letter:

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FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN

The McLain Sanitarium is a thoroughly equipped private Institution devoted exclusively to the treatment of Club Feet, Infantile Paralysis, Spinal Diseases and Deformities, Hip Disease, Wry Neck, etc., especially as found in children and young adults. Our book "Deformities and Paralysis"; also "Book of References," free on request.

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The Silver Tongued Orator of Minnesota, Charles A. Towne, Former United States Senator

Late Member of Congress from New York—Nominated for Vice-President—Recommends Nuxated Iron to All Who Feel the Need of Renewed Energy—Says That Henceforth He Shall Not Be Without It

Probably no remedy has ever met with such phenomenal success as has Nuxated Iron—Over three million people annually are taking it in this country alone; to say nothing of the vast number who are using it in France, England, South America and other countries. It has been highly endorsed and used by Former United States Senators and Members of Congress; physicians who have been connected with well-known hospitals have prescribed and recommended it; Monseigneur Nannini, a prominent Catholic Clergyman, recommends it to all members of the Catholic Church. Former Health Commissioner, Wm. R. Kerr, of Chicago, says it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician; Dr. N. H. Hornstine, for ten years connected with the Department of Public Health and Charities of Philadelphia, says the administration of Nuxated Iron in a number of stubborn cases where other tonics had utterly failed, only served to convince him absolutely of its remarkable and unusual power; Former First Assistant Postmaster General of the United States, C. P. Grandfield strongly endorses and recommends it to the tens of thousands of civil service employees who know his name and signature. Sarah Bernhardt—"the Divine Sarah," the world's most noted actress—has ordered a large quantity sent to the French soldiers to help give them strength, power and endurance.

The famous "Cyclone" Davis, Member of the 64th United States Congress, says the effect of Nuxated Iron on him was almost magical, that after taking it, nothing seemed to tire him out no matter how strenuous it might be. Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago, and former House Surgeon Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago, says Nuxated Iron has proven through his own tests of it to excel any preparation he has ever used for creating red blood, building up the nerves, strengthening the muscles and correcting digestive disorders.

Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author, says that in his recent talks to physicians on the grave and serious consequences of iron deficiency in the blood of American women he has strongly emphasized the fact that doctors should prescribe more organic iron — Nuxated Iron — for their weak, run-down, nervous, haggard-looking patients. Ty Cobb, the greatest baseball batter of all time, took it to help give him renewed energy and great staying power. No matter what anybody says, you could not, at this day, get such prominent men to endorse a remedy that has no value — doctors, lawyers, politicians, athletes—a great array.

What Senator Towne Says:

"As a member of Congress from New York, as a member of Congress and Senator from Minnesota, as participant in political campaigns and candidate for Vice-President, my nervous energy and reserve force were tremendously drawn upon. That I survived these trials and came into advanced middle life with the elasticity and strength of a boy is unquestionably due to the rigorous attention I have paid to the proper care of my body. Recently I have been taking Nuxated Iron and have found it of the greatest benefit as a tonic and regulative. Henceforth I shall not be without it. I am in a position to testify for the advantage of others to the remarkable and immediate helpfulness of this remedy, and I unhesitatingly recommend Nuxated Iron to all who feel the need of renewed energy and the regularity of bodily functions."

Minnesota's Man of Mark

Former United States Senator Charles A. Towne, graduated from the University of Michigan, twice elected member of the United States Congress, served in the United States Senate, nominated for Vice-President, takes Nuxated Iron; now recommends it to all who feel the need of renewed energy.

Dr. E. Saner, a Boston Physician who has studied both in this country and great European Medical Institutions, said: "Nuxated Iron is a wonderful remedy. Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of twenty, and full of vigor, vim and vitality; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health; at 46 he was careworn and nearly all in—now at 50, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth. If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak and run-down instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants, and alcoholic beverages, I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases, and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. The real, true cause which started their disease was nothing more or less than a weakened condition brought on by a lack of iron in the blood. Thousands of people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it."

If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work, or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which has been used by Former United States Senator Towne with such surprising results, and which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron, that they offer to forfeit $100 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under sixty who lacks iron and increase their strength 100% or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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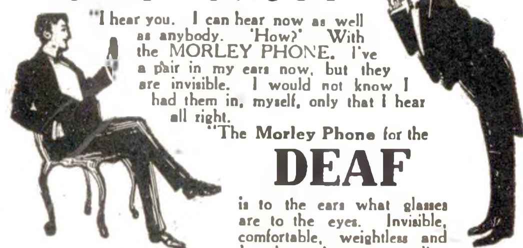

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LePAGE'S GLUE

HANDY TUBES

A HOUSEHOLD NECESSITY

When Jack London Came to Our Home

NANCE and I were tired of ordinary fiction. The war had awakened us to realities. No namby-pamby fiction could satisfy us. We wanted *life*.

I read the Metropolitan's announcement that they would give **The Greatest Works of Jack London** free to the man or woman who sent in their subscriptions under certain easy conditions.

It seemed worth taking a chance so I cut out the coupon and mailed it. The books came promptly. Nance wanted a good love story to read that evening, so she took "Martin Eden." I wanted a real man story, so I took "The Sea-Wolf."

We both got overflowing measure. It was just as if Jack London was sitting before us, telling us of his adventures on the long trail.

My book was full of the buccaneer spirit; the salt air of the sea blew through it; I saw Wolf Larsen shoot four of his crew; lure husbands and wives aboard his ship and then maroon the men while he sailed off with the women. I saw a beautiful girl rescued from the Sea-Wolf's clutches by the young American who through long months of contact with the brute had become his match.

Nance had the same experience. The story of the uncouth young sailor with the spark of genius in his breast, who by sheer force of will achieved literary success and won the love of a spoiled darling of society, held Nance fascinated. When we closed the books it was midnight.

The next evening we read "Love of Life" and "The Call of the Wild" and these were just as gripping. Jack London's dauntless spirit was with us as we read—for he had put his life—his roving, adventurous, devil-may-care spirit into these books.

Nance says—and I second it—that of all the bargains I have secured, I never got one that was less a drain on my purse or that brought such rich returns. We swear by Jack London, and by the Metropolitan that brought him to our home.

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