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Vol. LIV. No. 4

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November 7, 1919

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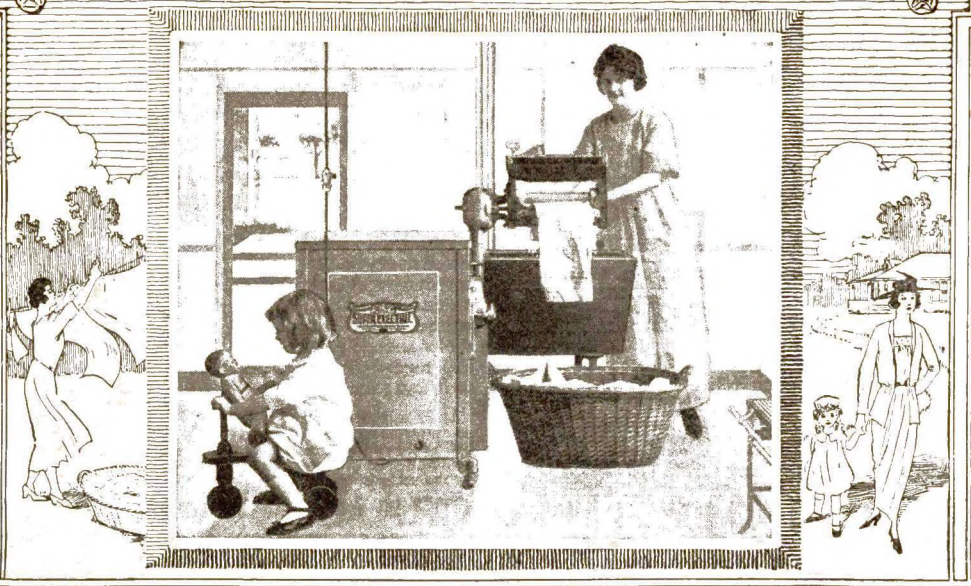

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LIV. NOVEMBER 7, 1919. No. 4.

Treasure of Trebizond

By Francis Metcalfe

Author of "The Treasure of the Romanoffs," Etc.

Again Metcalfe takes us to the East for a story of adventure amid surroundings of fascinating interest. Trebizond is a long way from New York, and the type of courage required for the expedition undertaken by Celeste la Rue, the charming Creole girl, is that which few men possess. But this is the age of women, and we all know that they are daily performing tasks that their grandmothers would have fainted at, and doing so with a smile. This is a Lost Legion story that is different from anything which has gone before. Of course, there are men in it, and Celeste does not cease to be a real woman for all her courage.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THERE were few businesses which were not influenced either directly or remotely by the Great War. To some it brought quick disaster, to others expansion and prosperity; to be followed in turn by curtailment and shrinkage almost overnight when the armistice brought a cessation of hostilities. But through the troubled war time and the equally troubled days of uncertainty and readjustment following the unlooked-for collapse of the Teutonic war machine, the peculiar business activities of Mr. Jabez Cooper knew no interruption and the profit accruing therefrom enabled that eminent capitalist to subscribe liberally to successive Liberty Loans and to give up gracefully to the social highwaymen and, more especially, highwaywomen, who invaded his business sanctum and held him up at the point of a fountain pen for donations to the innumerable and insatiable war charities.

In fact, Mr. Cooper's business flourished so vigorously that employees capable of carrying it on were at a premium, and he was reluctantly obliged to defer serious consideration of several tempting and probably profitable propositions submitted to him for lack of agents possessing the peculiar qualifications which he demanded. The little restaurant presided over by Madame Hortense, in periods of depression in the adventure market the unofficial headquarters of his employees waiting for something to turn up was practically deserted; for agents reporting at the conclusion of one mysterious mission invariably found another ready and waiting and they were not of the kidney to take holidays and rest when the allurement of adventure offered.

Nor was Mr. Cooper the kind of a business man to let a thing which looked like an exceptionally good bet get away from him simply for the immediate lack of assistance to pull it off; for he was distinctly an optimist of the practical kind who made dreams come true and with the faculty of discovering and extracting profit from the silver linings of what appeared to be only dark nebulous masses of trouble to less keen and imaginative vision. Therefore, although not a single one of his adventurous employees was at the moment available, he listened attentively and sympathetically to the proposition made to him by a swarthy, shrewd-faced little foreigner who looked so much like an itinerent Armenian peddler that he had been refused entrance to the of-

fices of less imaginative and more conservative capitalists. For reasons best known to himself this gentleman had refused to confide his real name or the nature of his business to slangy office boys, supercilious and pompadoured stenographers, or square-jawed private policemen who guarded the portals of the sanctums of ordinary financial magnates.

But, while Mr. Cooper was distinctly in the magnate class—as certified to by the ratings of the commercial agencies and the deferential attitude of bankers whom he honored with his accounts—he was by no means ordinary; for he possessed a peculiar imaginative faculty which enabled him to perceive possibilities of profit in projects which more prosaic plutocrats promptly dismissed as fanciful financial chimeras. No proposition which dealt in big figures was too bizarre to receive his consideration and no applicant for an interview who was not obviously a maniac or a trifler was turned from his office door unheard. Therefore, the little foreigner who had been admitted after a slight delay in the outer office and who introduced himself to the corpulent capitalist as the Pasha Arkani Tartatanyi, was greeted with Mr. Cooper's characteristic crisp and businesslike courtesy.

"Mr. Cooper, I have called in the hope that I could enlist your services in a little venture in Turkey," he explained in a low voice after the secretary who introduced him had left them alone. Mr. Cooper regarded him with a coldly speculative eye.

"It is perfectly simple to enlist my services in a venture in any old place—if I am convinced that there is enough in it for me," he said encouragingly, "but I serve notice right here that I have already subscribed my limit to the Armenian Relief, the Fund to Furnish Flea Powder to Stamboul Pariah Pups, and the Society to Promote Remarriage of the Grass Widows of Abdul Hamid." His visitor denied intention of any such appeal with an eloquent wave of his slender, brown hands.

"My dear sir, the activities of the bashi-bazouks under orders from Berlin and Constantinople have practically obviated the necessity for Armenian relief by annihilating the Armenians, and most of the pariah dogs which formerly scratched themselves in the Stamboul sunshine have been eaten by the inhabitants during the four years of blockade. The surplus wives of Abdul Hamid, having been carefully selected and tenderly cared for, were rapidly assimilated and have disappeared; I confess that a half dozen of them are in my own harem," he answered quickly. "This is business, not charity, and there will assuredly be something tempting in it for you if you can assist me to recover my fortune."

"Shoot!" directed Mr. Cooper genially as he tilted back his chair and clasped his fingers across a prominently rounded waistcoat. "Just bear in mind that when I refer to there being something in it for me I am speaking of money—real money."

"Or something which can quickly be turned into real money," suggested Tartatanyi with a twinkle in his shrewd eyes. "It is there, Mr. Cooper, oodles of it, for I got it while the getting was good, and, believe me, I was some little getter. Expert as the Germans have been in looting and exacting tribute from my unfortunate country, which they have exploited more as a conquered territory than the possession of an ally, they have barely touched the surface. In fact, in the so expressive language of this metropolis, a third-rate deputy assistant Turkish tax gatherer could send the whole Hun outfit to night school to learn how to get the kale. The Osmanli are adepts as collectors and particularly canny in concealing their treasure. I speak advisedly; for under Abdul Hamid I administered the finances of Trebizond, Erzerum, Van, and Mozul, and demonstrated that those provinces were capable of yielding twice as much revenue as had been accounted for by the pasha who preceded me as governor."

"That must have gratified Abdul Hamid," suggested Mr. Cooper, his thumbs twirling about each other betraying that his interest was aroused. There was a resonant quality about "Trebizond" and "Erzerum" as Tartatanyi pronounced them which suggested the fabled riches of the Orient.

"It undoubtedly would have interested him greatly—if I had been foolish enough to let him suspect it," replied the pasha dryly. "You may not be aware of the Turkish method of raising revenue, Mr. Cooper. Of course, there is the direct revenue from the customs, the tobacco monopoly, and so forth, which goes for the ordinary government expenses. Then there are the fixed taxes on land and business, acknowledged concessions, and so on, which are carefully accounted for and paid into the imperial

treasury to meet interest charges on the foreign debt. But, being a very much-married man with many demands upon him, the sultan always finds it necessary to have additional funds for domestic purposes. Accordingly, each pasha appointed as viceroy or governor of a province is expected to raise a specified amount for the private imperial purse by procedure which is technically illegal, but justified by custom from time immemorial. That amount is carefully estimated in Constantinople, and the pasha who does not make good is apt to receive a little packet from the sultan. It contains a silken bowstring and is delivered by a messenger who sees that it is properly applied, and carries the head of the pasha in a bag back to headquarters to prove it."

"And I take it that the specified amount is figured as about all the traffic will bear?" suggested Mr. Cooper, who was more interested in the financial than the mortuary details.

"Yes—and then some," agreed Tartatanyi. "But, as I demonstrated, a really efficient man on the ground can see chances which are not visible from the capital. The pashas are entitled to a percentage of their collections; but the clique at the capital is so suspicious that it is almost as fatal to exceed the estimate as to fall below it. It immediately causes conjecture and attracts attention. Therefore, while, by stimulating the secret traffic in slaves and introducing new methods in handling the Armenian usurers, I more than doubled the former receipts, I was careful to remit only the customary tribute to Constantinople."

"And pocketed the balance," suggested Mr. Cooper. The Oriental shook his head and smiled ruefully.

"No, unfortunately; I buried it," he said. "Of course, although as pasha and viceroy I was absolutely supreme in those provinces and empowered to administer the high justice, the middle, and the low, I was never free from the unofficial observation of the Constantinople clique; for—to paraphrase one of your English classics—in Turkey:

> "Little spies have little spies,
> With littler spies to spite 'em.
> These littler spies have littler spies,
> And so, *ad infinitum!*

"You will understand that the slightest indication of increased and unusual prosperity on my part would have been at once reported to the sultan, and, as there was constant intrigue to obtain these pashaliks, I should have lost my office and probably my head as well. Therefore, I concealed the wealth which I accumulated; storing it away in a safe place against the time when I should voluntarily retire with my anatomy intact. As I occupied the post for some six years, my savings amounted to a very large sum. In fact, I had enough and was about to resign when the Young Turks deposed Abdul Hamid and appointed a Greek renegade as my successor. May the curse of Allah fall on the dog of an unbeliever; for he took over the office so unexpectedly that I had barely time to embark on a Russian cruiser which was lying in the harbor! In spite of my precaution, some of the Young Turks must have suspected that I had been, so to speak, thrifty; for they had given him precise instructions to shake me down."

"Well?" prompted Mr. Cooper interrogatively as the Oriental paused and the simple exclamation caused the ex-governor of Trebizond to start violently in his chair.

"No, by the beard of the Prophet, not there!" he protested vehemently and then, seeing the perplexed expression on the capitalist's face, he laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Excuse me; your peculiar choice of a word startled me," he continued. "I might explain that in the East the wells are favorite hiding places for savings, and the one in the courtyard of the old palace was the first place my successor started to explore. In fact, it was while he was pursuing that investigation that I made my get-away. The fortune I had accumulated was not there; but I had strong reason to suspect that he would find something which might peeve him; for a man whom I had recognized as one of Enver Pasha's cleverest spies had disappeared mysteriously the previous night and in the morning his fez had been found lying in a pool of blood on the pavement near the well. He was, I believe, closely related to the new pasha, and fearing, if his remains with my dagger between his shoulder blades should be discovered in the well I might be suspected of knowing something of his death, I deemed it wise to go, for the methods of extracting information from suspected prisoners in Trebizond are extremely painful, and I preferred to be absent during the investigation."

"And you have not returned there since?"

asked Mr. Cooper with a nod of comprehension.

"Oh, yes; but strictly incognito," answered Tartatanyi. "When the Russians under the Grand Duke Nicholas took the city I ventured back; for Zantopolis Pasha, my successor, was, of course, without power to order me bastinadoed or boiled in oil. But, unfortunately, the journey took so much time that when I finally arrived the Bolsheviki were in control and were using the knout instead of the bastinado to induce the inhabitants to contribute and were even more covetous than the Turks had been. I was able only to satisfy myself that my fortune was still safe; I dared not risk uncovering it, as there was no one I could trust to assist me in smuggling it out of the city. For that reason I have come to you, my dear sir; I am quite willing to pay a liberal percentage on everything recovered. Fortunately, considering the value, the bulk is small; for I invested the proceeds in precious stones; principally diamonds and rubies, as the gold was too bulky to be concealed and too heavy to be transported without exciting suspicion."

Mr. Cooper's thumbs revolved about each other with lightning rapidity. "About how much, did you say?" he asked eagerly.

"I didn't say; but here is a pretty complete inventory of the stones," replied the pasha drawing a packet of papers from his pocket. "The descriptions and weights are accurate; but, as diamonds have advanced materially in price since the estimates were made, the total is considerably below the present market value." Mr. Cooper's eyes glistened and he breathed hard as he noted the grand total and the Oriental watched him narrowly.

"Now, as to the percentage," he began, taking it for granted that the capitalist would assist him; but Mr. Cooper cut him short with a gesture and picked up a pencil. The lead was soft and the figures he made on his desk blotter stood out with disconcerting clearness; for they were: 50-50.

Tartatanyi shook his head. "Pardon me; but you fail to understand that this is a perfectly simple business matter; not a speculation!" he protested. "It is only necessary to send some one to transport——"

"Pardon *me;* there was one little detail I forgot to mention," interrupted Mr. Cooper blandly. "Of course, I should require an advance payment as a guaranty of good faith and to cover preliminary expenses. I am willing to gamble on the rest of it—on this basis."

He indicated the penciled figures with a pudgy finger, and there was a disconcerting finality in his matter-of-fact tone which convinced the Oriental that chaffering would be useless. He squirmed; as many a poor wretch had wriggled under his methods of enforcing tribute in the good old days of Abdul Hamid; but he realized that Mr. Cooper would be as insusceptible to conviction by argument as he had been deaf to appeals for mercy. Furthermore, the capitalist glanced significantly and a trifle impatiently at his watch and his hand wandered toward a pile of papers on his desk; unfinished business which evidently required his attention.

"Mr. Cooper, your terms seem absolutely unreasonable and exhorbitant; but time passes and I am not getting younger, so I suppose that I shall have to take my medicine," he said reluctantly. "As to the proposed preliminary payment, I would suggest, however, that I do the paying as we go. Being an experienced traveler and knowing the people with whom we shall have to deal, I can save——"

"I'm afraid you didn't get me!" said Mr. Cooper curtly. "I meant that the preliminary expenses should be paid right here—and then you can retire from the game until the end of the ninth inning when we shall make an even split of the box receipts in this office. Just give me full directions as to where the stuff may be found and that is all that is necessary on your part."

"But, my dear sir, it would be impossible for any one but myself to locate and obtain that treasure!" persisted Tartatanyi. "I am counting upon you to get it out of Trebizond after I have dug it up; but I am the only living man who would be able to reach the hiding place. You must understand that in Turkey the zenana—the part of an establishment occupied by the women of the harem—is absolutely sacred and inviolable; that is the real basis of all Moslem power. It is perfectly legal to imprison, torture, or execute a man and to confiscate all of his possessions; but, so long as he is alive, the privacy of his harem is never violated. As I told you, I was obliged to leave suddenly to save my skin; had I been caught and killed my palace would, of course, have been taken over and

my harem distributed; but, so long as I live, even that dog of a Greek does not dare to cross the threshold of that part of my former establishment still guarded by my faithful eunuchs. Therefore, it would be absolutely impossible for any one but myself to get the jewels which are concealed there; the scimitars of my black retainers would cut an intruder to pieces."

For just a moment Mr. Cooper was nonplused. In his large business experience he had financed so many ventures in Moslem countries that he was thoroughly aware of the sanctity of the harem; but experience had taught him that there was no obstacle which could not be overcome and the memory of that list of jewels was very vivid. His code of business ethics was peculiarly his own; but he observed it rigidly. First, although he was widely and favorably known as a philanthropist, he never mixed charity with business. No element of danger, hardship, or strenuous endeavor ever deterred him from undertaking a thing where the prospective reward for success seemed commensurate with the risk; but his own share of the latter was invariably assumed by a proxy; some adventurous spirit who considered flirting with death as part of the day's work and walked into it with his eyes open; for, while he evaded it personally, Mr. Cooper never minimized the prospect of peril to his agent. It was also an invariable rule that in any matter confided to him he became an absolute dictator after the preliminaries were arranged; although he was wise enough, after supplying all possible information and ample sinews of war, to leave the plan of campaign and the details of execution to the selected agent. Keeping his own hands off, he insisted rigorously that other interested parties should do the same, and, even had that not been his ordinary procedure, he would never have trusted this crafty Oriental—a self-confessed swindler and assassin—out of his sight, and he would assuredly refuse to expose one of his Legionaries to his treachery.

"Tartatanyi Pasha, I don't believe you would have come here unless you were plumb up against it, nor without a definite idea that I could help you out," he said quietly but firmly. "Now you have stated the proposition in a general way, and, if I accept it—why, you should worry about how I deliver the goods. I will accept it; but only on my own terms; the financial ones I have stated; as for the rest, you will supply me with the necessary information, maps, and diagrams, a full power of attorney executed in blank, and such tips as you may consider valuable. If the loot is still there, I'll get it and we'll split it, fifty-fifty, right here." He had scribbled a rough draft of an agreement as he spoke.

"But, my dear sir, you don't understand!" protested Tartatanyi desperately and Mr. Cooper frowned as he pushed the paper toward him.

"You will sign right on this line—or get out!" he said grimly, for he was irritable because for the moment he could think of no available agent. "That will do for a starter, and I will have my secretary put it in form while I am having the check which you will make out for the first payment certified." And as Tartatanyi reluctantly affixed his name with a trembling hand to the document, Mr. Cooper touched a push button on his desk. The summons was promptly answered by a very trim and attractive young woman. The eyes of the Oriental, an expert judge of feminine pulchritude, appraised her admiringly as she walked gracefully toward the desk and the expression of perplexity vanished from Mr. Cooper's face as he looked at her. It was not her beauty which appealed to him; but he suddenly realized that an agent of her sex would be in no danger from the scimitars of the black guardians of Arkani Tartatanyi Pasha's harem.

CHAPTER II.

Celeste la Rue was a typical product of the great American melting pot. A daughter of an old Creole family in which the bluest blood of Andalusia and France was but slightly tinctured with that of an Irish grandmother, she had inherited the best from all of her mixed ancestry. In her girlhood she had been surrounded with luxury and given every advantage of education, but the bursting of a levee had brought sudden financial disaster to her family, the angry flood water of the Mississippi destroying the fine old colonial mansion which had sheltered it for generations and converting the thousands of fertile acres of the plantation into an oozy and unproductive swamp. Then she had found employment in Mr. Cooper's office and in that new and strange environment a much more liberal education than

she had received in the most select schools and exclusive convents. An early duty had been the classifying and indexing of the archives, jealously guarded in his private vault and in them she had found more of romance than in the fiction of Alexander Dumas or Jules Verne, for they were living documents, the true and veracious chronicles of that strange Lost Legion of adventurous spirits who had carried the name and fame of their patron, Jabez Cooper, to the farthest "back of beyond."

Perhaps the perusal of those fascinating documents and the personal acquaintance with the joyously reckless but thoroughly competent men who had so much to do with the making of history without appearing in its pages aroused in her that dormant spirit of adventure inherited from the Spanish conquistadores and the French marquis who had accompanied De Bienville to the New World when the banner with the golden fleur-de-lis waved over Louisiana. At any rate, she listened eagerly to Mr. Cooper's suggestion that it might be possible for her to act as his agent in the matter of rescuing from Trebizond the treasure which Tartatanyi Pasha had been obliged to abandon in his hurried flight.

It was most unusual for the capitalist to employ women in his peculiar ventures, but once before she had demonstrated her cleverness in a minor part, assisting in camouflaging the secret and perilous work of others, and without the slightest hesitation she jumped at the opportunity to assume the stellar rôle in the new venture. When he proposed it she had not the remotest idea of where Trebizond was located, and, perhaps fortunately, but small conception of the difficulties a woman would encounter in gaining freedom of action in a Moslem community; but she was possessed of supreme self-confidence and an abiding faith in her ability to look out for herself in any circumstances.

There was, too, an element of pique which gave added zest to the prospective adventure, for a certain young British officer had for some time argued strenuously that she was unfitted to battle with the world without his protection and she welcomed the chance to demonstrate that she was quite capable of paddling her own canoe, even in the most troubled waters.

Her first intimation of the attitude of Mohammedan men toward a young woman beautiful and attractive enough to qualify as a houri came in the preliminary interviews with Tartatanyi Pasha in New York. Without betraying that she was the agent selected for the mission Mr. Cooper had requested the Oriental to supply her with all information which might be of use in accomplishing it, and, not suspecting that she was adroitly pumping him for her own personal information, Tartatanyi Pasha had eagerly consented. In fact, he went far beyond, skillfully weaving into his recital of dry and prosaic details a considerable amount of roseate fiction concerning the delights of polygamy and harem life and his own most desirable and unusual attributes as a husband. It was not until she had obtained what she believed to be the last scrap of real and valuable information that she refused to listen further to the romance and emphasized her refusal by soundly boxing his ears when he attempted to follow a flood of fervid protestations of love with an embrace. There was something in the cold-blooded, dispassionate, and businesslike manner with which she rocked his head by alternate right and left-handed swings which quickly convinced the experienced amorist—who in the harem which he ruled had brought more than one coyly rebellious beauty to terms—that the rejection of his advances was final, but Miss la Rue only laughed at his scowling face and the blaze of anger in his eyes.

"You see, pasha, I have had the advantage of studying a lot of inside history in this office—and much of it had to do with the inside of harems," she explained. "I quite realize the charms of luxurious surroundings, tinkling fountains, perfumed baths, glittering jewels, attendant slaves, unlimited bonbons and all that side of it; but you have forgotten to mention the tyrannical eunuchs, the bastinado, the bowstring, and midnight excursions to the Bosporous in a sack."

"You might learn enough of those details in short order, if you were an inmate of my harem!" he retorted angrily as he caressed his tingling ears. "What you have read and heard is, of course, exaggerated and imaginative; for no man save the master enters a harem and comes out alive to tell its secrets."

"Then, if you have given me the facts concerning the hiding place of the treasure, there would be small chance of one of the Legionaries getting it out of your little dove-

cot in Trebizond?" she said and Tartatanyi quickly assented.

"Not a chance in the world, which is just what I tried to tell your fat, pig-headed employer; but he wouldn't listen to me!" he exclaimed. "Having in a moment of weakness parted with most of my ready money to meet the exorbitant advance payment which he demanded, I am practically helpless; but he is crazy if he thinks his agent can succeed without me on the ground to assist. See here, my dear——"

"My real name is La Rue; *Miss* la Rue!" she interrupted, and the pasha quickly jerked his head back out of reach as he noted a suggestive accompanying movement of her hands.

"Oh, very well—it was simply force of habit; for I am naturally of an affectionate disposition!" he protested nervously. "I was about to propose that you use your influence—and from experience I know that a beautiful young woman can do about what she pleases with an elderly fat man—to induce Mr. Cooper to change that decision. I should make it well worth your while; say enough diamonds, rubies, and emeralds for a wonderful tiara or a magnificent bracelet; or, if you prefer——"

"Your experience apparently has not been with men of the class of Jabez Cooper, Esquire, nor with women like Miss Celeste la Rue!" she snapped out. "Nothing doing in that line, pasha; absolutely nothing doing! Even if I could be bribed, my effort would be wasted; for Mr. Cooper has already selected his agent and he never changes his decision. In fact, after making his selection he always dismisses the entire matter from his mind until his employee hands in the final report. He pays generously, but he does not pay and play both."

"But *you* know the agent he has selected?" asked the Oriental, and there was a tantalizing smile on her lips as she nodded assent.

"Naturally, as I enjoy my employer's complete confidence, I am acquainted with all of his employees," she answered truthfully enough. "This especial one I happen to know particularly well." The pasha's eyes gleamed hopefully.

"If I could get into communication with him before he sets out, I might be able to convince him——"

"Quite impossible, pasha, unless Mr. Cooper chooses to introduce you and as he is busy considering a proposal to find useful and remunerative occupation for the Amalgamated Association of ex-Czars, Emperors, Kings, Princes, Princelings, and Grand Dukes of the Slavic and Teutonic Nations, he has given orders that he is not to be disturbed," interrupted Miss la Rue. The pasha stroked his long, silken beard, causing a magnificent diamond on his finger to sparkle brilliantly in a ray of sunshine.

"Is there any reason why you should not describe him to me?" he asked, glancing significantly from the ring to her own taper fingers which were bare of adornment. "Naturally, I am interested in knowing something of the man to whom my fortune is intrusted, even if I am allowed no voice in the selection."

She hesitated for a moment, studying him intently as he half drew the ring from his finger. She realized that the man was a true Oriental, congenitally incapable of playing the game according to Occidental standards. He valued a skillful and convincing lie as a masterpiece, far above the truth which any fool could tell; it was a tenet of his faith that every man had his price. Without suggestion from her he had deceived himself in jumping at the conclusion that Mr. Cooper had selected a masculine agent and she was quick to realize the advantage it would be to her to foster and strengthen that delusion. It was a white lie which would do harm to nobody and might materially contribute to her safety and, in any case, she had small compunction in deceiving the man who had brazenly attempted to bribe her to betray her employer.

"It is difficult to give a convincing word picture of a human being; but I shall try," she said finally, her eyes avoiding his and looking at a blank space on the wall as if she were visualizing her subject to aid in her description. "He is really a charming fellow, although he is rather obstinate and terribly persistent. I should say he was the ideal height for a man, an even six feet, with broad shoulders and narrow hips; rather short-bodied and with long legs, which makes him very graceful and a natural dancer. He carries himself well, rides a horse as if he were born in the saddle, and is very good at all manly sports. I am told that he plays polo, golf, and tennis remarkably well, and that he is a very good shot with rifle, shotgun, and revolver, as well as a skillful swordsman. His head is small and very

well set on his shoulders and covered with the dearest crisp, dark-brown, wavy hair which would be curly if he did not keep it so closely cut. He has the narrow, well-shaped hands and feet of the aristocrat and dresses so perfectly that no one is ever conscious of his clothes. His eyes are brown and wonderfully expressive—they seem to get black when he is angry; but they are naturally soft and sympathetic. It would be difficult to classify him as either a blond or a brunet; his skin is, of course, browned by the sun; for he is essentially an out-of-doors man; but it is naturally soft and clear and suggests peaches and cream. He is clean-shaven, except for a perfectly adorable little mustache; in a word, he is everything which one would expect an English officer and a gentleman to be."

Tartatanyi Pasha watched her closely as she spoke and there was a crafty expression in his beady eyes when she finished and sat quietly, dreamily staring at the blank space on the wall and for the moment forgetful of his presence and everything but the vision she had conjured there.

"My de—I mean, Miss la Rue," he said, correcting himself hastily as the sound of his voice brought her back to reality with a start. "I think that you will agree with me that it is to our mutual interest that you should induce Mr. Cooper to change his decision and send a—er—let us say, less prepossessing person than the one you have described on a mission of this delicacy. I can assure you that he is not at all the figure of a man I care to have messing about in the precincts of my harem and I am quite sure that you don't want him there."

"I'm afraid I don't get you, pasha," she answered dryly. "From what you have told me, it seems absolutely necessary for Mr. Cooper's agent to go there if the jewels are to be recovered."

"Certainly; but it is not necessary that that agent should be such an Adonis as you have faithfully described to succeed—and it increases the risk for everybody concerned," persisted Tartatanyi. "Should he escape the vigilance of Rustem, the chief of my eunuchs, and the scimitars of his half dozen assistants—which I very much doubt his being able to do—he would be apt to play the very deuce with my domestic happiness."

"Pasha, Mr. Cooper's legionaries are accustomed to taking chances and winning with long odds against them," retorted Miss la Rue. "I don't think the danger from Rustem and his fellow highbinders would worry this one in the least, and, take it from me, you had better get word to your black watchdog of the door of felicity to watch his step and to stop, look, and listen; for he is the one who will be in danger if he starts anything." Tartatanyi shook his head and smiled synically.

"My dear—that is to say, Miss la Rue—there are other dangers," he said regarding her pretty face with a look which bordered on a leer. "As pasha of four provinces I had rather unusual privileges of choice in selecting the inmates of my harem, for the slave dealers imported the very choicest of their wares through Trebizond and I was reputed to be a connoisseur of feminine beauty. Granting—although I do not believe it is possible—that Mr. Cooper's legionary should succeed in escaping the danger from the eunuchs and gaining admittance to the harem, I do not believe that you would care to expose the man you love to the softer, but none the less real danger from the languishing, laughing, mischievous, challenging glances of the largest collection of the most beautiful women in the Turkish Empire."

"Why, you impudent old reprobate; how dare you even insinuate that I was describing the man I love?" exclaimed Miss la Rue furiously. "Just for that I'll tell you that the whole thing was a——" She had intended to say "humbug," but she broke off suddenly; her face which had been white with anger turning scarlet as she noticed the mockery in his crafty eyes. Yes, she had started with the intention of humbugging him with a purely fanciful description of an imaginary person; but she realized that she had unconsciously described a very real one. Just such a one as she would have herself selected for a mission which required bravery and chivalry of the highest type and the vision which her subconscious mind had projected on the blank wall was no figment of the imagination; but a true and perfect likeness of the Honorable Reginald Kent-Irwin, captain in H. M. Coldstream Guards, detailed as British intelligence officer to service in the United States, as he appeared to her eyes. But still she could not let the Oriental's assertion that she loved him go unchallenged—for at least a half dozen times she had assured Kent-Irwin himself that she did not, at any rate, not well enough

to induce her to desert her native country and sacrifice the freedom of an American girl to become a staid British matron and preside over his manor house. The blush gradually faded from her cheeks but, while Tartatanyi Pasha discreetly moved his chair beyond striking distance, there was a mocking smile of incredulity on his lips as he listened to her indignant and forcible denials.

"Peaches-and-cream complexion and the most adorable little mustache—just the kind to give savor to a kiss, as salt does to an egg, as the French say!" he exclaimed mockingly. "Believe me, Miss la Rue, the Mesdames Tartatanyi also have eyes in their heads—and remarkably pretty and enticing ones, too! No, it is decidedly no more to your interest to expose him to temptation than it is to mine to permit the privacy of my carefully guarded harem to be violated by such a lady killer. You will, if you are wise, accept my warning and suggestions." He drew the ring from his finger and held it out to her. "Just convince Mr. Cooper that it would be wiser to let me accompany his agent," he continued pleadingly. "Then I could remove the treasure from its hiding place in the harem and it would only be necessary for him to join me and assist me in smuggling it out of Trebizond and across the frontier." Miss la Rue regained her equanimity as he spoke and when he finished looked contemptuously from his face to the sparkling diamond which he offered to her as the price of compliance.

"Put that piece of glass away!" she said sternly. "Then I would suggest that you go out of here and stay out. You'll get rich quicker if you attend to your own business and let Mr. Cooper attend to his and let me tell you this: if anything I might say could influence Mr. Cooper to reconsider his selection, I could not be bribed, cajoled, or frightened into saying a word. Now, unless you have some other real, honest-to-goodness information which might be useful to his agent, you can toddle along and devote your undivided attention to the cigarette business which I understand you have established in Washington Street."

A flush came to the Oriental's dark face. As a matter of fact he had capitalized his expert knowledge of blending and adulterating Turkish tobacco to tide over a threatened period of financial stringency. By personal solicitation he had built up a profitable clientele of customers who regularly purchased his wares in thousand lots; standing for a very considerable proportion of alfalfa in the contents because of the artistic individual monograms on the papers; but he did not parade his trade connection and carried on his business under his first name. He had been especially careful to make no mention of it in Mr. Cooper's office, and it startled and embarrassed him to have the capitalist's private secretary betray knowledge of it. Rapidly in his own mind he reviewed his list of customers to try to identify a possible source of information and suddenly a gleam of triumph came to his eyes; for among them there was one—an English officer—whom Miss la Rue's verbal description fitted to a dot. And, furthermore, that same customer had only yesterday given him a large order, stipulating quick delivery as his presence in the United States being no longer required, owing to the suspension of hostilities, he was expecting an order of transfer at an early date.

The whole thing fitted together perfectly and, as Miss la Rue was very obviously disinclined to continue the interview further, Tartatanyi Pasha departed, congratulating himself that he had obtained the information he desired without sacrificing the diamond which still sparkled on his finger; a jewel so valuable that it could at any time be converted into sufficient cash to finance his own return to Trebizond. And as Miss la Rue turned to put some routine office matters in order preparatory to her own imminent departure, the Turk visited his cigarette factory in the Armenian quarter, and, collecting a number of gaudily labeled boxes, drove to make in person the first delivery of Captain Kent-Irwin's order.

CHAPTER III.

Captain Kent-Irwin was just finishing the clearing out of his desk when the Turk was ushered into his office, and, after making due allowance for feminine enthusiasm, Tartatanyi Pasha was struck with the fidelity of Miss la Rue's verbal description. Although he was in mufti, the Englishman was obviously as much of the soldier type as his batman, the soldier servant in the khaki field uniform of the Coldstreams who was standing at rigid attention as he listened to the officer's instructions.

"Tell Oscar to reserve the usual table for me and to be sure to put two cherries in

the lady's cocktail," he continued after acknowledging the Turk's obsequious greeting with a perfunctory nod. "Then hop around and direct the florist chap to substitute orchids for the usual violets and lilies of the valley. Have my car call for me at the club at seven; I think that's all, Tyler." The soldier saluted, turned on his heel, and left the room and Kent-Irwin turned to his visitor.

"My word, Arkani; blessed if I don't believe you're a blooming fraud!" he said smiling as he saw the package. "Never knew an Oriental to be on time before and you're ahead of schedule. You told me you couldn't possibly make delivery before tomorrow morning."

"No more I can—not of the full order—but here are a thousand," answered the pasha as he placed them on the desk. "I know how uncertain the movements of officers are and, as these were ready, I thought I would deliver them, so that you would have something to go on with if your orders were changed."

"You must be a mind reader—or have inside information," grumbled Kent-Irwin glancing irritably at a yellow cablegram on his desk. "I expected to have at least a week to finish up here; but the war office pulled me up short with a wire and I'm sailing to-morrow. You'll have to look sharp with the rest of the order; for I shall need 'em. Wouldn't matter if it were a 'blighty' order; but when I'm sent to a hole like——" He stopped suddenly, for Tartatanyi had unwisely permitted his eyes to betray a very eager interest. "By Jove, the armistice has made things so peaceful about here that I'd almost forgotten we are still technically at war and that you are officially an enemy," he continued, grinning. "I almost let the cat out of the bag." Tartatanyi's answering smile was crafty and insinuating.

"Captain, it would have done no harm and might even have been helpful if you had permitted pussy to escape," he said. "In fact, I believe that I could make things easier for you where you are going. I am only officially an enemy, for in reality the war is finished and I am interested, as we all are, only in the salvage. My intimate knowledge of the Near East would be of great value to you in the mission you are about——"

"Hold on there; what makes you think I am ordered to the East?" interrupted Kent-Irwin suspiciously, assuring himself that the cablegram was lying face downward on the desk. Tartatanyi shrugged his shoulders as the Englishman picked up the yellow paper and slipped it in his pocket.

"Perhaps I am a mind reader; perhaps I am playing inside information; at any rate, I'll wager that my guess isn't far out, captain," he replied. "But it is the fact which is important and, as I said, I could really be of tremendous service to you. For reasons which you can perhaps imagine, I am extremely anxious to visit Trebizond. There are difficulties about a passport which you could oyercome with a word, and it would be well worth your while to take me with you." The Englishman stared at him through a monocle.

"But, my good man, as I haven't the slightest idea of going to Trebizond, it would be out of the question!" he exclaimed. "I understand that all Turkish provinces bordering on the Black Sea are still held by the Russians and under present conditions it would be quite impossible for an English officer to go there."

"Just so—*as a British officer,*" agreed Tartatanyi with significant emphasis. "It would also be extremely risky for Tartatanyi Pasha, ex-governor of the province, to return under that name to his former capital."

"Rather; from what I heard of the old blighter's performances when I was attaché at Constantinople," assented Kent-Irwin with a grim smile. "As I remember it, he was a regular bad un; about the worst of old Abdul Hamid's lot. Had a lot more wives than the Koran allows, invented several tortures that even Abdul had never thought of and had about as much compunction over slipping a dagger or a dose of poison into his best friend as I should have over punching a Hun in the nose." Tartatanyi shrugged his shoulders.

"One must always consider the customs and the times in forming a judgment," he said. "Serving Abdul Hamid was not a sinecure; as they say here, it was largely a matter of passing the buck. Of course, carrying out the sultan's orders did not make Tartatanyi popular in Trebizond, and the memory of some of the things he was forced to do to—er—maintain his authority makes the populace so bitterly against him that he would be out of luck if he fell into their

hands. But sometimes it is worth while to take a big risk—when the game is worth the candle. Now, as I was saying, you will, of course, not go there as a British officer; the Russians would——"

"My dear man, I haven't the remotest idea of going to the place!" interrupted Kent-Irwin. "To be quite frank, I don't know where I shall fetch up; I am simply directed to report for orders."

"Oh, I see; Mr. Cooper hasn't informed you yet that you have been elected to be the goat!" said Tartatanyi, nodding. "In that case I was speaking from advance information, unwittingly conveyed to me; but straight from the inside office." The captain screwed his monocle more firmly in place.

"Might I ask if you are not a bit barmy, old chap?" he said. "I have the honor of a very slight acquaintance with Mr. Jabez Cooper; but I happen to receive my orders from the British war office and again I assure you that I have no idea of going to Trebizond. No matter where I am going, I would mildly suggest that it is none of your affair; it is only necessary that you deliver the balance of the cigarettes before I sail, which will be at noon to-morrow on the cruiser *Lancaster*. That will be about all, Arkani; I have a lot of loose ends to gather up and my time is limited." Tartatanyi made no further protest; for it was obvious that the Englishman was sincere in disclaiming knowledge of the work which had been cut out for him. He remembered that when Miss la Rue entered Mr. Cooper's private office during his first visit she wore a bunch of violets and lilies of the valley and that a similar bouquet was in a vase on her desk during their interview that very morning. From the orders which he had overheard the officer giving to his servant he had small doubt as to the origin of those flowers, and it was easy to guess the identity of the lady who would find two maraschino cherries in her cocktail that evening.

The fact that the captain was sailing on a cruiser was a trifle disconcerting and effectually banished the idea of accompanying him. While the United States had never declared war upon Turkey, Great Britain had, and if he set foot on the *Lancaster's* deck he would be treated as a prisoner of war; but there was nothing to prevent him from agreeing upon a rendezvous in Trebizond. The delivery of the remaining cigarettes would be ample pretext for a meeting the following morning and, in the meantime, he would make assurance doubly sure by shadowing the officer to his dinner engagement that evening.

For a few minutes that evening the pasha feared that all of his deductions were wrong; for in the radiant and beautiful young woman whom Captain Kent-Irwin solicitously assisted from his car and escorted into the quiet and exclusive restaurant it was difficult to recognize the amazon who had so soundly boxed his ears that very morning. During business hours in Mr. Cooper's office Miss la Rue was, as far as she could contrive it, simply a cog in the great machine. Her trim costume was almost masculine in its plain severity, her hair was arranged with a simplicity which verged upon primness and every word and movement was quick and decisive. She was the personification of self-confidence born of efficiency and met all comers on a footing of equality which disclaimed limitations of business ability because of the accident of sex.

But in her social life the beautiful Creole was essentially as feminine as her female ancestors, who had been guarded with almost Oriental jealousy from the rude buffets of the world. Her wonderful hair was a masterpiece of the coiffeur's art, her costume the last word of a world-famous modiste, and her jewels—heirlooms accumulated by her ancestors from the loot of two continents—such as a sultan might envy. And, independent and self-sufficient as she appeared to be in business intercourse with her masculine associates, she was, with Kent-Irwin, at any rate, almost a helpless clinging vine. So, at least, Tartatanyi Pasha concluded as he watched them during their very leisurely enjoyment of their dinner, which was a tête-à-tête affair at a table in a secluded corner of the palm room where they could talk without fear of being overheard by curious fellow guests.

He would have given a great deal to hear all that they were saying. Had he been able to overhear, his uneasiness and perplexity would have been markedly increased; for it was not until the dinner was nearly over that they discussed anything but the most personal affairs which concerned themselves alone. To his great disappointment

and chagrin the Englishman found that on this last evening which they would spend together his fair companion was more obdurate in refusing a definite engagement with an early marriage day than she had previously been and quite unmoved by the prospect of his imminent departure.

"Confound it; I don't believe that you will even miss me!" he exclaimed when she greeted the announcement of his unexpected sailing with the conventional wishes for a safe and pleasant voyage.

"Certainly I shall miss you, dear boy; but we should be separated in any case, for I, too, am leaving New York," she explained. "Can you tell me where you are going, Reggie, without endangering the safety of the British Empire?"

"The British Empire has taken jolly good care to look out for its own safety by leaving me entirely in the dark," he grumbled. "'Embark on H. M. S. *Lancaster* and report to chief intelligence officer at first port for instructions. Urgent!' the order reads and that last word means that I'm to obey without asking any questions. I know that the cruiser is ordered to join the Mediterranean squadron, so I suppose the first port will be Gibraltar; but that doesn't mean anything; to be quite truthful, nothing means anything to me now except you, you, you. I'm a lot more interested in knowing where you are going than in my own destination."

"That's awfully sweet of you, and I am sorry that I can't tell you," she answered. "You know that modern business guards its secrets even more carefully than diplomacy, and until it is all over I really can't whisper a word about it!" He looked at her suspiciously, for he would willingly have given a fortune to have a thought of him bring such a sparkle to her eyes.

"Celeste, is that old duffer you work for trying to use you as a cat's-paw to pull his chestnuts out of the fire?" he asked indignantly. "If I believed that I'd find time to drop around and punch his head before sailing time to-morrow. Oh, by the way, that reminds me of a thing that happened to-day; something I meant to ask you about." She was relieved that he had made it unnecessary to give a direct answer to his question and leaned forward eagerly to stimulate his interest in the other thing, whatever it might be.

"I've been violating all the regulations forbidding trading with the enemy for some time by buying my cigarettes from one of your local Turks," he continued. "Chap named Arkani and as big a rascal as the rest of his tribe; but I've served so much in the East that I know what's what in the way of tobacco, and he gives me the real thing. He delivered some this afternoon and insisted that I was going to one of the worst holes in the Near East; a Turkish city called Trebizond down on the Black Sea. A lot of poets have invested it with a certain romantic interest; but from personal experience I happen to know that it is one of the worst places in the rottenest of empires; for what the Osmanli couldn't think of themselves in the line of rottenness, the mixed population of Russian, Greek, and Persian renegades has taught 'em. We haven't any particular interests there just now; but that Turkish johnny insisted that I was to be ordered there, and the rummiest part of it is that he insinuated old Cooper was sending me. Of course, it's all tommy-rot; but he claimed to know what he was talking about. Do you happen to know this chap, Arkani? He's a bearded delegate and looks like a cross between a pirate and a Bolshevist." Miss la Rue's face flushed, and there was uneasiness in her eyes, for she realized that her own indiscretion had caused Tartatanyi to seek that interview, and she wondered how much he had betrayed to the Englishman.

"I am quite sure that he is an arrant fraud, if he claims to know anything of Mr. Cooper's affairs," she answered evasively. "What you say of Trebizond does not sound attractive; I should think it would be a very dangerous place. You don't really think there is any chance that you may be sent there, do you, Reggie?" The expression of real anxiety and solicitude in her eyes quickly banished all thought of Arkani from Kent-Irwin's mind.

"Would it really matter to you if you knew that I was ordered on a dangerous service?" he asked, and she was so relieved to have him steer away from the dangerous ground that she let the hand which he grasped lay passively in his.

"It would worry me terribly if I thought you might be ordered to—er—Trebizond," she admitted truthfully enough. "From what I have heard of it I imagine that you would be exposed to very grave danger there; the kind of danger from which the

bravest and most resourceful man would find it difficult to escape. Please don't go there, Reggie; even if that horrid war office tries to send you!" The pleading voice, the anxiety in her eyes, and a little pressure of her captive hand transported the young Englishman to the seventh heaven of delight; for never before had she betrayed solicitude for him.

"My dear, there isn't a chance in the world that I shall be ordered there; no more chance of it than there is that you should go there yourself," he assured her confidently. "Don't you worry about me, little girl——" He hesitated, wondering what he had said to make her suddenly withdraw her hand. "But never mind about me just now," he continued quickly. "Can't you tell me of your own plans, Celeste?" She shook her head and kept her eyes fixed on a screen of palms which afforded their table a measure of seclusion from the rest of the room; for in his eagerness Tartatanyi Pasha had poked his head beyond the edge of it, and she saw the gleam of triumph in his eyes as he noted the clasped hands upon the table.

"No, I can't say a word," she answered nervously. "But I'm worried about you, Reggie and I—I don't like this place. Come; let's go some place where we can dance; it's a shame to waste our last evening together." And, while Tartatanyi Pasha had been unable to overhear a word of their conversation, he was so well satisfied with what he had seen from his table behind the palms that, when the couple left the restaurant together, he also departed and hurried to an establishment where three golden balls hung over the doorway. When he came out the wonderful diamond no longer sparkled on his finger; but the proprietor had found him too well acquainted with the value of precious stones to be imposed upon, and there was a fat and satisfying roll of bills of large denominations in his pocket.

An hour later in a little coffeehouse in Washington Street a couple of those bills were exchanged for the papers and passports of one Abgub, an Armenian rug dealer who had obtained permission to visit the Orient to replenish his depleted stock, and the ticket which entitled him to passage to Scutari, and Arkani Tartatanyi Pasha retired to rest, well satisfied with his evening's work.

CHAPTER IV.

Three large ships sailed from New York the following day, the *Lancaster,* still in her grotesque garb of camouflage, leading and under sealed orders; the others were peaceful merchantmen carrying cargoes of food to starving peoples instead of the grim ladings of war which they had transported for the last four years, and their cabins were filled with messengers of mercy to ravaged lands in place of the armed warriors who had crowded their decks on many eastward voyages. From the quarter-deck of the cruiser, Kent-Irwin noted indifferently the two liners which followed in its wake, absolutely unconscious that on the first of them the girl with whom he had dined and danced the previous evening was wistfully watching him through her glasses. He was also ignorant of the fact that on the other the wily Oriental who had delivered many boxes of cigarettes to him that morning was a passenger under the name of Selim Abgub, his silken beard sacrificed, his glistening silk hat replaced with a fez, and his feet encased in embroidered Morocco leather slippers proclaiming him an Armenian merchant.

Some ten days later, when the cruiser had dropped anchor in the closely guarded harbor of Gibraltar and Kent-Irwin was receiving his orders from a very much worried intelligence officer at the military headquarters in the Citadel, the two liners passed unchallenged through the strait to the blue waters of the Mediterranean. The girl on one of them was convinced that she was for the moment leaving one of the troublesome complications of her life behind her; the false Armenian was equally confident that in passing the cruiser he had gained a lap on the emissary of Mr. Cooper in the race for the treasure of Trebizond. And while the two voyagers were finding satisfaction in their unfounded delusions, the young officer was cudgeling his brains to discover how an Oriental cigarette peddler in New York could have fathomed the carefully guarded secrets of the British foreign office; for he was listening to explicit verbal directions which ordered him to the destination which Arkani had predicted.

"You understand that the armistice has served only to give us a breathing spell on the western front," his superior explained to him. "It hasn't ended hostilities, and the history of the Balkan War is repeating

itself; Turkey is served up as burned offering to peace and her immediate neighbors are squabbling among themselves for the tidbits. We hold Mesopotamia and the Dardanelles; but the Russians are still in control of the Black Sea littoral and in the provinces of Van and Erzerum the Turks are merrily cleaning up the few remnants of the Armenians who escaped the general massacre. It is absolutely necessary for us to get full control of the Turkish ports on the Black Sea to quarantine Egypt—which is already at the boiling point—against the invasion of Bolshevism; but the conditions there are just as clouded and obscure as in Russia, and we must have information. We really know very little of what has been going on there since the Grand Duke Nicholas was deposed after his spectacular and victorious campaign; but we understand that the Bolsheviki are in full control, with Trebizond as headquarters. I have received some information from a Greek renegade named Zantopolis, who was formerly pasha of those provinces; but I can't rely upon it. He brought in a cock-and-bull story about an expected return of his predecessor, Arkani Tartatanyi, and an attempt to use the Bolsheviki forces in overthrowing the present Sultan. He was a precious old——"

"*Arkani* Tartatanyi!" exclaimed Kent-Irwin. "By Jove, colonel, that may not be such a cock-and-bull story after all. See here; how many people knew that I was to be ordered to Trebizond?"

"One—myself," answered the colonel. "I'm directing the intelligence work for the Near East, and I simply asked that you be assigned to me for temporary duty; I decided only this morning that Trebizond was the place for you to go to get the information we require; but why do you ask?" Kent-Irwin told him of his experience with the cigarette dealer in New York.

"And, confound him, I never suspected until you mentioned the other name that he was that infernal old scoundrel, Tartatanyi Pasha, the worst of the cutthroats employed by old Abdul Hamid to wring blood money out of his unfortunate subjects!" he continued. "You know that the *Lancaster* left New York under sealed orders; until we were twelve hours out of port even the captain was not sure of our destination; but when that old brigand brought the last of the cigarettes I had ordered and I said good-by, he just grinned and said that it was only au revoir, for we should meet at Trebizond in the very near future. Can you make anything of it, sir?"

The colonel, who had dealt largely with Orientals during his long military career and was reputed to know more of them than any other man in the service, shook his head.

"If I could solve riddles like that offhand I could run the whole show myself and it wouldn't be necessary for me to drag youngsters out of comfortable berths to send them where they stand every chance of getting their throats cut in gathering information," he answered. "I knew that Tartatanyi was exiled in New York, and I have kept track of him lately. It was reported that he had been in consultation with Jabez Cooper and that was enough to make me suspicious that there was something up; there usually is when that fat old schemer cuts into a game. Zantopolis claims to know positively that Tartatanyi left a large treasure behind when he fled from Trebizond, but the most diligent search has failed to discover it. He is convinced that Tartatanyi will return to recover it and that it is to be used to restore the old dynasty and drive the British out of Egypt. The Turkish flag has already been raised by the rebels in some of the provinces, and we know that the khedivial court is plotting to give assistance. Lack of money is the most serious problem for the conspirators, and, if Tartatanyi really controls a large treasure, it would be a good gamble for him to back them. With the old régime in power he would realize heavily on his investment. With Bolshevism threatening to sweep over the world, there is no telling what may happen, and this Turkish movement is its Mohammedan first cousin. Whether Tartatanyi was spoofing you or not I don't know; but I do know this—he has disappeared from his usual haunts in New York, and we have not been able to locate him; he hasn't been seen since the day you sailed. And there is one more little item which may have some bearing on this thing, captain; I understand that your last evening in New York was spent in the company of a young lady who is employed in Mr. Cooper's office."

"Certainly, and many previous evenings; but that is my personal affair, colonel," answered Kent-Irwin stiffly.

"Which I have no desire to pry into—

except as it may touch your official business," assented the colonel gravely. "Just one question: did you happen to discuss Trebizond with the lady that evening?" The captain's face flushed.

"Yes, we did, or, rather, I told her quite a lot about it," he answered frankly. "I remember telling her what I have just told you about Arkani's prediction that I was going there and his mention of Mr. Cooper's name in the matter. She displayed no interest in that part of it; but she was interested in the city itself. When she found out I had been there she asked me a great deal about it. In fact, I remember now that she kept pumping me about it all the evening; between dances, when I should have —er—that is—er—I mean to say—well, when I should have much preferred to—er —talk of something else." There was complete comprehension in the colonel's eyes.

"Quite so; I understand perfectly," he said dryly. "Captain, it may or may not be significant; but Miss la Rue also disappeared from Mr. Cooper's office on the day you left New York and we have every reason to believe that she sailed on the *Acropolis*, which is carrying supplies and a number of American volunteers for relief work in Armenia." Kent-Irwin's face lost its ruddy color, and he rose from his chair.

"Colonel, how soon can I start for Trebizond?" he asked quickly. The colonel motioned to him to resume his seat.

"As soon as I have given you instructions about what you are to do after you arrive there—and I would remind you that you are going on his majesty's service!" he said. "Now that we control the Dardanelles it will be simple enough to get you there; you will embark on a submarine at Constantinople and be landed at night near the city, where Zantopolis will meet you. That is as far as you can count upon our assistance; you will have to rely upon yourself to obtain the information, to transmit it to me, and to get away when your work is completed. I understand that you qualified as interpreter in both Osmanli and Persian when you were attached in Constantinople; that will help you a lot. I will give you a list of our other agents there, the passwords, and so forth; you will, of course, commit all that to memory and destroy the paper. You will be supplied with funds at Constantinople, and final instructions to supplement those I shall give you here. Now, listen!"

And for the next half hour the young officer did listen with every outward manifestation of attention and respect; but while the colonel's terse directions and orders were being impressed upon his subconscious mind, his thoughts were following the Greek liner, *Acropolis*, which was steadily plowing through a sapphire sea.

Lounging comfortably in a steamer chair on the deck of that ship, well content with the world, Miss la Rue occasionally looked up from her novel to gaze indifferently at another vessel pursuing the same course a couple of miles away. She had seen the grotesquely painted *Lancaster* as it disappeared around the Crouching Lion to enter the harbor of Gibraltar, and other ships had little interest for her. At first she had been very much worried when she discovered that Tartatanyi had fixed upon Captain Kent-Irwin as Mr. Cooper's emissary; but on reflection she decided that it was rather fortunate. If the Turk decided to disregard her employer's wishes and mix up in the affair himself, he would undoubtedly follow the Englishman and leave her a free hand. She had not thought of such a possibility when she gave her fanciful description; but in jumping at conclusions Tartatanyi had deceived himself and originated a more effective camouflage for her own activities than she could have devised. She had not the slightest suspicion that on the vessel she regarded indifferently from time to time the pasha was voyaging back to the scene of his former power, cunningly planning with the devilish ingenuity of the Oriental to cheat her employer of his promised share of the treasure after it was once safe from the clutches of the Russian invaders who would take it all if he attempted to remove it from the city himself.

Exiled though he had been, Tartatanyi Pasha knew more of the widespread conspiracy in the East than the British intelligence officers even suspected, for their desperate need of money had prompted the leaders to offer him tempting inducements to join them; inducements which appealed to him more and more strongly with each passing day bringing him nearer to the scene of his former glory. No matter how strong a league of nations might be formed at the Paris Conference, the secret jealousy of the great European powers would always prevent an effective interference with the internal affairs of Turkey in Asia, and with-

out the support of Germany the Young Turks could never hold the power which they had wrested from the old régime with the aid of Teutonic gold and diplomacy. With even half of the treasure which he had secreted in his possession he could become powerful in the councils of the conspirators; with all of it he would be practically the dictator of the whole thing and apportion the spoils of victory so that his advances to the cause would be repaid many times over.

But for that treasure to be the stepping stone to a throne instead of a death warrant, it would be absolutely necessary for him to get it to a neutral country and that he knew would be impossible without assistance. In spite of all his precautions, the existence of such a treasure was known, and no Turk, even if there was one whom he could trust, could possibly get it out of Trebizond.

Therefore, after disembarking from the steamer at Scutari, Tartatanyi traveled to his former pashalik in a very leisurely fashion, stopping to gossip and gather news in the bazaars of many towns, craftily feeling the pulse of the people and weighing the chances of success of the conspirators before finally committing himself to their plot. So varied and devious had been the channels of crooked dealings through which he had amassed his wealth during his rule that he had little difficulty in picking up the threads and in gaining such assistance as he required by promises that protection for illicit trade of various kinds would be available at the old prices as soon as he was restored to power. And when he was at last ready to enter his former capital, an Arab slave dealer who had found him one of his best customers in former days, obligingly smuggled him through the town disguised as one of his human chattels, his figure swathed in feminine garments, his face jealously hidden by coif and yashmak so that only his eyes were visible.

And while Rustem was welcoming him on the safe side of the Door of Felicity with low salaams and shrill, falsetto cries of joy, Kent-Irwin stepped from a collapsible boat on the beach not a mile away and under the guidance of the renegade, Zantopolis, found shelter after threading many tortuous and filthy back lanes and narrow streets. On a lonely hilltop beyond the walls at that same time Miss Celeste la Rue paid over the gold pieces with which she had bribed an Armenian to guide her from the nearest American Relief Station, and as he slunk away in the darkness gave an exclamation of delight as she saw the city at her feet, its squalid and unattractive features softened in the moonlight, its ancient crenellated towers and slender minarets suggesting medieval romance and Oriental mystery as they stood, silent silhouettes in white against the deep azure of the moonlit, semitropical sky.

CHAPTER V.

In carrying on the very unfeminine task for which she had volunteered, Celeste took every advantage of the privileges of her sex without claiming any of the immunities conventionally accorded to it. Having reached his decision to do a most unusual thing, Mr. Cooper went about it in his usual manner; stating very precisely the result which he desired and leaving her an absolutely free hand in her method of accomplishing it. The first step had been simple; for the capitalist had subscribed so generously to the Armenian Relief Fund that the request of his employee to accompany the first contingent of relief workers which was to establish headquarters at Bitlis was readily granted and with it she traveled in comparative comfort and security to that once happy and prosperous city. Between Bitlis and her objective lay a couple of hundred miles of rough and troubled country, infested by brigands, raided by the fierce Kurds at their pleasure and ravaged by the roving disbanded Turkish soldiers; a very devil's playground where might was the only recognized right.

No caravan without a very strong military escort could have passed through it and even the small army assigned to protect the lives and property of the relief commission dared not venture far from the protection of the city fortification; but once it had reestablished law and order within the devasted and depopulated city, Celeste found proof that craft and cunning had enabled some of its former inhabitants to escape the dangers of that perilous No Man's Land. Three years before the bashi-bazouks had, so far as it was inhumanly possible, carried out their orders to exterminate the entire Armenian race. Every house in Bitlis had been searched, the men and old women ruthlessly slaughtered and the young and attractive women sent to the slavery of Moslem

harems. In the confusion a small proportion of the Armenians had escaped to the surrounding country and while most of them had been tracked down and killed, a few had escaped, and, in spite of rigorous pursuit, had managed to exist in the wild country until the arrival of the American mission made it safe for them to return to their ravaged and looted homes.

As a measure of self-preservation these exiles had necessarily become familiar with every goat path and hiding place, and were adepts in concealment, and listening to the tales which they poured into the sympathetic ears of the relief workers, Celeste quickly realized that fortune had favored her. The real truth concerning the Armenian character probably lies somewhere between the vices attributed to them by the Turks and the virtues with which cruel persecution has led the sympathies of America to invest them; but neither their persecutors nor their sympathizers are blind to their love of money. With that Miss la Rue was generously supplied and appreciating that in the game she was playing considerations of economy must give way to the necessity for speed, she employed it in bribing one Selim Magistani to employ the information he had acquired in three years of strenuous outdoor life to guide her to the environs of Trebizond. With the exception of a small preliminary payment to provide the necessities of travel, she stipulated that the reward would be paid only when she dismissed him at the end of the journey and any mental reservations which the Armenian may have made when agreeing to the terms of the contract he found valueless at the end of the first night of travel after they stole quietly from the Northern Gate of Bitlis.

Secure from interruption in the solitude of the barren hills, he had suggested that she anticipate then and there the full payment, and, in addition, surrender the remainder of the gold pieces which she carried in a belt beneath her jacket to reimburse him for the necessary expenses of the return journey. His dark eyes glistened covetously when she thrust her hand beneath her jacket, ostensibly to comply with his demand; but when it was withdrawn they looked into the muzzle of an automatic pistol and in accordance with a softly spoken request his hands went rapidly above his head.

"Selim, at just about this time the director of the relief committee is reading the little note of apology which I left to be delivered to him at breakfast," she continued quietly. "It explains to him that I voluntarily left Bitlis with you and that you would probably return alone to claim your share of the relief which they are about to distribute so freely. If on your return you give him the password which I mentioned in that note, it will prove to him that you carried out your contract with me and left me in safety. If you are ignorant of it, he will conclude that you took advantage of my feminine weakness to rob and betray me and will hand you over to the Turkish authorities. That password I shall confide to you when we are in sight of Trebizond and not before. Until then, when we are on the road you will travel in front of me and if I so much as catch sight of your face I shall smash it with a bullet. When I wish to sleep I shall take the precaution to tie you, and if by any chance I find that we are in danger of capture by any of the gentry hereabouts, I assure you that I shall not permit you to fall into their hands alive. Now, if you will kindly lie flat on your face and cross your hands behind your back, I shall insure myself a few hours of well-earned rest by appropriate use of this silken rope with which I fortunately provided myself before leaving Bitlis."

Selim did not capitulate; he surrendered unconditionally; for the pistol pointed steadily and without wavering to a point squarely between his terrified eyes, and as he watched it the small bore seemed to grow to the diameter of a Big Bertha.

The memory of it was always very vivid during the ensuing nights and made him consider safety first in choosing the paths by which they traveled and the places in which they might lie hidden during the day. His protestations of fidelity fell on deaf ears and the girl invariably tied him up securely while she slept and in this strange companionship they won through to that hilltop from which alone she watched the rising sun gild the domes and minarets of Trebizond and saw the slumbering, mysterious city wake to another day.

She experienced little difficulty in entering the city, for a crowd of country people had gathered before the gate, awaiting its opening at the sunrise gun to enter with their wares for market. Her trim, graceful figure

concealed by the voluminous folds of a rough burnoose and only her dark eyes showing between the edge of its hood and the yashmak drawn tightly across the bridge of her nose, she passed unchallenged by the careless Bolsheviki guard and unnoted by the swarming Turkish spies who were alert only to prevent treasure being smuggled out of the city. Mingling with the crowd, jostled by heavily laden donkeys, stumbling over the milch goats which delivered lacteal fluid on the hoof to the citizens of the town at their doorways, she passed readily as a woman of the country. Fortunately, the material of the disguise which she had adopted stamped her as of the humbler class and gave her a degree of freedom without exciting attention or comment, for guardian eunuchs were a perquisite of the rich.

Trebizond, like all ancient Turkish cities, was a maze of narrow, tortuous streets, bordered by blank walls; for the domestic life of the households centered about carefully secluded courts and for both safety and privacy there were no windows on the outer side. The palaces of the officials and the wealthier inhabitants were all situated along the water front, each standing alone in its own grounds and jealously surrounded by high walls which enabled the inmates to wander in the gardens, safe from the scrutiny of curious or impertinent eyes. So faithfully had Tartatanyi described the location of his former residence that Celeste had no difficulty in locating it; but there was nothing in its outward appearance to suggest the luxury and magnificence which he had so eloquently described. The wall surrounding it was exceptionally high and crowned by a triple row of rusted iron spikes and was pierced—as she discovered by a discreet inspection—by only two openings.

The first of these was a broad gateway, wide enough to permit the entrance of a carriage, and gave access to an outer courtyard. The heavy gates were swung back and the opening, guarded by two slouchy sentinels in the Russian uniform, gave her a view of the interior that was surrounded by a row of buildings which, during Tartatanyi's rule as pasha, had been used as offices and quarters for the masculine members of the establishment; a single narrow portal, carefully guarded and poetically named "The Door of Felicity," giving access to the zenana. The outer courtyard and its surrounding buildings had evidently been commandeered by the conquering Russians and she saw a half dozen women of that nationality in the courtyard, unveiled and mingling freely with the Bolsheviki guard; but—as Tartatanyi had confidently predicted—the conquerors had evidently respected the Moslem tradition which made the harem precincts sacred, for the Door of Felicity was closed by a barrier of heavy planks and placarded with a warning surmounted by a crudely drawn skull and crossbones which made its meaning graphically clear to the illiterate.

The other opening in the surrounding wall which gave the whole establishment the appearance of a prison, was a narrow doorway giving on a crooked, filthy lane at the back. In the heavy wooden door which closed it was a small grille through which a guard on the inside could inspect any one applying for admission and as she passed she caught sight through the bars of a hideous black face and a pair of suspicious eyes regarding her so malevolently that instinctively she hurried to the shelter of an angle in the wall.

A moment later the door opened and a huge negro stepped out into the lane and looked sharply up and down. He was not an attractive specimen of his race, his face was fat and flabby and disfigured by a chronic frown and his bandy, flat-calfed legs seemed pitifully spindling and inadequate to support the weight of his great paunch. On his head was a tremendous turban and about his waist a broad silken sash supported a curved scimitar and a brace of daggers, while a vicious-looking whip of rhinocerous hide dangled by a loop from his wrist.

Celeste had little doubt as to his identity; he was undoubtedly one of those unfortunate beings used as watchdogs of their matrimonial treasures by the jealous Mohammedans; as necessary to that peculiar institution of polygamy as the mule to an army's transport, and, like that patient animal, without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity. It could be no other than Rustem. Watching him, she smiled cynically behind her yashmak at the memory of the absolute faith which Tartatanyi had expressed in his fidelity; for, after satisfying himself that the coast was clear, he motioned to some one inside the gate and an unmistakably masculine figure emerged and hurried away in the opposite direction from where she was concealed.

Beyond the fact that as soon as possible

she was determined to enter that harem to recover the jewels which Tartatanyi had secreted there, Miss la Rue was for the moment an opportunist and without a fixed plan of procedure mapped out. Her present investigation was in the nature of a reconnoissance and, like a skillful strategist, she had no intention of attacking until she had secured her line of retreat. But every scrap of information she could acquire would be of value, and as Rustem quickly reëntered the harem grounds and closed the door after him she determined that it would be wiser to follow and try to identify the poacher on the exiled pasha's matrimonal preserves than to waste further time in circling the blank and impenetrable wall.

Accordingly she gathered up the skirt of her flowing burnoose and hurried after the fleeing figure, finding it comparatively easy to keep him in sight because his progress was often halted by the loss of one of the slippers of red Morocco leather. Evidently the man she was following was well acquainted with the city, for without the slightest hesitation he threaded the bewildering maze of narrow alleyways and entered the great bazaar. And there she saw him plainly for the first time, in the booth of Mahmoud Ben Azra in the Street of the Armorers. He was sitting cross-legged on a cushion and in earnest converse with the proprietor. It was well that the heavy yashmak half smothered the exclamation of surprise which came from her lips. She recognized in the man she had followed from Tartatanyi's harem the one masculine individual who had undisputed right to enter it.

Realizing as a result of her inspection that the task she had undertaken presented difficulties which she had not anticipated, she was tempted for a moment to make herself known and compromise with him. From the ease with which she had entered the city she had little doubt that she could get out and carry the jewels with her, and she was equally confident that she could retrace in safety the route she had followed from Bitlis. The dangers of the road and from the brigands, Kurds, and disbanded soldiers she was quite willing to face; but there was something in her memory of Rustem's repulsive face which made her shudder with the dread of encountering him and his kind inside of that horrible wall. Yet, despite the sacrifice of his beard, the sight of the pasha's face recalled another memory almost as unpleasant, the expression in his eyes which had earned him chastisement in New York, and she had no wish to see it rekindled in this city where he had boasted there were still many desperate men who would answer to his call. Believing that Mr. Cooper's exactions had made it impossible for Tartatanyi to come to Trebizond, she had practically dismissed him from her calculations; but now that she had discovered him here she determined to see what he was up to, and, feeling safe in her disguise, she loitered about the neighborhood of Mahmoud Ben Azra's booth, innocent of the fact that she was violating all of the Mohammedan conventions in even entering this street.

In the Oriental bazaars the trades are segregated, each in its particular street, and while modern liberality permitted veiled women to visit the portions devoted to the sale of perfumes, silks, embroideries, and purely feminine fripperies, the intrusion of a female into the Street of the Armorers where the merchants dealt only in weapons was unheard of. Therefore, Tartatanyi was almost as much surprised to find himself the subject of scrutiny by feminine eyes while he talked with Mahmoud Ben Azra as Celeste had been when she recognized him and, keenly alive to the danger of his own position, it made him distinctly uneasy.

But Tartatanyi was too old a player in the game of intrigue and espionage to betray his fears, and while he watched her furtively from the corners of his eyes he calmly continued his conversation with the patriarchal-looking merchant, alternately drawing at the snakelike tube of the nargile and sipping black coffee from a tiny cup; for business in the East is never transacted hurriedly nor without the soothing influence of tobacco and the mild stimulus of coffee.

There are no show windows in a Turkish bazaar; in fact, there are no windows at all; for the narrow streets are protected from sun and rain by gayly colored awnings stretching from roof to roof, and the shops themselves are little more than shallow booths, open their entire width to the street during business hours and hermetically closed by heavy wooden shutters during the night. There is little public display of their wares, and the choicest of them are invariably jealously stored away, to be produced for inspection after a long preliminary chaffering and discussion of indifferent topics.

Mahmoud Ben Azra was known to every collector of antique arms and armor on two continents; but in the sheaf of rusted modern sabers and a mess of battered helmets and fragments of chain armor hanging in front of his shop there was little to suggest the treasures concealed in the dusky interior. Hidden away in bales and iron-bound boxes were the rarest specimens of the lost art of Damascus—slender blades so finely tempered that they could be bent until point and hilt met and so keen of edge that a silken thread laid across it would be severed by its own weight. Scimitars of sultans, slender rapiers, daggers with hilts, and scabbards incrusted with precious stones, shirts of woven chains hardly thicker than silk but stout enough to turn a treacherous stroke, and protective armor for man and horse brought to the East from all Christendom by the Crusaders; a collection which would have made a museum curator's eyes glisten covetously, were there; but it was not their appeal which had tempted Tartatanyi to run the risk of visiting the bazaar where recognition would have meant death and in all probability a very painful one.

For, profitable as old Mahmoud Ben Azra made the dealing in the artistic weapons of the past, that business which he carried on openly in the Trebizond bazaar was but a mask for his far more lucrative traffic in the practical weapons of the present which he secretly carried on all over the Orient. A case of rifles which could be purchased for a few pounds in Europe was worth its weight in gold on the right side of the Afghanistan frontier, the Arabian slavers paid tremendous prices in ivory for the arms to equip their raiding caravans, and each of the plots hatched to overthrow constituted authority from the Mediterranean to the Pacific required a preliminary accumulation of the arms and munitions of war.

During his days of power as pasha of the four provinces, Tartatanyi had—for a percentage of the profits—closed his eyes to the flagrant violations of neutrality by the old gun runner, and in his enforced exile he had more than once acted as his purchasing agent in the foreign markets. In Birmingham he had purchased Enfields which a few months later were used by the Afghan hillmen to take pot shots at British tommies in the Khyber Pass, in Solingen he had made to order the broad-bladed spears with which a tribe of bushmen cut to pieces a Prussian battalion in the jungles of German New Guinea, while from Antwerp he shipped the rifles which enabled the infamous Kaid Hassan-al-Ruba to scatter the Belgian garrisons and penetrate to the very heart of the Kongo in a raid for slaves and ivory.

Knowing that the wily old contrabandist would, from the nature of his illicit business, be the fountain head of knowledge as to the prospects of success in the projected rising against the British rule in Egypt and the usurped power of the Young Turks in Constantinople, Tartatanyi had risked the visit in search of inside information. Not until his stealthy return to the city did he realize how much he had sacrificed in his exile, and he knew that he would never again be happy without the power he had exercised as a ruler and deprived of the solace of his harem when wearied with the affairs of state he retired for rest and relaxation through the Door of Felicity to the bosom of his family.

Mahmoud, of course, recognized him; but he had little fear of betrayal at his hands; for the wily old merchant was too wise to sacrifice a goose which might lay golden eggs. As a pasha, Zantopolis had proved difficult to do business with, the Grand Duke Nicholas during his brief tenure of power had been absolutely incorruptible, and the Bolsheviki commanders were overthrown with such bewildering rapidity that he had barely time to conclude satisfactory arrangements with one before he had to start all over again with a successor. Aside from the immediate profit to be made by supplying arms for the proposed revolt, he was anxious for a return of the good old days when protection could be purchased at fixed rates and officials stayed bought after their price was paid.

Therefore, the views which he expressed over the coffee cups to the accompaniment of the soft gurgling of the hubble-bubble in the nargile were decidedly optimistic. Egypt was seething with hatred of the British tyranny which imposed trying and exacting sanitary regulations on the populace and curtailed the rights of the Turkish nobles for the benefit of the despised native fellaheen. Turkey, which under Abdul Hamid was always victorious at the peace table after military defeats, had been stripped of her richest territory after the Balkan War, had lost through poor diplomacy

the valuable colony of Tripoli to Italy, and now was prostrate and helpless under the weak and inefficient rule of the Young Turks.

Only the restoration of the old régime could preserve the empire, perpetuate the old institutions, and recover the territories which had been taken as the spoils of victory and only the lack of money prevented that restoration. The victorious Allies were already squabbling among themselves in Paris, and Turkey had always profited by the dissensions and jealousies of the Powers. Demobilization was already far advanced, chaos in Russia and revolt in Central Europe would keep the depleted armies of the victors occupied close at home. The sudden cessation of hostilities on a large scale had thrown a tremendous amount of war material on the bargain counter and for cash a shrewd and experienced buyer could purchase enough to insure the complete and sweeping success of the proposed revolution and a consequent return to power of the officials who had been driven into exile when Abdul Hamid was deposed.

Unfortunately, Enver Pasha and his confederates had looted the treasury before departing from Constantinople for the safety of neutral Switzerland, and the only possible source of supply of the needful war chest appeared to be the miraculous reappearance of some hidden and unsuspected hoard. Mahmoud even ventured a tentative estimate of the amount which would be required to insure success, an estimate which tallied with suspicious fidelity to the total value of the jewels of his hidden treasure.

Tartatanyi listened attentively; but he never lost sight of the veiled woman who loitered about the street, passing and repassing the open fronts of the booths and looking at them with an unabashed effrontery and an undisguised curiosity which in Turkey was, to say the least, bad form. In spite of the concealment afforded by the voluminous folds of the burnoose, there was something vaguely familiar to him in the way she carried herself, and, although he could not place them, he was sure that he had seen those questioning eyes before. Mahmoud Ben Azra, too, noted the unusual presence of a woman in the Street of the Armorers; but for him her presence served simply as a peg on which to hang a further complaint against the existing order.

"There you can see to what these accursed doctrines of the infidel invaders are bringing our holy and sacred institutions!" he exclaimed. "Unrebuked and without shame the Russian women who followed in the wake of the army parade unveiled through the bazaar and even in the harems our own women are clamoring for greater freedom and plotting a general strike against polygamy and the authority of the eunuchs. You can see how necessary it is that we should act quickly; for the accursed Americans, too, are taking a hand and demanding the release of the Armenian women whom we preserved from massacre and saved from everlasting perdition by receiving them into the true faith—and our zenanas. They have already arrived at Bitlis and, having unlimited money at their disposal, are organizing a force to trace and recover those women for whom many of us paid large prices!"

Tartatanyi made no comment; for the moment he was incapable of speech; so stunned with surprise was he by his amazing discovery of the truth, for by accident he penetrated Celeste's disguise.

Although she could not understand a word of the conversation which reached her carefully covered ears only as a confused murmur, the fierce look with which Mahmoud regarded her warned her that she had become the subject of it and she suddenly realized that she was conspicuous through being the only woman in the narrow, crowded thoroughfare. In her confusion she forgot the character she had assumed and strove by assuming an interest in the wares displayed to account for her presence there.

From under the protecting folds of the rough burnoose she extended her hand to pick up a trumpery dagger; a hand so white and slender and so delicately cared for that it had obviously never known the labor which all women of the peasant class performed. And Tartatanyi, his ears tingling reminiscently, recognized it at once; at their last interview in Mr. Cooper's office he had become so familiar with it that there was no possibility of mistake! Watching him closely, Mahmoud Ben Azra interpreted the sudden palor of his face and the gleam of resentment in his eyes to the last argument he had employed; for it was notorious that Tartatanyi was such an enthusiastic supporter of polygamy that his harem contained many times the four wives permitted to the faithful by the law of the Prophet.

That conviction was strengthened a moment later when Tartatanyi turned and spoke to him in a low voice which trembled, as he believed, with righteous indignation.

"By the sword of the Prophet which was the scourge of the infidel, I swear that such things shall not be!" he exclaimed savagely. "Mahmoud, great as is the sum which you have demanded, it will be furnished and the crescent banner shall wave from Khartoum to Alexandria and the dogs of unbelievers shall fly whining back to their monagamous kennels. The green standard of Islam shall be flung to the breeze in a *jehad* and from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, from the Indian Ocean to the Black, the Koran shall again be the only law! Once more I shall rule supreme in Trebizond and Erzerum, Van shall again feel the weight of my hand and Mozul shall tremble at the mention of the name of Arkani Tartatanyi Pasha! The things you have told me make my blood boil; could I anticipate at this moment the power which I shall recover, I would show you how quickly and effectively I would deal with insubordination. That hussy who so brazenly flaunts this new liberty in the bazaar would be seized and carried to my harem, where the trusty Rustem and his assistants would quickly teach her the virtues of humility and submission!"

Mahmoud Ben Azra listened to the violent outburst calmly, stroking his patriarchal white beard and watching Tartatanyi's face with shrewd, calculating eyes. He knew that the first of it was all camouflage and that Tartatanyi was preparing to use fanaticism as a means to his own personal and selfish ends. In the conclusion he believed he had discovered the real motive; for some reason the ex-pasha desired to obtain possession of the woman who still loitered aimlessly in the Street of the Armorers. In the old days that would have been a simple matter; a nod to his janizaries and she would have been seized; but times had changed.

Tartatanyi knew, however, that from the peculiar nature of his business old Mahmoud had at his immediate call agents and employees to whom the kidnaping of a woman of the peasant class would seem child's play and the old gun runner appreciated that he had made a tentative bid for assistance. For a few minutes he smoked in silence, occasionally glancing at the veiled woman indifferently.

"That your glorious prophecy should be fulfilled is the hope of all true believers; but vague promises of financial assistance will not make it come true; actual cash will be necessary," he said, a curious resemblance to the tone of Jabez Cooper falling unpleasantly on Tartatanyi's ears. "Of course, a mere bagatelle like the handling of this woman I would manage for old friendship's sake—if I felt assured that the financing of the proposed revolution to assured success would prevent any trouble in the future. Did I understand you to say that you would make yourself personally responsible for the amount we talked of?"

"Where should I, a penniless exile, have hidden such a treasure?" protested Tartatanyi quickly, and Mahmoud Ben Azra smiled.

"That is just what Zantopolis tried to discover during his whole administration," he answered dryly. "Also the Bolsheviki have been so curious about it that they have even considered invading your harem to investigate and I am quite sure they will ask you some very leading questions concerning it if they happen to discover you here. Now, regarding this woman——"

He paused, and Tartatanyi did some rapid thinking. Judging others by his own standards he believed that Mr. Cooper would not hesitate about annexing the entire treasure if it once reached New York. In the presence of Celeste disguised in Trebizond he read another danger which he had not thought of: that Mr. Cooper's agent might double cross them both and with the treasure once safely in his own possession refuse to deliver it. That was undoubtedly what had brought her there; she had come to join the man she loved, and they undoubtedly intended to go to some neutral country to enjoy the fruits of their treachery and dishonesty together.

He knew that it was extremely dangerous to go back on any promise made to Mahmoud Ben Azra; but it was so vitally important to him that he should get Celeste in his power that he determined to risk it. She would be a hostage to insure Kent-Irwin's fidelity; for after seeing them together he was convinced that the young officer was a victim to that peculiar Occidental madness which made a man the slave of one woman instead of the master of many. After all, it would be more like an investment promising large returns than a

speculative gamble to devote his treasure to the revolutionary cause, and, so very large did the new danger seem, unless he could get Celeste in his power, he was pretty certain to lose the whole thing without even a run for his money.

"Mahmoud Ben Azra, all that I have shall be given to equip the faithful for the *jehad* against the dogs of infidels who pollute our land and threaten our sacred institutions," he said. "I am willing to be responsible for the sum you mentioned and on my head be it; but I must have time. Now, in the matter of this woman whose conduct is a scandal to——" Mahmoud smiled and silenced him with a gesture.

"In so trivial a matter there need be small delay," he said as he clapped his hands; a summons quickly answered by a Nubian slave who acknowledged a few direct and concise orders with a low salaam and then disappeared as silently as he came.

"The woman shall be in your harem soon after nightfall," continued Mahmoud. "But human memory—like life—is apt to be short in these troubled times, and before we part I shall ask you to attach your name and seal to a small contract guaranteeing the payment of the sum upon which we agreed. Ah, the good old times shall come again and Islam will do honor to the man whose generosity enabled it to throw off the yoke of the oppressor and removed the heel of tyranny from its neck! A humble pashalik would be too small a recognition of such service; but touching the time and manner of payment of the money——" Tartatanyi permitted the tube of the nargile to slip from his hand and shifted his crossed legs as he tried to peer about the edge of the booth; for the veiled woman after a hurried and startled glance down the street had gathered her burnoose closely about her and fled around the corner.

"By the beard of the Prophet, Mahmoud; if you permit that woman to give you the slip there will be small chance that either one of us will ever finger the money!" he exclaimed uneasily. Mahmoud smiled reassuringly.

"That she will never do, Tartatanyi," he said confidently. "When the shelter of darkness makes it safe to carry her through the streets she will be taken to the door of your harem; until then you need have no concern for her safety, for she will be sheltered in mine."

And as Tartatanyi furtively retraced his steps to his former home after signing an ironclad agreement which involved outwitting Jabez Cooper and his employee he was in no pleasant frame of mind; for he realized that through his own stupidity he had placed the girl who had full knowledge of his treasure and its hiding place in the power of Mahmoud Ben Azra, who was notoriously an adept in his methods of extracting information.

Before he left Mahmoud's booth the Nubian had returned and reported that his master's orders had been carried out, and the old contrabandist had hurriedly concluded their business and hastily retired to his harem where Celeste la Rue had been carried a prisoner.

CHAPTER VI.

Owing to the geographical location of the city, the bazaar of Trebizond was decidedly more cosmopolitan than the usual Turkish market places; for traders from the Balkan countries bordering on the Black Sea, from the neighboring Caucasia and Persia and from the rugged hinterland extending to the Syrian desert met there to barter and exchange their wares. It had profited by the war; for with the cruisers of the Allies blockading the Mediterranean and the British operations in Mesopotamia closing the outlet to the Persian Gulf, even the rich commerce of Bagdad and Damascus was diverted to it and its narrow streets were thronged by representatives of all the peoples of the East.

In that motley throng the appearance of a Persian merchant strolling slowly through the bazaar and conversing in his native language with a companion whose features and costume stamped him as a Greek attracted little attention from the natives; but it brought an exclamation of dismay from the veiled woman and stimulated her hurried exit from the scene. For, in spite of the tall, conical cap of Astrakhan ornamented with a diamond sunburst, the gold embroidered jacket, and the voluminous silken trousers revealed by the opening of the long cloak which fell from his broad shoulders, she recognized in the alleged vender of attar of roses from Tabriz, the troublesome young Englishman whom she had believed to be safely marooned on the Rock of Gibraltar. A remark from his companion, Zan-

topolis, that it was most unusual to see a woman in the Street of the Armorers had caused him to look at her sharply and forgetting that her disguise afforded her complete protection from recognition, she turned and fled.

In visiting the bazaar in disguise Kent-Irwin was on the business of the British Empire, his mission solely to confirm and supplement the information with which the renegade had furnished him; but the thought that Celeste la Rue had set out for that part of the world was always in his subconscious mind. Had the young woman remained quietly in front of the booth where they had first seen her, he would have passed her by without a second glance; for he knew the danger of exhibiting even curiosity concerning a veiled woman in the streets of a Moslem city. Even when she started to run away he was only mildly interested; but, cumbered as she was by the clumsy burnoose, there was something so familiar in her movement that the dormant thought was roused to activity and only the restraining grasp of Zantopolis' hand on his arm prevented him from forgetting the dignity which his disguise implied and starting in pursuit.

"Careful; unless you crave a Mohammedan dagger in your midriff!" warned the Greek nervously. "It would be safer to snatch the purse of Mahmoud Ben Azra, the richest and most powerful merchant in Trebizond bazaar, than to glance beneath the yashmak of the humblest peasant woman in this hotbed of fanaticism! And, believe me; even should you escape the vengeance of the fanatics, you would be but ill-rewarded for your trouble, for beauty is never hidden by so thick a veil!" Kent-Irwin halted, for the woman had disappeared, darting around a corner into a narrow alleyway, and he realized the truth of the first part of his companion's warning.

"But you were the one to draw attention to her—and why should a Moslem peasant woman be loitering in this portion of the bazaar?" he grumbled. Zantopolis shrugged his shoulders.

"Why should Mir Mirza, with attar of roses to sell, be seeking the booth of Mahmoud Ben Azra, who deals in arms, instead of going direct to the *souk* of the perfumers?" he asked impatiently. "Truly, brother, the mysteries of Trebizond bazaar are many and deep and the wise man walks warily and attends to his own affairs. Now, in the business we have in hand, there is this to be——"

He ceased speaking, for Kent-Irwin wheeled about so suddenly that the restraining grasp on his arm was broken and he saw the Englishman's hand dart to the broad silken sash which concealed a heavy service automatic, beside supporting the customary curved dagger. For above the murmuring voices of the bazaar and the clatter of many feet on the stone pavement there came to them the shrill shriek of a startled woman, quickly followed by the unmistakably furious protests of an angry one —then very distinctly:

"Reggie! Oh, Reggie! Reg——" The conclusion an appeal for help which was checked with a suddenness suggesting violence.

The call came from the alley into which the veiled woman had fled and with the suspicion of her identity turned to certainty by the sound of his own name in a voice which, in spite of its agitation, he could not mistake, Kent-Irwin broke away and darted around the corner.

Zantopolis made no attempt to follow. If this mad Englishman wished to risk his neck in amorous adventure after his warning, he would wash his hands of the whole affair. And, furthermore, he was speedily interested in a matter which *was* distinctly his own affair; for no sooner was he left alone by the desertion of Mir Mirza than he was joined by a fierce-faced, hawk-eyed Kurd whose sash bristled with an armory of long pistols and assorted daggers and whose sandals were muddied with the soil of the hills. In the report which that picturesque bandit whispered into his ear he found so much of interest that he almost forgot the hothead whose impetuous action in interfering in what he believed to be a purely domestic affair would probably lead to a riot.

And a riot there would have been had Kent-Irwin arrived in time to precipitate it, for that interrupted appeal for help was still ringing in his ears; but when he turned the corner there was not a living thing to be seen in the narrow alley and not a sound came from behind the high walls which bordered it on either side. A hundred yards from the Street of the Armorers it was crossed by another lane even narrower which gave access to the rear entrances of the booths in the bazaar. That, too, was silent

and deserted; but in the mud at the intersection there were footprints which suggested a struggle and at the edge of a slimy pool of water he found a woman's low shoe; small and dainty and very evidently of American manufacture.

Concealing the shoe beneath his cape he hurried on, but in that bewildering maze of narrow lanes his search was a hopeless one, for the tightly closed doors seemed to mock him, and none of them betrayed by marks which he could decipher the slightest hint of the mysteries behind them. Realizing at last the futility of unaided search, he reluctantly abandoned it and with no little difficulty found his way back to the bazaar, passing at the entrance to the Street of the Armorers old Mahmoud Ben Azra, who was hurrying to his residence to inspect the new inmate of his harem, the girl for whom Kent-Irwin had unsuccessfully searched.

By her precipitate flight from an imaginary danger, Celeste had literally plunged headlong into a very real one. The Nubian slave to whom Mahmoud had delegated the task of abducting her had only a moment before left the booth by the rear entrance, intending to summon a couple of his master's eunuchs from his near-by residence. Even in the most crowded street of the bazaar they could have seized and carried away a veiled woman without opposition from the bystanders; for the abduction would have passed as a piece of domestic discipline, the return to the seclusion of the harem of some rebellious woman who had dared to defy Moslem tradition by escaping from its restraint.

The Nubian had not the slightest intention of undertaking personally such a dangerous venture; but at the corner close to the entrance to the walled garden of his master's harem, he was nearly knocked from his feet by violent contact with the very woman he had been ordered to abduct, and it was forced upon him before he had opportunity to evade the issue. Intent only upon escaping the scrutiny of the young Englishman's eyes, Celeste was running at top speed and, tripping on the rough pavement, would have fallen face downward had she not plunged headfirst against the startled Nubian and saved herself by clutching wildly at his loose blouse. He was the first to recover from the surprise of that collision, and, realizing that a fortuitous chance had favored him, he grasped her firmly in his powerful arms as she struggled to regain her equilibrium.

At first Celeste read in that only a kindly effort to assist her; but quickly realizing her mistake, she shrilled the first cry of protest that came to Kent-Irwin's ears. She was a vigorous and muscular young woman, and with one hand free threatened to break the Nubian's hold, but he was tremendously powerful and his great strength was multiplied by his fears, for he knew that he would be given no time for explanations if he should be discovered by Moslem men struggling with a veiled woman in that deserted lane. And when Celeste, startled by the sight of his ebony face, cried for assistance to the very man from whom she had been trying to escape, he cut short the appeal by clapping a great black paw over her pretty mouth, and, disregarding the hand which struck and clawed at his face, he swung her from her feet and stumbled against the adjoining doorway in the wall of Mahmoud Ben Azra's garden. Fortunately for him, Hassam, chief of Mahmoud's eunuchs, had at that moment drawn the bolts, his curiosity aroused by the unusual tumult on the far side of the wall, and the door swung open, permitting him to thrust his struggling burden into more practiced hands and to seek safety for himself by darting around the corner before the arrival of the man whose heavy footsteps he could hear in the lane leading from the Street of the Armorers.

A moment later Kent-Irwin, having paused only to retrieve the shoe which had dropped from her foot in the struggle, hurried unsuspectingly past that very door which had closed behind her while the Nubian, stanching with the flowing end of his turban the blood which flowed from four deep furrows made by her sharp finger nails in his cheek, hurried back to the old contrabandist's booth in the bazaar to report the complete success of his mission.

Mahmoud Ben Azra was not nearly as much surprised to find that his captive was an American girl as Celeste la Rue was to find herself the inmate of a Turkish harem. His sources of information were many and efficient. Through his agents in New York he knew that Tartatanyi had been in communication with Jabez Cooper; even before the relief expedition sailed he had been informed in a cipher cablegram that the American capitalist's secretary was to ac-

company it, and when it was reported to him by an Arab runner that she had disappeared mysteriously from Bitlis he guessed that she was heading for Trebizond and kept a watchful eye for her arrival.

His suspicions were immediately aroused when he first saw her in the Street of the Armorers; they were strengthened almost to certainty when Tartatanyi betrayed his eagerness to get possession of her, in spite of the camouflage of fanaticism which he employed to conceal his real motive and in that eagerness he read a confession that Tartatanyi and the woman he believed to be Mr. Cooper's agent were not acting entirely in harmony.

Now, allowing for the differences in race and customs, Mahmoud Ben Azra was an Oriental counterpart of the American patron of the Lost Legion. According to the standards of the East he was square and honest, and he never let sentiment interfere nor charity mix with his business ventures. In dealing with honest men his word was as good as his bond; with a dishonest one he was a past master of trickery and from past experience he knew that Tartatanyi qualified in the latter class. He could reckon almost to a sequin the value of the loot he had accumulated and secreted during the six years of corrupt administration of his valuable pashalik, and, knowing that he had been forced to abandon it when he fled from the vengeance of Zantopolis, he guessed the reason of his visit to Jabez Cooper. Knowing, too, that Zantopolis' frenzied search and the rigid investigations of the Bolsheviki had failed to unearth Tartatanyi's ill-gotten hoard, he reasoned that it must be concealed in the one place which the law of Islam preserved from unwarranted masculine intrusion, and mentally he paid tribute to the shrewdness of his American confrere in selecting a woman for his emissary.

Realizing that Tartatanyi would not hesitate to renege on the agreement they had made if he succeeded in reaching the safety of a neutral country with the treasure in his physical possession, he had even contemplated introducing into the ex-pasha's harem a woman on whom he could rely to safeguard his interests, and on learning that Tartatanyi had left New York to return to Trebizond he had sought diligently through the slave markets to discover one whose beauty would make an acceptable present and upon whose fidelity he could rely to serve him intelligently and honestly. Among the Circassians, Georgians, Armenians, Egyptians, and Bedouins submitted by the dealers for his inspection he found many ravishingly beautiful women who were carefully educated in all the pleasing feminine accomplishments; but not one who met his other requirements; for in selecting their wares the slave merchants had sought for beauty, rather than brains. But knowing by reputation the cleverness of the women of the West—a cleverness which enabled them to enslave men instead of being content to be their slaves—he believed that his captive might prove to be an implement ready-fashioned to his hand, and it was that hope, not the fond anticipation of a bridegroom, which hastened his progress to the Door of Felicity.

Celeste had been surprised, rather than frightened, by her first glimpse of the interior of a Turkish zenana; for it was not at all what her imagination had pictured. As a matter of fact, that particular one was in no way typical; for old Mahmoud, becoming with the years more and more a cold-blooded, money-making machine, had long since ceased to take interest or pride in it, and it had gone to seed. He maintained it after a fashion through deference to Moslem tradition, but it was many years since he had added to its inmates.

The neglected garden was overrun with weeds, the alabaster fountain was cracked and dry, the whole place shabby and dilapidated, and old Hassam's post had so long been a sinecure that he had grown slovenly and inefficient. Therefore, a single punch from this vigorous young daughter of the West had sufficed to make him loose his hold of her, and it was fear of the Nubian and of encountering Kent-Irwin, rather than fear of the old eunuch, which induced her to enter the building instead of venturing again into the lane. But once inside he had accomplished by strategem what he could never have done by force, slipping quickly back, slamming a door and turning a key which left her a prisoner in a shabby, neglected room which in days gone by had been the nuptial chamber of a succession of Oriental brides, while on the outside Hassam stood jealous guard; bewildered by the sudden and dramatic return of long-forgotten responsibilities. And there, quivering with excitement, the old contrabandist found him when he opened the Door of Felicity, so long

unused that it creaked noisily as it swung on rusted hinges.

"Have a care, effendi!" he warned in a falsetto cracked with age as his master strode toward him. "This Rhoumi maiden is as beautiful as the most glorious of the ten thousand houris who delight the blessed eyes of the holy prophet in paradise; but truly she is possessed of a dozen spirits of Eblis! Until I knew your pleasure concerning her I omitted the customary instructions to a bride, but I would suggest that you permit me to summon Achmet and Akbar to assist me in instilling in her the virtue of submission before you honor her with the light of your presence!"

Remembering the red furrows on the Nubian's ebony cheek and noting a puffiness which nearly closed one of Hassam's rheumy eyes, Mahmoud Ben Azra smiled grimly, but impatient to get back to the bazaar which he rarely deserted in business hours, he motioned to the trembling eunuch to stand aside.

"On my head be it; unlock the door!" he said sharply, but when the eunuch with trembling hands obeyed and then ducked quickly to one side, Mahmoud Ben Azra halted suddenly at the threshold and his hands went instinctively above his head. The young woman who faced him fully justified Hassam's description; in all the array which the slave dealers had paraded for his inspection there had been none as beautiful; but it was painfully evident that she had never been educated according to the Moslem code. Her eyes were large and beautiful and betrayed unusual intelligence, but they returned his startled gaze defiantly above the short barrel of an automatic pistol; the muzzle with disconcerting and unwavering steadiness covering a point squarely between his own.

CHAPTER VII.

Clothes may not make the man, but they assuredly play no small part in a woman's scheme of life, and the change in the attitude and bearing of Celeste la Rue after a few minutes of privacy afforded convincing proof of the effect of raiment upon the feminine emotions. Swaddled in a burnoose and her face shrouded by a yashmak, she had unconsciously yielded to the indecision and helplessness so characteristic of Oriental women; discarding them and standing revealed in the neat and extremely becoming traveling costume designed especially for her in New York, she became suddenly the resourceful, self-reliant, and confident American business girl. The small and compact haversack which she carried slung over her shoulder contained a surprising quantity of things—among them even a spare pair of dainty shoes—and, in spite of her rough journey and recent strenuous experiences, she was speedily as trim and trig as she had appeared during business hours in Jabez Cooper's office.

Perhaps because of that mental change which her outward appearance typified, she realized after a moment's observation that Mahmoud Ben Azra meant business; but Tartatanyi Pasha was not the only man who had been tempted by her charms to attempt the injection of sentiment into a purely commercial relationship, and she kept him covered as she calmly demanded an explanation of his presence. And Mahmoud, recognizing her weapon as the latest improved model, realized its deadly potentialities, even in the frail hands of a woman, and quickly got down to brass tacks.

"I have come to welcome to Trebizond the representative of the famous Effendi Cooper; may his shadow never grow less!" he exclaimed. "And, by the beard of the Prophet, I swear that in the zenana of Mahmoud Ben Azra you are as safe as you would be in the booth of the great effendi in the bazaar of New York!" Celeste smiled, and, lowering her weapon, permitted him to follow suit with his hands.

"I'm relying more on the memory of Sam Colt than the whiskers of Mahmoud, and I'm not worrying about Jabez Cooper's shadow while he can get three square meals a day," she said. "Just to prevent a possible misunderstanding, I would remind you that this gun shoots straight and that I am impulsive. Now, as I saw you gossiping with Tartatanyi Pasha, I assume that you know the mission which has brought me to your charming city?" Mahmoud gravely inclined his head in token of assent.

"But not from the lips of that consummate liar," he qualified. "In fact, he has always denied the existence of his hidden treasure, which is the one thing which convinces me that it exists and lies hidden in his harem. It was to discuss that that I had you brought here, instead of delivering you immediately to his harem, as he requested.

Believe me, neither your employer nor yourself will be the loser by that."

"And from what I have heard of Mahmoud Ben Azra, he doesn't deal himself a losing hand when he has control of the cards, but I'd like to know where you get a license to come into this game at all!" protested Celeste. "And I only remained here through curiosity which you'll have to satisfy in a hurry. The exact nature of my business is a confidential matter of which I am not at liberty to speak, even if Tartatanyi was fool enough to talk of it, but I'll listen to anything you have to say."

And listen she did during the next half hour to a very vivid and accurate description of the situation in Trebizond and the surrounding country; a description which suggested many difficulties which Tartatanyi had omitted to mention in New York; not the least of them the frankly expressed determination of Mahmoud Ben Azra to share in the division of the spoils. To justify it he produced a copy of the contract which Tartatanyi had signed that morning, which stipulated the payment of a sum equal to the total value of the treasure to the revolutionary treasury.

"And, as that treasure represents all of Tartatanyi's assets, you can see what the Effendi Cooper gets if the pasha makes good with me," he concluded.

"A valid one; but, as it makes you rival claimants, I don't see why you are talking to me," objected Miss la Rue. "I warn you that neither bribery nor intimidation will induce me to deceive my employer."

"Unless I believed that, I should not talk with you," said Mahmoud. "We should not be rivals, however, but allied against Tartatanyi, whom I believe intends to keep the entire amount himself. He has agreed to pay half of it to the Effendi Cooper and all of it to the revolution; as he manifestly cannot do both, I believe that he intends to do neither. If we play at cross purposes it is possible that all three of us will lose and either the Bolsheviki or Zantopolis will win. Certainly we shall both lose unless we cooperate. I acknowledge frankly that without your assistance I can devise no way to get the jewels out of the harem and just as frankly I tell you that without my assistance you would find it impossible to get them safely to the frontier. Trebizond is like Tartatanyi's harem—a trap which is easy to enter, but difficult to escape from. Shrewd as I know the Effendi Cooper to be, he has made a mistake in handling this affair; he should not have allowed Tartatanyi to return to Trebizond until you were safely back in New York."

"Why?" asked Celeste quickly, a subtle change in his voice and eyes warning her that the old contrabandist's thoughts were straying from the safe ground of business. He glanced significantly about the room, at the stained and discolored walls, the faded draperies and moth-eaten coverings of the divans, at the festoons of cobwebs hanging from the ceiling and the litter carelessly swept into the corners. Neglected and dilapidated as it was, the room and its furnishings bore evidence of its former glories and raised memories of his golden youth and the days when he valued wealth only for the pleasures which it brought.

"Each man to his taste, and when you deal with Tartatanyi Pasha in the harem where his word is law, you will quickly find that his and mine differ," he answered slowly. "Avaricious he is, in the days of his pashalik no poor wretch who fell into his clutches escaped until he had given up his last sequin; but did he possess a wife or daughter whom Tartatanyi coveted, he forfeited his life as well. Madam, I have told you that without my assistance you could never hope to escape to the frontier with the jewels; that I realized before seeing you unveiled. Now that I have seen you—and remembering Tartatanyi's eagerness to have you delivered to him—I will say more than that; without my assistance you will never leave his harem. Do not judge what you will find there from what you see here!" he went on quickly as Celeste glanced at old Hassam, sitting cross-legged and dozing in the doorway, a great scimitar which he no longer had the strength to wield lying across his knees, and smiled contemptuously. "Hassam's duties have long since been only a memory and like the weapon he bears he has rusted into uselessness. In the harem of Tartatanyi Pasha you will yield to the will of the master, or——" he paused and looked at her appraisingly.

"Or—what?" she demanded, her fingers clutching the butt of her pistol as Hassam, probably dreaming of some former experience stirred uneasily and feebly attempted to draw the scimitar from the scabbard in which it was firmly rusted.

"Or be beaten into submission by Rustem

and his assistants—unless you go there as my ally," said Mahmoud quietly. "Wait, before you decide; I am willing to leave that decision to Tartatanyi himself, if you will agree that when his own act convicts him of treachery you will deal fairly with me, so sure am I that he will keep faith with no man when a woman stands between. If you do agree, I will promise to do my utmost to assist you to escape unharmed from his clutches and to aid you in reaching the frontier in safety with the treasure."

"Intact?" she demanded sharply, and Mahmoud Ben Azra smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes; both you and the treasure—and, believe me, one will be as difficult to guard as the other," he answered. "By reputation I know the great Effendi Cooper as a hard bargainer, but an honest and just man. Once it is safely removed from danger of confiscation by the Bolsheviki and appropriation by the brigands of Zantopolis, we shall share it equally. Unto the Effendi Cooper we shall render that which is his due; for Mahmoud Ben Azra, too, is honest and would defraud no man."

"Except Tartatanyi, who under your proposed arrangement seems destined to hold the bag," suggested Celeste cynically.

"Pardon me; the bag will be held by other hands—for his false head to fall into!" amended Mahmoud. "In Trebizond his life hangs by a thread at best. Zantopolis will soon be warned by his spies of his presence here and against Tartatanyi he has sworn the blood vengeance for the murder of his brother. So long as the Greek renegade knows that the treasure lies concealed in Tartatanyi's harem he will stay his hand; for with Tartatanyi's death the Bolsheviki would break down the Door of Felicity and loot the zenana. But with the treasure removed by us, Tartatanyi loses that safeguard, and his life will pay for the dagger thrust in the corpse of his brother which Zantopolis found in the well of the palace courtyard. Tartatanyi shall reap the reward of his treachery, Zantopolis will be paid the blood debt, and the Effendi Cooper and Mahmoud Ben Azra will share equally the legitimate spoils of victory."

"And the widows of Tartatanyi will be left penniless?" suggested Celeste.

The old contrabandist straightened up, stroked his patriarchal beard, and again glanced about the room and at the dozing eunuch. When his gaze returned to her she regretted having disregarded the maxim concerning the mixture of business and sentiment which Jabez Cooper eloquently preached and rigorously practiced, for there was something in his eyes which reminded her of the expression which had gained Tartatanyi chastisement. Evidently the return to his deserted and long-neglected zenana and the presence of a beautiful woman there had roused memories which it would have been wiser to let lie with his vanished youth, and instinctively her fingers tightened about the pistol butt.

"Of the wives of Tartatanyi I know only from hearsay; concerning his widows that may be a different matter!" he exclaimed with a senile cackle which made the expression which had crept to his leering eyes doubly repulsive. "Who knows what of beauty and youth may be found behind those jealously guarded walls when the rascal's death makes inspection possible without breaking the sacred law of Islam?" Celeste half raised the pistol, for his eyes betrayed his true meaning more plainly than his words.

"No American girl will be found there!" she said defiantly. "And this particular one isn't going to stand any nonsense from any Turkish Lothario, young or old. Now, Mahmoud; from what you have told me, I can see that the situation here is complicated enough without taking on any side issues. Of course, I'm going to Tartatanyi's harem, but only on the business which brought me here. He is going to get the surprise of his life when he finds that out; he hadn't the slightest suspicion that Mr. Cooper had intrusted the business to me; he thought it was some one else and——"

"Then why should he have been so quick to recognize you in the bazaar?" interrupted Mahmoud, to her relief quickly forgetting the memories of his youth in the problem of the present. "If he did not believe that you were here as the agent of the Effendi Cooper, he must have been aware of some other motive powerful enough to induce you to brave the perils of the road. If not to you, to whom does he believe the Effendi Cooper has intrusted the recovery of the jewels?" For the first time Celeste betrayed embarrassment.

"I have no way of knowing what is in Tartatanyi's mind!" she answered evasively, a telltale flush coming to her cheeks.

"Whatever his guess may be, I'll tell you right now, it isn't within a thousand miles of the truth which I'm going to tell him as soon as we are face to face. I go to his harem unfettered with promises, on the assumption that he will play squarely and stick to business; if he does, I expect to be able to accomplish just what I came here for; if he does not——"

"You refuse my offer of coöperation?" he asked incredulously and Celeste nodded assent.

"Until I have positive proof that Tartatanyi intends to play false—and, remember, I saw you as thick as—well, thieves, an hour ago. Also, you seem to have been in cahoots to trap me and get me into his harem. That happens to suit me exactly, but I'll attend to getting out of it myself. Now, Mahmoud, I have been given an absolutely free hand, and I am empowered to make any arrangements I please which will not conflict with Mr. Cooper's rights. If Tartatanyi plays square there will be nothing to it; if he does not, I realize that I should have difficulties in getting away after I leave his harem, and if you want to take a chance on a possible split with Mr. Cooper as a reward, I'll accept your help in getting the treasure to the frontier."

"And you count on no other assistance?" demanded Mahmoud suspiciously, for her embarrassment and blushes had not been lost upon him.

"If you deliver the goods, there will be no one else; if you do not—I shall naturally do the best I can to safeguard the interests of my employer."

Mahmoud Ben Azra looked at her intently for a moment, but she met his gaze without flinching, for in his shrewd old eyes there was no suggestion of the expression which had revolted, rather than alarmed her a few minutes before. Only when he turned and with a sharp word awakened the dozing eunuch was she startled; but he quickly reassured her with a kindly smile, and a moment later Hassam entered, bearing a tray on which lay a loaf of bread and a dish of salt.

Breaking a piece from the loaf, Mahmoud touched it to the salt and swallowed it and then motioned to her to do the same, pronouncing a few words which were unintelligible to her as she complied; his voice and manner giving to the simple proceeding the solemnity of a sacrament.

"Together we have broken bread and you have eaten of my salt," he said quietly and impressively. "Tartatanyi will not play fair, your need of help will be greater than you know; but, by the beard of the Prophet, Mahmoud Ben Azra will keep faith! Until nightfall you shall remain here; Hassam will be your slave while I return to the bazaar to make due provision for your safety. I, too, shall deal in all fairness with Tartatanyi until he reveals himself in his true colors, and, as I promised, I shall with the falling of darkness have you delivered to his harem door."

"Just make that 'escorted,' if you please, Mahmoud," corrected Celeste, toying significantly with the pistol. He smiled and accepted the amendment with a bow.

"Also, I have a little business to do in Trebizond this afternoon, so I do not intend to remain cooped up here. I don't mind taking Hassam along as a chaperon, but you had better instruct him to take and not try to give orders, unless he wants to get his other eye closed."

Mahmoud started a vigorous protest, but she cut it short and he was forced to give a reluctant assent and transmit her instructions—together with certain quiet suggestions of his own—to his aged retainer.

Again the Door of Felicity creaked on its rusty hinges as it closed behind him, but he reflected that a few drops of oil and use would soon banish that, and there was an elasticity in his step and a jauntiness in his bearing when he entered the Street of the Armorers which suggested that in his brief and unaccustomed absence from his booth during business hours he had discovered and sipped from the waters of the Fountain of Youth. Zantopolis, noting from a corner of his crafty eyes that miraculous rejuvenation, shrewdly drew his own conclusions as to the cause of it; but just as shrewdly he held his peace and said nothing of his suspicions to Mir Mizra with whom he was conversing earnestly on a topic which had nothing whatever to do with the marketing of attar of roses from Tabriz.

CHAPTER VIII.

His continued presence in Trebizond contemptuously tolerated by the Russians to whom he had surrendered the city after a purely perfunctory show of resistance, Zantopolis still retained a semblance of au-

thority over the irregular troops, never much better than bandits, who roamed the No Man's Land a few miles beyond the walls. It was an authority born of their necessities; for requisitioning rations from the peasantry and tribute from the caravans they were dependent upon him for their supplies of arms and ammunition and to find a market for their surplus loot. Selim Magistani, his senses perhaps sharpened by the fear of Celeste la Rue's pistol, had successfully eluded them; but relieved of that stimulus to vigilance he became careless and at sunrise he fell into the clutches of a patrol of Kurd horsemen commanded by Sarkis-el-Abbat. Surprised by the number of American gold coins which they found on him, they questioned him after the gentle manner of the East as to the origin of his wealth, and hanging suspended by his thumbs from the branch of a cedar tree he had—between the stimulating strokes of a rhinoceros hide whip—told them all that he knew and a good deal which he only imagined. In his pouch they also found a scribbled note from Celeste to the director of the Armenian Relief in Bitlis, and with this and the verbal information he had extracted, Sarkis hurried to his nominal chief in Trebizond.

Accordingly, while Kent-Irwin was searching vainly through the maze of narrow streets for the woman who had cried to him for help, Zantopolis was learning in the bazaar the explanation of her mysterious appearance in the Turkish city and, having identified her from the contents of the note as a legionary of the famous Jabez Cooper, he was able to form a pretty accurate guess as to the motive which prompted her coming. He was certain that Tartatanyi had accumulated a tremendous treasure in his corrupt administration, he was equally certain that in his hurried flight he had been forced to abandon it to save his skin, and, having during his own pashalik searched every other likely and available hiding place in Trebizond, he was morally certain that it was concealed in his harem, the one place which he dare not enter in spite of the despotic power which he had enjoyed. He paid mental tribute to the sagacity of the American capitalist in sending a feminine agent to recover it, the same idea had, of course, occurred to him; but—like Mahmoud Ben Azra—he had been forced to abandon it because he could not find one upon whom he could rely. Therefore he welcomed joyously the news of the arrival of Mr. Cooper's agent and vowed mentally that he would do everything to further the success of her mission—up to the time when she should get the treasure outside of those baffling zenana walls. Beyond that his plans did not imply anything which would strain the chivalry—even of a Greek renegade.

Thoroughly realizing the golden quality of silence, he said nothing of what he had heard when Kent-Irwin, flushed from his exertion and crestfallen from failure, rejoined him in the Street of the Armorers; but in a quiet and secluded little coffee-house he proved an eager and sympathetic listener to the young Englishman's rueful confession of his unsuccessful search. The dainty shoe offered convincing evidence that the young woman who had disappeared was the foreigner in whom he was interested and, while he made no comment, Kent-Irwin's description of the footprints suggesting a struggle which he had noted in the mud, possessed a peculiar significance for him. Nubian slaves were the only inhabitants of the city who trod its filthy streets with unprotected feet and since the source of supply had been cut off for four years by the war they had grown scarce and Mahmoud Ben Azra had practically cornered the entire visible supply. Rather to Kent-Irwin's surprise, Zantopolis heartily and eagerly volunteered his assistance in locating the missing girl; but, greatly to his disappointment, he insisted upon their personal inactivity as a condition.

"There are many harems in Trebizond; each is a mystery to all but its owner and even to betray curiosity concerning the humblest of them would be to court death for ourselves without aiding her, for by these Moslem fanatics we are both regarded as infidels," he warned. "But what we may not do ourselves, old employees who are still faithful to me may do for us, and I can safely promise you that before nightfall we shall know the place of confinement of this woman—and until then we could take no action."

"Then directly after sunset there is one harem in this filthy place that will give up its secrets!" exclaimed Kent-Irwin; but Zantopolis raised a warning hand and looked cautiously about.

"Careful; we must use strategy, not force!" he said. "From what you have told me of the courage and resourcefulness of

this maiden, I believe that she will be able to escape unaided from the strongest harem, for such things have been done, the most we can hope to do is to get word to her that we are in readiness without the walls to further her flight. To do even that much we must work circumspectly and speedily, and now we shall set our secret allies to work!"

A word to a public letter writer squatted beneath his gaudy umbrella at a neighboring corner was quickly followed by the disappearance of a dozen nondescript idlers from the bazaar. A hint dropped here and there as they strolled along served to make the small army of coffeehouse attendants alert to catch the idle gossip of their patrons and within an hour every donkey boy, public porter, beggar, and dancing girl knew that information concerning the abduction and hiding place of a foreign woman would meet with a golden reward from Zantopolis. Realizing his own helplessness until he had definite information, Kent-Irwin was forced to be content with inaction during the rest of that long day, for the renegade said nothing to him of the suspicions aroused by the jaunty bearing of old Mahmoud; suspicions which became almost a certainty when he saw the telltale scratches on the black face of the gigantic Nubian, hurrying barefooted through the filthy streets of Trebizond, carrying mysterious messages from the wily old schemer who sat cross-legged in his booth, sipping black coffee from an eggshell cup, drawing sibilantly at the snakelike tube of a nargile and under the mingled stimulus of caffein and soothing influence of nicotine reveling in the daydreams of a rejuvenated youth which had been inspired by a pair of eyes he had first looked into above the threatening barrel of an automatic pistol.

The suspicion that Mahmoud Ben Azra had been implicated in the abduction of the girl was most disquieting, for he feared the power of the old contrabandist's secret organization far more than the careless and inefficient administration of the Russians. Even in the days of his power he had never dared to oppress him and conscious that even a hint to the Bolsheviki commander that he was secretly in the pay of the British Intelligence Department would result in his own summary execution he dared do nothing openly to oppose him. Of course, the wily old schemer knew that and was in a position to use the information; for he always established cordial relations with the de-facto government. Knowing from common bazaar gossip that for years Mahmoud's zenana had been a deserted cage, he had no suspicion that this American girl had been carried there for sentimental reasons and in the rejuvenated bearing of the avaricious old curmudgeon he read only elation over the prospect of using her as he had planned to use her, to gain possession of the hidden treasure.

Before the afternoon, which to his companion seemed interminable, was half over, he received information which added mightily to his uneasiness, for his spies reported that Tartatanyi himself had returned to Trebizond, and that, disguised as an Armenian, he had even ventured to visit the bazaar; after a long consultation with Mahmoud Ben Azra returning safely to the sanctuary of his harem. With Mahmoud and Tartatanyi acting in concert and an agent of Jabez Cooper on the scene he had every reason to fear for the safety of the treasure, and he inwardly cursed the luck which had saddled him with the companionship of this mad Englishman who thought only of the safety of the woman who would prove a drag upon them when her usefulness was over.

In still another report he found a complication which was fairly maddening, for from the zenana of Mahmoud Ben Azra a veiled woman had emerged under the escort of old Hassam and had gone directly to that part of the palace which he once ruled, but which was now used as the Bolshevist headquarters. The spy had not dared to follow her inside, but through the opened gate he had seen her in earnest conversation with a couple of Russian women in the courtyard. When she came out she had returned, apparently voluntarily, to Mahmoud's zenana, for the feeble old eunuch had followed her submissively.

Of all of this, Zantopolis said nothing to Kent-Irwin; he intended to make what use he could of him, but he certainly had no intention of letting sickly sentimentality for this foolhardy American girl interfere with his filching the treasure from her nor, incidentally, to let any finicky British prejudice against murder prevent him from exacting his blood vengeance from its owner. He had even evolved a tentative plan to dispose of him when, to his complete mystification, Rustem, the chief of Tartatanyi's

eunuchs, boldly entered the coffeehouse, and, after sharply scrutinizing the faces of the guests, waddled straight to the divan on which they were seated. Ignoring the Greek, who even as pasha had never dared to interfere with this most insolent member of a class peculiarly exempt from official interference in Turkey, he salaamed respectfully to the disguised Englishman.

"I am the bearer of a message—for the ears of the effendi only," he squeaked with an insolent and significant glance at the renegade. To Kent-Irwin's surprise the Greek rose hastily from the divan and slunk away.

"My master, the all powerful Pasha Arkani Tartatanyi, sends greeting and the wish that the effendi may live a thousand years," cackled the eunuch after his departure. "If the effendi will graciously be at the gate of the zenana garden when the muezzins from the minarets summon the faithful to prayer at midnight, he shall receive from my master's own hands that which he has come from a far country to rescue." Kent-Irwin looked at the hideous black face with only surprise written on his own. From what he knew of Tartatanyi and from what he had heard of the wide-spread conspiracy against the British since arriving in Trebizond, he believed that the trickster would be far more likely to betray him to the Russians than to do him a favor. The presence of a British intelligence officer in Trebizond was a distinct menace to the success of that conspiracy which would return him to power, and Tartatanyi had proved that he was no sentimentalist in dealing with men who stood between him and that which he craved.

"You speak to Mir Mizra, a merchant of perfumes from Tabriz; I know nothing of your master and my business here is to sell attar of roses in Trebizond bazaar," he replied guardedly, purposely giving the Persian accent to his Osmanli speech. The eunuch grinned appreciatively. He loved the Oriental game of intrigue, especially when he had the master cards in his sleeve. One of these he proceeded to play, opening his black paw and disclosing in its yellow palm a gaudy bit of paper. It pictured a buxom Oriental houri reposing languorously on a divan beside a fountain, a cloud of fragrant smoke floating above her. It was the counterpart of the label which had adorned the boxes containing "Zuleika's Delight," Arkani's choicest brand of cigarettes.

"In his exile, my master—may his shadow never grow less—did not always appear in the splendor of a pasha, and he warned me that I should not find you wearing the uniform of a British officer in Trebizond bazaar," he said. "But should you still mistrust his humble and unworthy messenger, I am instructed to say that the treasure you shall receive from his hands will gladden the heart of the Effendi Cooper." Rustem grinned triumphantly, believing that he had played his trump ace, but he was a trifle startled by the result, for his opponent jumped to his feet with an agility which no staid Persian merchant ever displayed and clutched him firmly by the wrist.

"See here, there is no sense in waiting until midnight. I'll go with you right now and ask your master what he means by all this flowery camouflage!" he exclaimed, dropping all trace of Persian accent. The eunuch scowled and his free hand slipped to the hilt of a dagger in his sash, not the one whose hilt glittered brilliantly with precious gems, but to a plain and serviceable one which was meant for business, not designed as an ornament.

"Is the effendi mad?" he exclaimed; but, in spite of the shrill falsetto, there was no suggestion of fear in his voice. "Remember that in daylight you dare not so much as cast your infidel eyes at the door of a true believer's zenana, nor in this Moslem city could you pass in safety through the streets with that which you will receive under the mantle of darkness!"

Kent-Irwin released his grasp; he knew that the eunuch spoke the truth. As an infidel escorting a veiled woman he would be mobbed and stoned to death by the Mohammedans; as a foreigner escorting a beautiful girl unveiled he would undoubtedly attract the attention of the Russians, which would lead to his own execution as a spy and probably to a fate worse than death for Celeste in the power of the infamous Red Guards.

"Confound it; there is something in that!" he admitted reluctantly. "But, see here, you black devil, don't you count too much on the sanctity of the zenana. I'll hold both you and your master responsible, and, if you play me false, that won't save either of you, for I'll pull it about your ears to get you before any one gets me. As for

this treasure, your heads shall answer for its safety until it is delivered into my keeping." Rustem faced him fearlessly, a hideous grin of defiance distorting his thick lips.

"Treasures beyond all price has my master left in my keeping during his absence. That infidel dog who sat with you when I entered will tell the effendi that Rustem is true to his salt. Until midnight, effendi, Mizpah!"

"Confound the flowery metaphor of the East!" exclaimed Kent-Irwin savagely in answer to Zantopolis' eager questioning when the renegade rejoined him a few minutes later. "If that black delegate was telling the truth, you can call in your ragamuffin army of spies. Miss la Rue is in Tartatanyi's harem and he's evidently keen to get rid of her, for he wants me to call at the garden gate at midnight and escort her back to her former employer. Much obliged to you for what you tried to do, old chap. At any rate, you've enabled me to clean up my official business in good shape, so there is nothing in that line to detain me here. There's just one thing more you might do, set the signal for the submarine to stand by at midnight. As soon as I meet Miss la Rue I'll clear out and not bother you further." Zantopolis looked at him incredulously.

"And you really believe that Tartatanyi will voluntarily release from his harem such a beautiful young woman as you have described to me?" he asked. "Two heads are better than one in dealing with such a treacherous dog. Will you repeat to me exactly what the eunuch said to you?"

Kent-Irwin complied, and from his ingenuous recital Zantopolis was convinced that he was totally unsuspicious of what he believed to be the truth; that Mahmoud and Tartatanyi were scheming to use him as an unconscious agent to smuggle out the treasure. Little that went on in or near Trebizond failed to become speedily known to Mahmoud, and the capture of the Armenian had probably convinced him that it would be too risky to try the route to Bitlis.

To his crafty, treacherous mind the whole scheme seemed as plain as print, for he was sure that Celeste was in their power. A veiled woman would undoubtedly be delivered to Kent-Irwin that night and, in his anxiety to reach safety with her, he would never wait to raise her yashmak. That woman, probably one of Tartatanyi's slaves, would carry the treasure concealed about her. Undoubtedly Rustem would follow them closely as they fled to the beach; if they were intercepted he would claim the woman as an escaped inmate of his master's harem. Such a claim would never be disputed in a Moslem city, and Rustem could drag her back, the treasure undisturbed, leaving Kent-Irwin to shift for himself.

Should they succeed in escaping, the substitution would not be discovered until they were on the submarine and, as these overscrupulous Englishman would never think of searching a woman, they could do nothing but carry her to Constantinople where one of Tartatanyi's agents would undoubtedly await them with apologies and excuses and take charge of her and her precious burden and promise to send Miss la Rue in her place.

Failure to reach the beach would mean only the death of the Englishman, for the treasure would be returned to the harem and Tartatanyi would be no worse off than before the attempt; success would mean that he, Zantopolis, would be left to hold the bag, and he quickly devised a scheme in which he would play a far more agreeable and profitable rôle. In that amended scheme Kent-Irwin was to play the part of the sacrificial goat, so naturally the renegade said nothing to him about it and accepted his thanks and instructions without comment.

Zantopolis knew and feared the long arm of the British intelligence department to which he had sold his services; a secret service which could not afford to let treachery go unpunished. In an official matter he would never have dared to betray the young Englishman, but fortune was playing into his hands to make treachery both safe and profitable. He would accompany him to his midnight tryst; he would be close at hand when he and Tartatanyi stood face to face with the veiled woman between them. There would be no living witness left to identify him as the wielder of the dagger which would make three swift strokes in the darkness; a moment would suffice to strip the woman's body of the treasure and then a swift flight to the beach where the submarine's boat would be in waiting.

He knew the obstinacy of these cursed Englishmen. Undoubtedly the naval officer in charge would require proof of the story he would tell; the story of Kent-Irwin's madness in attempting to violate the sanc-

tity of a Moslem harem. At the very door of the zenana he would show it to him. The body of the would-be violator, the corpse of the Mohammedan who had died in defense of his sacred rights, the body of the woman who had tempted the young Englishman to destruction in spite of his warnings. Then he would beg a passage for himself on the submarine, and before daybreak he would have left Trebizond forever, his tracks thoroughly covered, his blood debt paid, the long coveted treasure in his possession, and ahead of him a roseate future of luxury and wealth beyond the dreams of avarice!

Accordingly, with the falling of dusk, he ascended to the roof of his house to set the signal which Kent-Irwin had ordered, and, descending, received the last report from his spies—that, escorted by old Hassam, a veiled woman had left the house of Mahmoud Ben Azra and through the garden gate from which his fortune was to come had entered the zenana of Tartanyi.

Inside of that carefully guarded wall Tartatanyi had spent a happy and busy afternoon, unearthing, sorting, and preparing for transportation the wonderful jewels which represented the proceeds of the tremendous loot of six years of corrupt administration of the richest provinces of the Turkish Empire. The sweat of honest labor, the bitter agony of tortured victims, the life blood of those who had resisted, was in the glittering streams which he gloated over as they trickled through his fingers into stout leather bags, but no remorse for the cruelties of the past nor compunctions for the meditated treachery of the future disturbed the callous reprobate as he spun his web.

At midnight Kent-Irwin, the duly accredited agent of Jabez Cooper, would take over the treasure, planning to appropriate it for himself and the woman who had followed him to share the fruits of his treachery to his employer. With the treasure the Englishman would hurry to safety, only to find that the woman for whose love he had sold his honor was held as hostage in Trebizond and to obtain even a promise of her release he would have to give up the last jewel for ransom. And at that it would be only a promise, he reflected, a crafty smile on his lips as he thought of how little worth was a devout Mohammedan's pledged word to an unbeliever.

After all, the future would hold compensation for his lean years of exile, and to replace the great power which he had wielded as the Sultan's viceroy he would have that which his great wealth would purchase, and the easy conscience arising from having wiped out old scores, including the chastisement he had received from a pair of pink palms in the office of that avaricious fat man who had attempted to profit by his dire necessities.

Mahmoud Ben Azra had profitably employed those hours which the young Englishman found so long. By his orders the Nubian had visited many hovels in the slums of Trebizond and, as a result, a score of men, who had served him faithfully in many a desperate venture, were warned that this night his master would again have need of their services. The old contrabandist was taking no chances. Celeste would go to Tartatanyi's harem primed with such advice and counsel as he could give her and, having had convincing demonstration of her fearlessness and self-confidence, he had little doubt that she would emerge at the appointed time with the treasure in her keeping. But once outside the walls of Tartatanyi's harem she would be in constant danger until she had taken refuge in his own, and he would feel much safer about her and her precious burden if a force of men upon whom he could rely stood ready to his call. And once again inside his zenana, she would learn many things—but, business before pleasure, and that could wait.

And so, entirely unconscious of the webs of plot and counterplot of friend and enemies which were being woven to rescue or destroy her, Celeste walked fearlessly through the carefully guarded doorway of Tartatanyi's zenana garden, confident that the plan she had devised would absolutely insure her own safety and lead to the complete success of her mission. And the same moonlight which flooded the beautiful garden she entered shone on the hills beyond the walls, revealing the body of Selim Magistani hanging from a cedar as grim evidence that the roads from Trebizond were closed. It lighted, too, ripples on the glassy surface of the Black Sea as the periscope of H. M. S. 139 cut through the water, the commander below the surface noting through it the message of the colored lanterns on the roof of Zantopolis' house. In the renegade's garden Kent-Irwin strode im-

patiently to and fro, cursing the lagging hours, while his host, furtively testing the point of his dagger with his thumb, smiled grimly as he marked between the broad shoulders the exact point to strike.

In his own long-neglected garden Mahmoud Ben Azra sat with the calm patience of the Oriental, dreaming of the days to come when its grass-grown walks should be restored, its tangled rose vines pruned and brought to proper order, and a beautiful young woman of the West would wait beside the fountain to welcome him when he returned wearied with his labors from the bazaar.

And avoiding that moonlight and creeping furtively in the deep shadows cast by the high walls, a score of cutthroats hurried stealthily from their kennels in the slums to rendezvous near the gate of Tartatanyi's harem, prepared to disregard the laws of God and man to make their master's dream come true. Mahmoud had no fear of their fidelity to him, for in his crafty old brain was stored information concerning each and every one of them which, whispered in the proper place, would cause them to regard hanging as an easy death.

CHAPTER IX.

Tartatanyi Pasha in his Trebizond harem was a very different individual from Arkani, the cigarette dealer in Washington Street, the center of New York's Oriental quarter. Attired in a gorgeous native costume, a great emerald flashing on the front of his turban, the gem-incrusted hilt of a dagger gleaming above a broad silken sash and the crimson velvet zouave jacket stiff with the embroidery of gold thread, he was a brilliant figure. There was a curious, cynical smile of welcome on his sensual lips as from the divan where he sat cross-legged, he greeted Celeste without rising when Rustem conducted her into the great reception room; but his eyes were as hard and cruel as the green gem which glittered evilly above them.

Behind him, dividing the room into two parts, was a screen of mushabeah, that beautiful and delicate handwrought lattice which in the tropical harems insures privacy and seclusion without preventing the circulation of air, and from behind it came a soft rustling and half-whispered exclamations as the beautiful daughter of the West entered that typically Eastern setting.

For just a moment Celeste hesitated and, seeing that Tartatanyi had no intention of rising, she acknowledged his half-mocking welcome with a careless nod and, uninvited, seated herself comfortably on a divan facing him. At this unparalleled breach of harem etiquette which amounted to a brazen claim of equality, the eunuch stepped forward, uttering an angry falsetto rebuke, but something in the calm, contemptuous eyes which turned to him gave him pause before his outstretched hand touched her.

"You can just sit down until I call you," she said quietly. The eunuch scowled and his fingers clutched at the handle of the whip which hung suspended from his wrist; but at a few sharp words from his master he stepped back with evident reluctance.

"My dear, you will find as an inmate of a harem it is not wise to start by defying the authority of the chief eunuch," remarked Tartatanyi, fixing his eyes insolently upon her.

"First of all, it seems necessary to remind you that my name is La Rue; *Miss* la Rue!" she answered unabashed, and a dark flush came to the Turk's face at the memory of the first time she had made that correction. "Also, that I am not an inmate of this harem, but calling as the representative of Mr. Jabez Cooper on a purely business matter." Tartatanyi waved her protest aside with a sweep of a heavily jeweled hand.

"Pardon me if I make a slight correction in that statement, *Miss la Rue!*" he sneered, the emphasis a palpably intentional mockery. "You are *not* here as the unmentionable Cooper's representative, but as my—er—guest. You do not at all resemble the verbal picture of the business agent which came from your own lips. 'Peaches-and-cream complexion and the dearest brown hair with a natural brown wave,' I grant you, but you are far short of 'the ideal height of six feet,' and there is a very fortunate absence of that 'adorable little mustache!'"

Celeste blushed furiously. "If your perception was as well developed as your memory, you would have discovered that I was humbugging you; there was no such person as I described—that was a figment of the imagination to throw you off the track!" she retorted.

"Then, verily, the age of miracles has not passed!" jeered Tartatanyi. "A figment of the imagination it may have been, but so

real that it was speedily incarnated in human form—in two forms, I might say. In the Western world it materialized as Captain Kent-Irwin of His Majesty's Coldstream Guards and, behold, to-day he walked in Trebizond bazaar as the Persian merchant, Mir Mizra, of Tabriz!"

"Go as far as you like, if it amuses you to make such ridiculous identifications, but I have no patience with such nonsense!" protested Celeste. "Nor shall I have with your trifling, Tartatanyi. In New York you turned this whole matter over to Mr. Cooper, and he warned you. I have certified copies of your agreement to prove it, and he appointed me as his agent under the power of attorney which you executed. However, I'll assume that your intentions were good, and I hope you'll prove it and that you have saved me time and trouble by digging up the jewels and preparing them for transport." Tartatanyi's jeweled hand lovingly caressed a plump leather bag, carefully tied and sealed, which rested beside him on the divan.

"Certainly; all is prepared, and I trust that ere the sun rises my treasure in the safe-keeping of Mr. Cooper's agent will have been removed from the reach of the covetous fingers which clutch at it in Trebizond," he said; but when she impetuously started to rise with the evident intention of taking possession of the bag, he warned her with an imperious motion to keep her seat.

"With that part of it, *Miss la Rue,* you need not concern yourself further," he continued, smiling maliciously. "I have already communicated with Mir Mizra and made the appointment with him to call for them."

"What? Reg—I mean, Captain Kent-Irwin—is coming here?" exclaimed Celeste in dismay.

"Not exactly here; so you need not fear the embarrassment of a meeting," answered Tartatanyi, his smile giving place to a snarling grin. "In New York I told you that I did not care to have such a handsome man enter my harem and in his Persian costume he is even more stunning than he was then. No, my dear, at midnight I shall meet him alone at the door through which you entered and deliver to him the treasure with my own hands. He will depart without even suspecting that you are hiding within the walls which he may not pass. Nor will he know it until he has safely transported the jewels to the rendezvous where he fondly expects you will be awaiting him."

Celeste's heart sank as she realized where the delusion she had fostered and the deception she had practiced threatened to lead. In prosaic New York a comedy of errors, it bade fair transplanted to this Eastern scene of mystery and intrigue to develop to grim and terrible tragedy. But, while the color for a moment left her face, there was no betrayal of fear nor hint of indecision in her voice when she spoke.

"Tartatanyi, you persist in ignoring the fact that you agreed to leave the management of this whole affair to Mr. Cooper and that I am his duly appointed representative on the spot and am determined to exercise my rights," she said defiantly. "I'll do the best I can to straighten out the muddle you have gotten this thing into and, if Captain Kent-Irwin is really to be at the gate at midnight, I'll meet him myself with that little package. It may be a trifle embarrassing to both of us at the start, but in the long run it will save a lot of explanations, and he will be sort of handy to have along if there is any trouble on the road."

"Excuse me, my dear; you must remember that the agreement which your fat, pigheaded employer so brutally forced a helpless exile to sign in New York is valueless here," sneered Tartatanyi. "Yes, I imagine that it would exactly suit you to depart with your British lover and to laugh at me as you shared my hard-earned wealth, but that would not suit me at all and, by the hand of Fatima, I am master here! Inside of the walls of this zenana my word is the only law; here I still exercise the high justice, the middle, and the low, and it is my will that the other arrangement stands. While your infidel lover serves me by incurring the danger and discomfort inevitable in carrying my treasure to safety, you will remain here in comfort and luxury and you will speedily forget him as we learn to know each other better. Then, when you fail to join him at the rendezvous, the jewels which he intended to share with you shall be your ransom—and, by the beard of the Prophet, Celeste, you would be worth it!"

Celeste involuntarily shrank back as he leaned forward. His eyes were no less hard and cruel, but in them there flashed something more terrifying than cruelty to a beautiful woman alone in that harem and the familiar use of her Christian name be-

trayed how absolutely he believed her to be in his power.

"Aye, worth it; but by Allah, that dog of an unbeliever shall pay without receiving—for I shall take the jewels and keep you!" he continued passionately, so sure of her powerlessness to resist that he threw caution to the winds. "And with such a fit companion for his greatness, who knows what Tartatanyi may become? Look about you, through that lattice many pairs of eyes are watching you jealously—eyes which, until I saw yours, I believed to be the most beautiful in the world! Beautiful they are, as the eyes of a gazelle—of a cow—are beautiful; but behind them lies no more of soul than the stall-fed ox possesses. But with you beside me, your proud spirit submissive through love, not broken by severity, I can conquer the world. Last night I hurried to anticipated delights with impatient strides; this morning for the first time I left my harem a disillusioned man; satiated with the cloying sweetness which does not satisfy, and I returned to it with leaden feet. Aye, truly, have I learned in the West why Turkey has become the football of the Powers; but, by the sacred sword of Mohammed, Tartatanyi, with you, will change all that. Through what I shall acquire you will be a sultana; the proudest of these women shall be your slaves and handmaidens, and you shall rule a vaster empire than Abdul Hamid knew; for Tartatanyi will conquer it to lay it at your feet!"

"I'm quite satisfied with the job I have now, and I haven't the slightest intention of throwing it up to become the pride of any hashish eater's harem," she replied. "I know it will be a little unconventional, even for a business girl, to go traveling around the Orient with a young man without a chaperon, but that is your fault; you've mixed things up so beautifully——"

"Silence!" interrupted Tartatanyi furiously. "Enough of this. In the harem of Tartatanyi even the mention of another man's name is forbidden and, by Allah, I see that you must be taught to obey before you will be fit to rule! Rustem!" Celeste's hand darted beneath her burnoose as the eunuch started forward at the summons, and reappeared grasping the pistol. Rustem's advance was suddenly checked, and from behind the screen of mushabeah came a chorus of feminine screams of terror, but Tartatanyi looked at the weapon contemptuously.

"Don't be foolish, my dear," he said quietly. "Do you think that I am so stupid that I learned nothing when I lived in New York? I was quite expecting something of this kind from an American girl and, knowing that I should have to deal with a spitfire, I prepared for it. Of course, if you really know how to use that ugly weapon, you might shoot old Rustem, but before you could press the trigger a second time the far more powerful eunuch who stands behind you would——" Old as the strategem was, it worked—as it will in nine cases out of ten until the end of time—and Celeste instinctively half turned. It was only for a second, but a fraction of that would have sufficed for the experienced old eunuch. With an agility which was surprising in a creature of his distorted build he jumped for her and, while the impact carried them both to the floor with a crash that half stunned her for a moment, his movement was swift and sure. Her slender wrist was grasped in the vicelike grip of his great black paw, and the pistol fell from her relaxed fingers and slid across the tiled floor to the edge of Tartatanyi's divan. Disarmed and helpless as a babe in the experienced hands which had learned from long practice to control efficiently the rebellious or hysterical tantrums of women, she was raised to her feet, and Tartatanyi, who had watched the struggle unmoved, looked at her with a cynical smile of triumph upon his sensual lips.

"If you will give me your word that you have no other weapons concealed about you, I shall have you spared the inconvenience of a search—which I can assure you Rustem knows how to make," he said derisively and Celeste, not daring to trust her voice, nodded assent. Tartatanyi motioned to Rustem to release her and, breathless and half dazed, she resumed her seat on the divan as the eunuch took post behind it, watchfully waiting for the first sign of renewed rebellion.

"You will find it wiser to depend upon the weapons of women, with which fortune has so bountifully armed you," continued Tartatanyi. "Now that you have learned from practical demonstration the futility of physical resistance—and I warn you that another outbreak will not be regarded so leniently—there is no reason why I should not tell you of the future I have planned, for in it you are to play a very wonderful part. I know that you will not betray my confi-

dence, for no whisper goes from this harem to the rough world outside—which shall never again look upon your unveiled face!"

As he spoke he watched her as many a time during his pashalik he had watched the face of some poor wretch in the hands of his torturers. Tartatanyi was an expert in the psychology of pain, physical or mental, and through its ruthless infliction he had stimulated that fear which made the six years of his reign a black nightmare in the memories of the four provinces he had misruled with a rod of iron. For weeks it had been the dream of his life to have this girl who had repulsed and flouted him in New York in his power in his Trebizond harem.

When that dream seemed impossible of realization he believed that it was stimulated by the craving for revenge, the desire to see her flesh quiver under the lash of his eunuchs, the desire to have her proud, defiant spirit broken until she crawled to his feet for the mercy he would never grant. But with the sudden and unlooked-for realization of his dream came, also, a realization of the truth; that it was unsatisfied desire for the woman, not a craving for revenge, which roused it.

For once in his life, Tartatanyi had spoken the absolute truth in his passionate outburst a few minutes earlier. The delights of anticipation had turned to bitter disappointment when he returned to the harem which before his banishment had seemed to him an earthly paradise. The women who greeted his return with smiles and glad cries of welcome were as beautiful as they had been when they bewailed his proposed flight with tears and lamentations; but they were not satisfying. They had not changed; but he had, for in his exile he had learned to know women who were the intellectual equals and real companions of their mates.

Unconsciously he had outgrown these women of the Orient; soulless human chattels acquired by purchase, conquest, or trickery; congenitally incapable of becoming anything more than playthings to amuse his idle moments; but he did not realize the real reason for his discontent until Celeste actually entered the harem; in fact, not until his first fierce exultation at having her in his power was swept away by the realization that to her he had given the first thing approaching real love that his callous, Oriental heart could ever feel.

Come to him she must, but not as these ox-eyed women behind the screen had come —submissive, half cringing, striving to win his smiles and favor with the petty, shallow, feminine graces learned under the discipline of a slave dealer's whip; fulfilling without protest and without real emotion the manifest destiny of Moslem women. Such a conquest of Celeste might be possible; but in that there would be neither novelty nor satisfaction. A degree of submission she must learn in deference to Moslem tradition, but it must be carefully taught and tenderly instilled, not dictated by the fear of Rustem's whip and the undisputed power of life and death which those same sacred traditions gave to the master of a harem. Perhaps at first just a touch of severity might be necessary, but in the end he would win her as the men of the West won their mates; he would bind her to him with chains of gold and ropes of jewels, he would gain power to dazzle her, he would conquer an empire to lay at her feet. All of that would come in due and proper order, but first he would demonstrate his own cleverness and appeal to her business sense.

To his estimate of the conditions of the present, the obstacles he would have to overcome and the great resources at his command, Celeste listened in silence, although she realized that in other ways he was as completely self-deceived as he had been in New York. Deprived of the weapon upon which she had so confidently counted for defense, she realized that her only hope lay in gaining time. That hope grew as she listened to Tartatanyi and appreciated that he was living in a fool's paradise and ignorant of his danger; but she wisely refrained from undeceiving him.

He persisted in his belief that Kent-Irwin had come to Trebizond as Jabez Cooper's agent and with the intention of cheating his employer, appropriating the jewels, and spending the proceeds in the company of his woman accomplice; a piece of treachery of which he would have been quite capable himself, and which, therefore, the Englishman would undoubtedly accomplish. It was difficult for her to remain silent when he brutally expressed that belief in plain words and boasted that through his own superior cleverness he would use the traitor's proposed dishonesty as a cat's-paw to serve his own purposes.

She knew that Kent-Irwin and Tartatanyi

must be playing at cross purposes and that the Englishman, totally ignorant of the existence of the jewels, was probably coming to the harem gate in the belief that he would find her waiting there. Guessing the real nature of the business which had brought him to Trebizond, she appreciated that he would be in grave danger from Tartatanyi if she succeeded in undeceiving him, as a valuable tool he would spare him; as a possible rival he would kill him or denounce him as a spy to the Bolsheviki, which would amount to pretty much the same thing.

For Tartatanyi, who had broken his agreement with her employer and coolly announced his intention of playing false with every one else, she had not the slightest sympathy and she continued to keep her own counsel when, dismissing Kent-Irwin for the moment, he boasted fatuously of the use he intended to make of old Mahmoud Ben Azra, tempting the avaricious old contrabandist to supply arms on credit by the promise of future payment and huge profits. And then he would use the power to which he would rise through the use of those arms to refuse payment and to mulct the old miser of his hoarded wealth as well.

Deceived by his own overweening conceit, Tartatanyi read in the rapt attention with which she listened to his recital of his treacherous plans and golden dreams for the future, a promise of easy conquest, while, as a matter of fact, each word served only to harden her heart against him and to banish farther and farther any lingering pity for the fate which she believed awaited him. As the hours sped on she tried to devise some plan which would enable her to accompany him to that midnight rendezvous with Kent-Irwin, but her heart sank when, as the time closely approached, two vigorous young eunuchs entered the room, silently followed by a couple of hideous black slave women. The manner of Tartatanyi, who for the past hour had been as suave and courteous as a Western suitor, changed suddenly when he rose from the divan and stood erect. He was again the Turk, master of his harem and all that it contained.

"In the words of your people, 'It is well to be off with the old love, before you take on with the new,'" he said with a gesture denying the silent entreaty which he read in her eyes. "I go to dismiss this stupid Englishman forever from your life. Believe me, I shall begrudge every moment of our separation, but it will give you an opportunity to gain a part of that knowledge you must acquire to fit easily into your new existence. Remember that in my absence the word of Rustem is the law; he will guard you and the women will replace those unworthy garments with raiment befitting the prospective mate of Tartatanyi."

Realizing that entreaty would be useless and resistence to such overwhelming odds futile, Celeste, who had risen to her feet, maintained her long unbroken silence and stood as impassive as a statue when Tartatanyi picked up the precious leather bag and left the room. As the door closed behind him Rustem stepped forward, the whip grasped in his right hand as with the left he motioned to his young subordinates to take post on either side of her.

CHAPTER X.

Promptly as the muezzin from the tallest minaret sent his resonant call over the roofs of the city slumbering in the moonlight to summon the faithful to arise and bear testimony that there is but one God and Mohammed is his Prophet, Tartatanyi's hand drew back the heavy bolt of the door in the wall of his zenana garden. A glance through the grille had revealed only the handsome, eager face of the young Englishman beneath the Persian astrakhan cap, and nothing to excite suspicion of danger, for Zantopolis had flattened himself against the wall out of range of vision and Mahmoud Ben Azra's motley crew of desperadoes, as expert as Apaches in taking cover, lay silent and perfectly concealed in the dense shadows cast by the blank wall of an adjoining building, their presence unsuspected by Kent-Irwin and his companion.

The Englishman gave a sigh of relief as the noise of the sliding bolt signaled the end of the long hours of waiting and anxiety, but it was quickly followed by an exclamation in which anger and dismay mingled when the door swung open and the bright moonlight revealed a masculine figure standing alone on the threshold. In the smooth-shaven Turk in his brilliant native costume he did not recognize the bearded, silk-hatted cigarette dealer of New York and, suspecting treachery from the supposed substitution, he stepped back when Tartatanyi thrust the sealed leather bag toward him.

"Take it; it is what Jabez Cooper sent

you for!" exclaimed Tartatanyi impatiently. "You will carry it to safety and then communicate with me. I shall remain here until I have word from you!" The voice and the mention of Mr. Cooper's name identified the changeling to Kent-Irwin, but the recognition neither banished his bewilderment nor allayed his fears.

"You infernal old blighter; are you trying to rag me?" he exclaimed angrily. "I came here to fetch Miss la Rue and all that's coming to Jabez Cooper from me is a jolly good hiding for permitting her to come to this filthy hole! But there's a lot worse than that coming to you right now unless you produce her chop-chop, for I'll put a bullet through you and then tear your harem to pieces to find her."

As he spoke his hand crept to the pistol in his sash and, while Tartatanyi was dumfounded by his refusal to grasp the treasure, he did not miss the significance of that move and his own hand went swiftly to his dagger, but before either weapon could be drawn from its sheath, Zantopolis sprang forward from his place of concealment in the shadow.

Preparedness added to the advantage which surprise gave him, for his dagger had been held naked and in readiness, and before Kent-Irwin could interfere or Tartatanyi could defend himself, the Greek renegade struck to exact payment of his blood debt. The cry for help which came to Tartatanyi's lips never passed them, for with an arm strengthened by hatred and avarice Zantopolis drove his dagger through his heart with a blow so vicious that the impact of the hilt drove the protecting shirt of chain mail through the flesh to the breast bone.

With his last conscious movement Tartatanyi clutched as a drowning man clutches a straw the treasure which represented so much of oppression, agony, and blood and fell back, dead before he struck the ground, into his moonlit garden. In that sudden attack Kent-Irwin read only a desire to save him and, seeing no other menace, he let the hand which had sought his pistol fall empty to his side, but a moment later, when Zantopolis with a wrench plucked his weapon from Tartatanyi's breast and turned swiftly on him with its dripping blade upraised, he saw that in the renegade's eyes which proved the gesture was no idle threat.

Unfortunately for the Greek, his carefully devised plan to catch them both unawares had been upset by the Englishman's unexpected outburst. He had intended to strike him in the back, and it was disconcerting to find himself looking into those eyes suddenly aflame with the fierce light of battle. He knew that there must be no missed thrust, that the first stroke must finish the bloody business without giving an opportunity for outcry or resistance, and noting his victim's empty hands, he held his own while his eyes sought the surest spot to send the dagger home.

Not long, perhaps not more than the tenth part of a second; but that respite was sufficient for the man who had learned every trick of the squared circle in fighting his way to the middleweight championship of the Guards Brigade.

Kent-Irwin's hand lost no time in fumbling for a weapon; instead, it clenched into a very firm and hard fist, and, flashing in an uppercut with the power of perfectly conditioned muscles driving, it caught the renegade squarely beneath the chin. The blood-stained dagger, just starting to descend, flew from the upraised hand, shining black in the moonlight as it semicircled to land on the far side of the wall, and the Greek, lifted from his feet by that tremendous blow, shot back until his progress was checked by a crashing impact against the rough stones and then fell a quivering, twitching, unconscious heap in the filthy mud of the lane.

For a moment Kent-Irwin stood there to take stock of the new situation, but all indecision as to his next step was quickly banished from his mind; for the silent lane which had seemed so absolutely deserted was suddenly teeming with life. In the center of it stood a patriarchal old Turk, careful not to advance himself within reach of that fist but with energetic gestures urging to increased speed a score of fierce men who had emerged silently but swiftly from the shadows.

The weapons which they carried unsheathed banished all doubt as to their intentions. Resistance to such overwhelming odds would be hopeless. Ambuscades and unknown dangers might lie in that silent and mysterious garden, but with certain death awaiting him in an unequal struggle in the lane Kent-Irwin dared not hesitate. With a leap he cleared the unconscious form of the prostrate renegade and, rolling aside the body of Tartatanyi, he slammed the heavy door, thrusting home the great bolt which

secured it as the first of Mahmoud Ben Azra's men dashed himself against the outer side with a reckless force which would have torn from its fastenings a flimsier structure than the one devised by Oriental jealousy.

Swift and tragic as the unexpected developments had been, there had been no noise or outcry to spread the alarm to the neighboring Bolshevist garrison, and within those high walls where the air was heavy with the perfume of flowers, everything was peaceful and quiet. Not a sound came from the lane to suggest the stealthy movements of the men he had eluded by such a narrow margin; but the body lying before the closed gate, the sightless eyes staring at the moon in a cloudless sky, was a grim reminder of the danger lying beneath that peaceful calm.

Drawing his pistol, Kent-Irwin stepped quickly into the protecting shadows of the hedge of ilex bordering the path. Ignorant that within reach of his arm a treasure worthy to be a king's ransom had slipped from the relaxed fingers of the dead man's hand, he could figure out no explanation of the renegade's sudden treachery nor the appearance of Mahmoud Ben Azra's cutthroat crew.

The garden was perhaps two acres in extent, and its winding paths, intentionally converted into a veritable maze by the bordering dense hedges, was in itself a puzzling obstacle to one unacquainted with its topography. To the other puzzles, to the persistent delusion of Tartatanyi that he was acting as an agent of Jabez Cooper, to the reason for Celeste being in Trebizond, he gave little thought. It was enough that she was there. The first thing to do was to find and rescue her. The rapidly lengthening shadows warned him that he must act quickly. Hugging the shadows of the tall towers, he crept cautiously through the bewildering paths of the moonlit garden toward the forbidden buildings of the zenana.

Turning and twisting, keeping as much as possible within the shadows of the hedges, alert to meet the attack of anything which might spring upon him from their protection or confront him at any turn, it was necessarily a slow progress, but after crossing and recrossing his own trail a dozen times in that fragrant labyrinth, he finally reached his goal and stood before a door enticingly ajar in the very center of the long row of buildings. Not a sound came from within as he stealthily approached it. Cautiously pushing the door open with one hand, he held his pistol poised in the other, ready for instant action, as he stepped inside.

And then that pistol nearly slipped from his hand as he halted abruptly and an involuntary exclamation, half apologetic, came from his lips. In his wandering through the confusing garden paths he had missed the direct one by which Celeste had been conducted from the gate and reached a doorway on the opposite side of the building. It gave entrance to the same large room; but to that portion behind the screen of lattice where, unguarded and unveiled, were gathered all of the women of Tartatanyi's harem. His stealthy entrance had passed unnoticed, so intent were they in watching through the interstices of the lattice work some scene of apparently absorbing interest on the other side.

Startled by his half-smothered exclamation, the one nearest to him turned, and he found himself looking into the curious, frightened eyes of a beautiful Circassian girl, little more than a child in years but with the full, rounded maturity of body which comes so early in the East. For a moment she looked at his handsome, kindly face in which she certainly found nothing of menace, and then catching sight of the weapon which he was making frantic efforts to return to the concealment of his broad sash, she gave a scream of fright. From that moment the silence was shattered, for at least a score of women turned and there came from their shapely throats and carmined lips a shrill chorus of screams.

Embarrassed as he was to find himself in the midst of this bewildering assortment of Oriental beauties, he did not for a moment forget his object. He quickly scanned face after face, searching for the familiar features of Celeste la Rue. Under this scrutiny the cries of fright quickly ceased, to be followed by simpering and giggling; for, by the rarest chance in the world, these women were free from the jealously watchful eyes of the eunuchs on this, the first occasion that any man save Tartatanyi had ever entered those sacred precincts and looked upon their unveiled faces, and it also chanced that this intruder in his picturesque Persian costume was an extremely captivating and attractive figure. But a cold-hearted and indifferent one apparently, and not in search of amorous adventure for, oblivious to the chal-

lenge and invitation of their glances after their fright, he looked hastily from face to face, and disappointment deepened on his own.

Tartatanyi's standard of beauty had evidently been a severe one. Judging by the expensive raiment in which they were clothed and the jewels which adorned them he must have been a lavish and indulgent husband, but neither their personal pulchritude nor the adventitious aids which emphasized it appealed to this indifferent breaker of barriers. Representatives of many of the races of the East were there and skins of every hue, from the ebony black of a Junolike Nubian, barbaric in flaming scarlet and massive anklets and bracelets of gold, to the creamy white of the little Circassian, daintily clad in pastel shades of some filmy, gauzy material with pearls about her throat and interwoven with her golden hair.

Disheartened that Celeste was not with them, Kent-Irwin looked about for an exit through which he might continue his search. A sudden commotion in the group of women huddled together, laughing, giggling, and playfully pushing and nudging each other, gave him renewed hope; for it was caused by a woman who had stood apart, half concealed in a dusky corner. With small regard for their protests she forced her way through them, pushing them unceremoniously aside and from her path. He stepped forward hopefully, but to his disappointment she proved to be not the girl he sought. She was a typical Spanish gypsy, accidentally gathered in the meshes of a slave trader's far-flung net and purchased by Tartatanyi on the very morning of the day of his flight for safety.

There was nothing of invitation or coquetry in her bearing or expression. She confronted him almost menacingly, bold-faced, and defiant as her glance swept him from head to foot. Lithe and graceful as a panther she stood there, a dagger which she had filched from Rustem's sash as he escorted her from the slave market to the harem clutched in her strong, brown hand.

With quick instinct she recognized the Anglo-Saxon beneath the Persian costume, in spite of the perfection of detail of his disguise, for in her wandering childhood she had known the peoples of many lands. And with the uncannily quick intuition which enables the Romany folk to interpret the meaning of trivialities and from them draw conclusions which they voice to the bewilderment of the credulous who cross their palms with silver, she read the reason for his being there. Although she understood no English, she had missed only the insignificant details of the scene she had witnessed.

Ordinarily she would have believed his own chance for escape more hopeless than that of the frailest of the women, for Tartatanyi's black servitors were incorruptible, capable, and efficient. But from the scene which had been a prologue to his coming she guessed that Tartatanyi had left the harem to meet him, expecting to return to claim the spoils of victory after his encounter. To her quick perception the failure of Tartatanyi to return and the appearance of this stranger in his place was a puzzle which could have but one possible solution: at the meeting Tartatanyi had played a losing hand, and the man who could worst a Turk on the threshold of his own zenana must be a skilled player and capable of winning against long odds. Nevertheless, she knew that he would need all the assistance he could get, and in his necessities she saw the chance to win her own freedom and eagerly jumped for it.

She noted the disappointment which so quickly banished hopefulness from his face when he realized that she was not the woman he sought. "Listen, señor," she said. "If you would escape the dangers which threaten, and find that which you came to seek, listen to the Zingara who sees the man from the West beneath the masquerading costume of the Orient!" Despite the mysterious setting of the East there was that in her tone and bearing which carried Kent-Irwin's memory swiftly back to quiet English byways where sharp-eyed women of her race rose from wayside camp fires to wheedle silver coins from pockets. "Strong as is the arm which has broken down the barrier to entrance, brave as is the spirit which has led you here, it will require more than strength and bravery to win through and bring you safely from the net spread about you with that which you most desire in your keeping!" She spoke in Spanish, which he had mastered during a detail at Gibraltar.

"Forget the Zingara patter and get down to facts, señorita. I will pay and pay well for service!" he exclaimed. She smiled and shook her head as she pointed to the valuable jewels which adorned her; ornaments

which, with the acquisitiveness of her race, she had wheedled or cozened from her sisters in captivity.

"More riches I do not desire, but I crave the liberty to enjoy what I have," she answered. "Your word that you will take me with you, and I will lead you to the maiden whom you seek and aid you to escape with her. Believe me, señor, you will need all the help you can get. At least, I know this place as you know your pocket, and beyond its walls the Zingara can slip through unseen where others would be trapped."

"Come on!" exclaimed Kent-Irwin eagerly. "I make no promises; but, as you have read so much, you can read that I will deal fairly. Guide me to——"

He broke off abruptly; for through the lattice came the sound of a scuffle, a succession of squeaks and excited jabbering in shrill unnatural falsetto; a forcible protest in the rich, full-throated voice he knew so well, which was quickly muffled and then stifled to silence.

Wheeling about he faced toward the screen, and there, framed in a small opening designed to permit the passage of nargiles and coffee cups from side to side, was the repulsive face of Rustem, distorted with rage as he glared furiously at the vandal who had dared to violate the sanctity of the harem which he guarded. Shrewd as Carmen was, she had forgotten that the screen which impeded vision unless eyes were close to it was no barrier to sound and Kent-Irwin's masculine voice had carried through, to be recognized by the woman he loved and to carry the alarm to the alert ears of the eunuch.

After Tartatanyi's departure things had moved slowly on the other side of the screen. Frightened women, rebellious women, defiant women, it had been his lot to handle; but they had either inherited the Moslem traditions of submission and obedience or had a degree of them instilled by their former owners. A threat had usually sufficed. But this American girl drew back and refused to permit his assistants even to relieve her of the coarse peasant burnoose which she wore. Force which he was empowered by custom and tradition to use was at his command; but looking into her fearless, defiant eyes he realized that she would fight to the limit of her endurance, and in such a struggle she would undoubtedly be bruised and marked before she was overcome. Fearing that a single mark on the perfect beauty of this woman would result at the very least in criss-crossed scars of the lash on his own back, he maneuvered for an opportunity to catch her unawares.

At his direction the slave women had spread out in enticing array the magnificent bridal garments, and with his own hands he emptied out and displayed the contents of a jewel casket. Celeste merely glanced at them disdainfully as she backed away to maintain her distance from the two younger eunuchs who watched her as a cat watches a mouse. She thought only of the pistol of which she had been robbed and which lay disregarded and unmarked by all eyes but hers, half hidden beneath the draperies of the couch on which Tartatanyi had reclined.

Slowly but surely she was working her way toward it as the eunuchs circled about her, seeing in her quick little dashes and side-stepping only a skillful effort to elude them. Taking advantage of their surprise when they paused to listen to the commotion following Kent-Irwin's intrusion, she gained a good six feet toward her goal. But as the screams quickly gave way to the laughter and giggling to which their ears were so well accustomed, she paused when another yard would have made a quick dash for its possession a safe risk to run. And then a few minutes later, when Kent-Irwin's masculine voice reached her ears, she hesitated no longer. Eluding the grasp of the eunuchs who, at a quick gesture from Rustem had attempted to run in on her, she ducked and with a quick movement snatched the weapon from the floor. When the two eunuchs jumped for her she contented herself with dealing one a blow in the face with the heavy barrel. The other, with a dexterous motion, caught the hem of her burnoose and, throwing it over her head, smothered her protests. With the pistol still clenched in her hand she rolled on the floor, kicking and struggling to free herself as the terrified slave women ran screaming about the room like frightened rats seeking escape.

With a scream of rage Rustem drew back to escape the fist of the young Englishman driven straight at his face in the screen opening. The fist, meeting no opposition, went shoulder-deep through the opening where the face had been, and the impact of the body behind it shattered the frail lattice work. The other eunuchs, having secured a grip on their victim which made her

practically helpless, removed from her head the heavy folds of cloth, and, although the pistol was still clenched in her hand when they lifted her to her feet, she was powerless to use it, even had she willed.

This was the tableau which Kent-Irwin saw when, with Carmen close behind him, he jumped through the opening which he had made in the screen. In the moment of hesitation which followed his entrance the old eunuch realized what his presence meant. No infidel could have come through that gateway save across the dead body of the master of the harem. One look at the firm, determined face of the intruder told him that his own doom was sealed, for never would old Rustem prove untrue to his salt and living let a woman confided to his care be taken away.

In the harem the eunuch always laid aside the cumbersome array of weapons which he carried when he walked abroad and, unarmed, he was no match for this young man who could strike such a mighty blow. But, by Allah, in his hand was clutched the long whip which was carried more as a badge of authority than for use. He knew the possibilities of its cruel lash that, applied with the strength of hatred, would cut through flesh to the bone. Yes, he knew that he was beaten, that the man who had killed his master would now kill him and then, after the manner of conquerors from the beginning of time, take the woman for his own.

Uttering a shrill cry of rage he wheeled and, before Kent-Irwin, suspecting treachery but not the truth, could draw his pistol, the whip lash was whistling over the eunuch's head as his cruel eyes fixed themselves on the upraised face of the girl held powerless and at his mercy. Before the Englishman could possibly have reached him it would have descended to leave a fiery, indelible scar upon that delicate beauty, but for the quicker wit and infinitely quicker movements of the Zingara. With a spring as sure as a tigress jumping for its prey her lithe, graceful body hurtled past him, her knees landed squarely in the middle of the obese eunuch's back and, as her bare left arm clasped about his neck the right, which had been held above her head, descended, the dagger which was clenched in her hand burying itself to the hilt in the fat roll at the base of his thick throat.

Before his body reached the floor Carmen had leaped clear and stood facing the younger eunuchs who had sprung to Rustem's assistance. They never reached her. Kent-Irwin fired twice, turning as the two blacks crumpled at the gypsy girl's feet to send another bullet toward the door through which the slave women had fled for help.

The whole tragedy had been enacted so quickly that Celeste hardly realized that she was free until the three sharp reports seemed to stimulate her to life, and then, to Kent-Irwin's amazement, she threw herself on him, not to embrace him gratefully nor to faint in his arms—neither of which actions would have surprised him, but to attempt to wrest the smoking pistol from his hand as she reproached him for having used it. He repulsed her almost roughly. Added to the shrieks and screams of the terrified women beyond the screen there came an uproar through the open windows.

"Confound it; I was doing the best I knew how; I didn't want to shoot the poor beggars; but I couldn't stand by and see the girl who saved you manhandled by their black paws! And as far as that goes, you seem to have been ready to pull off a little gunplay yourself!" he protested, looking at the pistol which she still held.

"Oh, Reggie, you don't understand!" she cried. "Yes, I should have shot them all. I had the chance, but when I heard your voice I held my hand to save you. The three shots were to be the signal."

"I'm blessed if I understand!" he protested. "Signal for what—signal to whom?"

"To the Russians, who are already answering by battering down the door leading to the harem from the official palace—the Door of Felicity which has been barricaded since Tartatanyi's flight!" she exclaimed. "To-day I arranged it with the leader of the detachment of the Battalion of Death, the women soldiers with the Bolsheviki troops. She thought that I was a woman of Tartatanyi's harem, willing to betray him for jealousy, and there is a price upon his head. I feared his treachery when I planned to come here, and I arranged that as a safeguard. Three pistol shots was to be the signal that he had stolen back to Trebizond and was in the harem; then they were to break down the door and enter. Women could do that without offending the Moslem populace and the people would have rejoiced to have Tartatanyi dragged out and executed. They hated him!"

"Then why in blazes didn't you give the signal? You seem to have been up against it hard enough, from the looks of things when I broke in."

"Can't you understand that it was because I heard your voice?" she asked impatiently. "As an English officer disguised here you would be shot as a spy if you were taken. You must fly, Reggie. I can hear the door giving way now, and those women soldiers are more merciless than the men!"

"I'm not worrying about myself, but I am about you, so come along," he said, holding out his hand, but she drew back and shook her head.

"No, no; I am in no danger and my work is not finished!" she said. "I must find Tartatanyi before I leave; he has something which belongs to—er—which I must get before I go from Trebizond."

"You'll have to go a good deal farther than Trebizond—to a much hotter place to find anything but Tartatanyi's corpse!" said Kent-Irwin grimly. "Celeste, as one of Tartatanyi's wives, you may have been safe enough from the Bolsheviki, but that won't go as one of his widows. I don't know that we have much chance to get out of this mess; but I know this, either you come with me to try, or I'll stay here with you and take my chance with the Russians—and you haven't much time to make up your mind!"

Celeste hesitated. Again she started to urge him to leave her, but when Carmen darted forward and seized the hand which she had refused to take, the words died unuttered on her lips. If he yielded to her entreaties this woman would evidently go with him alone, and after one glance at her bold, handsome face, she weakened. Already the man who swore he loved her had killed two men to protect her, and—well, Tartatanyi was dead, her mission seemed hopeless, and perhaps it would be the part of wisdom to go. And so she grasped Kent-Irwin's other hand and, leaving the scene of tragedy behind them, they fled in the moonlight through the garden as the Door of Felicity crashed open to admit the Russians to the harem.

CHAPTER XI.

The sudden treachery of the Greek renegade which so tragically ended Tartatanyi's dreams of happiness and so thoroughly upset the program of the young Englishman, also twisted awry the carefully laid plans of Mahmoud Ben Azra; but the wily old contrabandist had learned from experience the value of devising in advance an alternative. Thoroughly informed of all the gossip of that city of intrigue, he had known of the arrival of the English officer and of his presence in the bazaar disguised as a Persian; but he believed that he had come to Trebizond entirely upon the official business of the British Empire, and it was not until he appeared at Tartatanyi's gateway in company with Zantopolis that he suspected the truth. Remembering Celeste's blushes and confusion, he guessed pretty accurately, but in his conclusions he found little cause for uneasiness. He had ample force at his disposal; when the girl emerged from the zenana with the treasure it would simply mean disposing of these two intruders, and a little matter of that kind would not burden his conscience with remorse.

When, instead of the girl he expected, Tartatanyi himself appeared at the gateway, and he saw the bag in his hands, he mentally checked his name into the list of his proposed victims and gave the signal to his followers to attack. Even when the quickness of Kent-Irwin foiled him he was not disheartened. He believed that the Englishman would immediately seize the treasure which Tartatanyi had unfortunately carried with him when he fell and that he would try to find the girl who was held prisoner; but both were in the zenana from which there were only two exits, and he knew that they would never dare attempt to escape through the old palace which was held by the Bolsheviki. When they came through the gateway they would fall into his hands. The only thing which could prevent him from having both Celeste and the treasure before daybreak would be the Englishman's decision to lie hidden in the zenana instead of risking an attempt to escape, and that he determined to make impossible. Hassam had reported to him that Celeste had visited the Russian headquarters during her promenade and he was quick to take the hint.

Warned that a British spy had taken refuge in Tartatanyi's harem, the Russians could justify their own violation of it by a plea of military necessity, and, knowing their eagerness to ransack it for Tartatanyi's hidden hoard, he believed that they would eagerly welcome the excuse. He was on good terms with the Bolshevist commander, and at a hint from him he would imme-

diately order the long barred Door of Felicity to be broken down. Falling into the hands of the Russians would have meant sudden death for the Englishman and worse for Celeste, and he would undoubtedly attempt to escape with her through the gateway to reach the waiting submarine, and the rest would be easy.

Ignorant that Tartatanyi had converted the proceeds of his oppression into easily transported jewels, the Bolsheviki would wait to wreck the harem in a search for a hidden hoard of gold, and Celeste would not be missed from the large number of women who would fall into their hands. To make assurance doubly sure, he would even withdraw his men from the immediate vicinity of the gate, posting them on the path the fugitives must follow to reach the beach. And lest the unconscious figure of the renegade might attract the attention of some casual wanderer and cause a premature alarm, he ordered them to carry it with them in their retirement while he hurried to the Russian headquarters; a precaution which was the culminating piece of hard luck for Zantopolis, who was slowly recovering consciousness, but still distinctly groggy.

For the Greek, too, had been thrifty during his brief tenure of office, and, believing when he left his house that night that he would never return to it, he had carefully stored his savings on his person. Guessing the nature of the lumps and protuberances which they felt as they lifted his limp body from the mud, the expert fingers of Mahmoud's followers promptly searched him as soon as they were free from observation, silencing his feeble protests with a knife thrust and throwing his rifled body over a convenient wall. They quickly divided the unexpected treasure-trove, and, after the manner of their kind, upon their arrival at their designated post, promptly fell to gambling for it; their absorption in the fascinating game of *scolopata*—very similar to the American craps—causing the minutes to pass unnoted.

Therefore, when Kent-Irwin, after his hurried flight through the garden with Carmen grasping one hand and leading the way, and Celeste, half reluctant to acknowledge defeat, tugging back at the other, looked through the grille, he saw only a deserted, moonlit lane. Reasoning exactly as Mahmoud Ben Azra expected he would, he had chosen that one desperate chance to escape from the certainty of falling into the hands of the Bolsheviki, but while he could hear the Russians raging through the palace behind him, he took time to reconnoiter before opening the gate. Waiting for him, Carmen spied the body of Tartatanyi lying at the edge of the path, and, uttering a little exclamation of triumph knelt beside it, her slim brown hands going quickly to the broad silken sash about his waist. In killing Rustem she had sacrificed her only weapon, but here, useless to its dead owner, was a more effective one, and it was its keen blade, rather than its jeweled handle, which she coveted.

Prejudiced against her by a jealousy which she would not acknowledge to herself, Celeste attributed her fumbling at the dead man's sash to a ghoulish avarice and drew back in disgust. She knew nothing of this brazen-faced woman who had come as Kent-Irwin's companion, and she didn't want to. Things had happened so quickly after they burst into the harem that she hardly realized the great debt of gratitude she owed the gypsy; but she did know that if they ever reached a place of safety Kent-Irwin would have to do a lot of explaining before he would be restored to her good graces.

She was irritated and humiliated by her failure as a recruit of the Lost Legion and in no mood for trifling. If Kent-Irwin just had to have a feminine accomplice to enter the harem there was no reason why he should have selected such a handsome and attractive one and—— To emphasize her anger she started to stamp her pretty little foot, but when it descended it did not come in contact with the gravel of the walk, but struck something decidedly different.

She glanced down, and there, lying in the moonlight, was the sealed bag containing the treasure she had risked so much to get!

Stooping quickly she grasped it, and with a quick and surreptitious movement concealed it beneath her burnoose just as Carmen rose with Tartatanyi's bared dagger in her hand and Kent-Irwin turned to whisper that, so far as he could see, there was no immediate danger lurking without. The rapidly increasing turmoil in the palace, the hoarse shouts of the Russians, the screams of the women and the crash of falling doors warned them that they had no time to lose and, withdrawing the bolt, Kent-Irwin leaped, pistol in hand, through

the doorway, closely followed by the two women.

Mahmoud Ben Azra had found the Bolshevist commander an eager and willing listener to his proposal, but short and concise as he made his story he had barely finished it before the three pistol shots gave the signal to the women soldiers who, as usual, were prepared to act upon their own responsibility without waiting for the decision of a soviet or a soldiers' council. And, while the Bolshevik was quite willing to take advantage of Mahmoud's information, he trusted him no further than he could see him, and when the old contrabandist, alarmed by the unexpected commotion, gathered up his cloak and fled from the room, he gave orders which resulted in a strong detachment turning out and following close on his heels; a pursuit which did not in the least suit the plans of the Turk, but against which he was powerless to protest. Accordingly he fled at top speed, and, fortunately for Kent-Irwin and his companions, he circled the high zenana wall to the left, for their path to the beach lay to the right.

Warned of the new peril by the heavy footfalls of the Russians advancing at the double, that strangely assorted trio fled toward their only hope of safety, the beach, where a naval officer was impatiently waiting with a collapsible boat to carry a British intelligence officer to the submarine which lay, just awash, a hundred yards from the shore. Surprised and elated with their luck in finding the lane deserted, they raced through it in the moonlight, dodging about a corner just as Mahmoud Ben Azra and his most unwelcome escort rounded into the other end.

When barely a hundred yards separated them from safety, Kent-Irwin believed they had won. Then they burst unexpectedly into the very center of the ring of gamblers, so absorbed in their game that they had not noticed the fugitives' approach. Ordinarily the surprise would have given them an advantage which would have neutralized the odds against them, but an Oriental *scolopata* gambler shoots the dice with one hand and holds a bared weapon in the other. So, while Kent-Irwin without the slightest compunction emptied the chamber of his automatic, Celeste followed suit almost as effectively and Carmen, with Tartatanyi's dagger, fought like an enraged tiger cat. The desperadoes left standing even then threatened to bear them down by sheer weight of numbers.

Mahmoud Ben Azra had guessed correctly the meaning of the zenana door swinging open, and he had just finished a hasty search of Tartatanyi's body which told him that the treasure had vanished, when the pistol shots and cries of his followers suggested that there was a last desperate chance to recover it. Again he took up the chase and had it not been for his troublesome escort his plans would have finally met with complete success. With the magazines of their pistols empty and Tartatanyi's dagger, designed more for ornament than use, broken short from the jeweled hilt, the trio of fugitives stood back to back, the remaining desperadoes circling about them for a chance to rush them without further loss.

Encouraged by the shout of victory which came from Mahmoud Ben Azra's throat, they started to close in, but when the gray-coated Russians who had followed him wheeled about the corner they paused, and then, scattering beyond recall, fled in a wild effort to reach the safety of their kennels. Each and every one of them had strong reason to dread falling into Bolshevist hands. The old contrabandist cursed them and their ancestors for a thousand generations in a language which dignifies cursing as a fine art, but they were deaf to his entreaties. Single-handed he rushed toward the trio, but they were already on their way. The Russians took up the pursuit of the scattering desperadoes, and a moment later the waiting naval officer was startled to see three figures racing toward him across the moonlit beach.

"Steady; belay there!" he said sharply as the tall Persian without ceremony motioned to his panting companions to enter the waiting boat. "My orders don't read that I'm to convoy—Great Cæsar's ghost!" It was not recognition of Kent-Irwin which brought forth the exclamation, but the sight of the two feminine faces turned to him in the moonlight. They were radically different in type, but each was ravishingly beautiful and with a muttered "Orders be blowed!" he gallantly stowed them tenderly in the fragile craft, jumped in, and ordered the sailors to give way.

A few minutes later, with a most unusual passenger list, H. M. S. 139 submerged, leaving the moonlit surface of the sea deserted, and on the neighboring beach a pa-

triarchal-looking Turk, a grotesque figure as he danced up and down in impotent rage and called down the curse of Mohammed and Fatima upon all infidels and unbelievers, male and female.

CHAPTER XII.

For more than a week Mr. Jabez Cooper had studied the calendar closely and started expectantly at every knock upon the door of his private office. Solicitors for charitable subscriptions found him grumpy and unresponsive, and several pipe dreamers who sought his assistance were brought to earth with dull thuds by his curt refusals to aid in making their dreams come true.

And then, on a day some six weeks after the submarine had started its return journey to Constantinople, a load was suddenly lifted from his heart, for there was no mistaking the familiar little tapping demanding admittance and his face fairly beamed when, in obedience to his glad shout to enter, Celeste tripped demurely in. The welcoming smile froze on his lips, however, at the sight of the broad-shouldered young giant who followed her, for his chin was aggressively set and there was a dangerous glitter in the eyes which he encountered.

"Oh, Mr. Cooper, I've had the most glorious time!" exclaimed Celeste as she deposited a shopping bag which seemed to be exceptionally heavy on the mahogany desk. "And really no very serious trouble; I thought there might be just at the end, but the girl whom I suspected as a cause of it turned out to be a pretty good sort, and, anyway, she refused to bother us or be bothered by us and slipped away to join her own people when our boat touched at Gibraltar. Oh, excuse me—I believe you know Captain Kent-Irwin?"

"He does—and he's going to know me a jolly lot better before I've finished with him!" exclaimed the young Englishman. "See here, Cooper, if I hadn't happened to drop in, the Lord only knows what would have become of her. She won't tell me what she went to such a filthy hole for; but I've every reason to believe that you sent her and, if you did, I'm going to hand you just what you deserve."

"Why, of course, he did, old dear!" Celeste cut in, laughing. "You're always spoiling things just when they are getting interesting. Now you stop being disagreeable and you will understand everything, for Mr. Cooper taught me not to let sentiment interfere with business, and it is I who have something to hand him."

As she spoke she opened the shopping bag and drew from it that carefully sealed bag of leather which he had so scornfully refused to receive from Tartatanyi's hands.

She broke the seals and, upsetting it, let a stream of such gems as the world rarely sees gathered together roll over the polished surface of the desk. Even the capitalist, who had seen uncounted treasure dumped there many times by his Legionaries, stared at the glittering mass with eyes widely distended with astonishment and for a moment the sight drove all apprehension of the threatened chastisement from his mind.

"But I still fail to understand!" protested Kent-Irwin coldly. Celeste laughed and looked at him with twinkling eyes.

"I don't suppose you ever will, Reggie, for it was purely a business transaction. That's why you found me there. I had gone to get it and it was worth a little bother, for that is the famous Treasure of Trebizond!"

"That trash!" exclaimed Kent-Irwin contemptuously. "Nonsense, my dear; it isn't worth the little finger of the real treasure that I was lucky enough to find and make my own there."

And as Jabez Cooper saw him take the girl in his arms he knew that while he had gained the treasure of Trebizond and escaped a hiding, he had lost a very capable and attractive private secretary.

The Tip on Barney Phelan

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Unmasking of Gerald," Etc.

A philosopher once said that speech seemed to have been granted to human beings to enable them to conceal their thoughts. You will be inclined to believe this after reading the dialogue between the two prize-fight promoters, neither of whom was going to the town where the future conqueror of Dempsey was to be discovered

"YOU'D hate, I suppose," said this shrewd old scout beside me, "to have one in your own shed that's got it in him to shade that assassin?"

Meaning, by "that assassin," this J. Dempsey person whom we'd seen, a few hours before, in the act of making a tall sunflower, named J. Willard, look like a short sprig of jimson weed.

"It's too hot a night for hop dreams, hombre," said I, fanning my face with my near Panama. "But, if you must chirp, lay off chattering to me about this million-to-one stuff, anyhow, will you?"

Somebody that would shade Dempsey, eh?—and the air about us still echoing with the mule kicks that the young speed scoundrel from Salt Lake had landed on a smeared and helpless world's champion just a short while before! This man beside me raved. That's all there could be to it. He raved.

"Million to one me eye," was his comeback all the same. "Box fighting, as you ought to know by this time, if you don't, is by rights the one and only even-money-and-take-your-pick game. A fighter is licked when he's licked, and it takes ten of those up-and-down strokes of a referee's arm to count out the rawest ringster in the world. The biggest and fastest fighter on earth is legitimately no better than an even-money gamble when the gong summons him to go up against any unknown quantity that he's meeting for the first time."

"Yea, bo—and twice two is four and twice four is eight, and the sun is pretty likely to come up to-morrow morning if there's no hitch," said I, mopping the chops with the old bandanna. "How do you get this way?—you and your somebody that's going to shade Dempsey! That cub'll be whittling 'em down to wishbone size and stacking 'em away in carload lots for the next ten years, anyway. Try a swim in the Maumee, Bill. This Toledo heat's getting you."

That's the system. If you want to prong your friend for a piece of information that you need in your business, taunt him over how little he knows about the subject and he'll promptly loosen up and tell you all he knows and more. And if you're taking it that Denny Delaney, the notorious manager of mittists—meaning myself—was dormant, on that night of the last big fight, to any suggestion that the future trimmer of J. Dempsey certainly was alive somewhere in the world and waiting to be discovered, then it must be that you require another smoke.

So Bill eased me what he had under his hat about this maybe shader of Dempsey. Know Bill Cranston, the big-league baseball scout, don't you? Not many know, though, that Bill, as a youngster, was a pretty shifty middleweight scrapper out on the coast. When he slowed up he took to training fighters, and, later, ball players. It was because of the eye for likely ones that Bill always had in his head that he graduated from a ball-club trainer into a ball-club scout. No promoter of pugilists ever got into debt through listening to what Bill Cranston had to say about obscure and undeveloped scrappers who looked to him as if they might make good on the big time. I'd take Bill's judgment against my own as a picker of raw ring material, hard as it is for me to give my inordinate vanity that kind of an uppercut.

"It's a favor I'm doing you, fathead," was Bill's way of loosening, "by tipping you about this cub that's got more of the makin's of a grizzly about him than any raw one I've ever lamped."

"Shoot and show your ignorance, Bill,"

said I, kind of boredlike, so's to sting him into slipping me the entire earful. "But if it's grizzlies your mind is working on, don't forget that this lad you saw win the world's heavyweight championship this afternoon has been going after and getting his own bear meat practically since his infancy."

"So had Jeff," Bill rapped back, "and then a dinge dock walloper by the name of J. Johnson nudged along and made him look like a jack rabbit."

Bill, it appeared, had got his orbs of a hawk on this grizzly lad while doing some of that slewfoot scout stuff, a short time before, in a Kansas town to get a line on a skinned-lot ball player.

"The fighting pup, himself a discharged soldier back from France only a month or so before, was walking through a six-session mill with a big tractor of a regular-army buck at the military post near this Kansas town when I saw him," said Bill. "You'll be telling me, I suppose, that this regular-army soldier was pretty poor even after you've heard, as you're hearing now, that he'd got an even break in a four-round go with Georges Carpentier in France. Well, the kid I'm foolish enough to wise you to made this big swaddie who'd stood off Carpentier look like a hair seal trying to climb a cliff. Just walked around him like an oiler shooting grease in a ship's engine room. Sank his pair of piston rods into the big slammer who'd got an even-Stephen with Carpentier whenever and wherever he felt like it, and in the last inning of the six, after yawning a good deal over the dullness of the entertainment up to that time, he suddenly became interested enough to fetch a left up from about the level of the rug. You could see the alfalfa, longer than Spanish moss, streaming from that left as it shot upward from the deck. It fell against the right jaw of this birdie who'd broke even with Carpentier with a sound like a new one-hundred-and-fifteen-dollar tire stepping on a tack and going temporarily out of business, and the regular-army lads grouped around the ring whistled 'taps' for their man. The boy, of course, needs a year of smoothing and polishing. But he's got more native hellishness in him, by way of heavyweight promise, right now than any lad I've ever lamped in my thirty years of gumshoeing around for likely looking raw uns. If he'd been up there on those red-hot rosin boards with Dempsey to-day the Salt Lake sketch, good as he is, would have had to stretch to take him, and it would have been an even-money party for my money at that. Better slip out to Kansas right away and take a slant at this one, bo. It'll take a skating rink to hold the bank roll he's going to build for somebody, and I don't seem to remember that you're exactly a kale hater."

"What's the name of this here town in Kansas where you inhaled all that hasheesh, Bill?" I asked him.

"Leavenworth," said Bill. "The kid got his shoulders and arms from working in a coal mine on the edge of the Missouri River between Leavenworth and Fort Leavenworth. But he hasn't gone back to coal mining since he returned home from soldiering in France. Don't know what he's doing for a living now. Don't know where he lives in Leavenworth, either. But you can dig him up. Name's Phelan—Barney Phelan. Better get his moniker on a dotted-line paper, matey. He'll deliver."

Bill's mention of Leavenworth, and of a coal mine on the Missouri River, just outside of Leavenworth, had put a gourd in my throat and a kind of mist before my eyes, as the mention of old hull-down things in your life is liable to do. But I wasn't exhibiting any of my little old sentimental gourds or mists to Bill.

"Oh, I'll trickle out to Leavenworth and take a look at your bum, if only to stop you from nagging me about it later if I didn't," said I to Bill. "Ho-hum! you and your Dempsey shaders!" I tacked to that, getting up from my seat in the jammed lobby of the Toledo hotel and stretching. Bill handed me a disgusted look and passed through the mob of parboiled fight lunatics. It was just then that I felt a finger tap on the back of my shoulder and heard a familiar voice wheezing language into my nigh ear.

"Don't you let a boob like Bill Cranston ease you all that superheated steam, Dinny—I was sitting back of you and heard it all," said this voice. "I've had a look at this Barney Phelan Bill was kidding you about," the voice went on. "Tramp. Quince. Lummox. Couldn't knock a slat off a chicken coop if he was locked inside of it. If my little eight-year-old sister in K. C. couldn't poke the big stiff in the eye and get away with it I'd quit buying her birthday presents. Horrible cheese, this Phelan bloomer, Dinny. Lay away from him. Bill

Cranston's just handing you some of that old Number Seven of his, warranted to break the Rockefellers if they used it long enough. Barney Phelan, hey? Phooey! There'd be a laugh in that for me if this bone-dry Toledo burg hadn't cracked my lips."

The voice belonged to Jerry Cosgrave, the wild and woolly pugilistic promoter of Kansas City. You know Jerry. Everything that Jerry's got, if you're taking it from him, is made out of twenty-four karat radium, whereas everything that you yourself own has been manufactured from an extremely inferior kind of low-grade zinc. Each and all of the scrappers in Jerry's shed are humdingers that for blaziness make Halley's comet look like a lightning bug on a foggy night, to listen to Jeremiah telling you about them, whereas all and several of the persons masquerading as pugilists in the shelter of your stable are a passel of hoboes suffering from the hookworm. In other words, Jerry is and you ain't; that's about Jerry's view of the thing. He gets that stuff across, too, with a great many people who fall for the persuasion of a loud, wheezy voice and whose education as to the nuances of bunkology has been more or less neglected.

So when Jerry Cosgrave, after getting his earful of Bill Cranston's talk with me about the pugilistic promise shown by Barney Phelan, told me that Phelan was a fliv not worth wasting time and traveling expenses on, I was all the more keen to hop the first train for Leavenworth. A lot of experience with Jerry had taught me that the only way to break even with him is to copper his bets, as you might say, by playing the diametrically opposite number from everything that he tells you. It looked to me like a lead pipe that Jerry, far from being in a position to put a firsthand appraisal on Barney Phelan from having actually seen the lad in action, really had never clapped an eye on the kid in his life, nor even heard of the boy until he'd eavesdropped on Bill Cranston's talk with me about the likely one in Leavenworth. Jerry didn't want me to go to Leavenworth. He wanted to go there himself. And Jerry's town, Kansas City, is only twenty-nine miles from Leavenworth, which would give him a healthy drag on me if I didn't start for Leavenworth at once while Jerry was in Toledo, as I was.

"'Zat so, Jerry?" said I in reply to his foxy attempt to flatten out Bill Cranston's tip on the Leavenworth lad. "Well, I kind o' thought Bill was suffering from sunstroke or something. Nix on these Dempsey shaders. They ain't going to be no sich animal for about ten years to come."

Then I made some excuse to shake Jerry and hustled over to the Pullman office to cop a lower from Toledo for Leavenworth.

I said, back yonder a bit, that Bill Cranston's mention of Leavenworth and of a coal mine near there on the edge of the Big Muddy had put a lump in my neck. Those lumps are liable to develop suddenly under your collar band, maybe you've noticed, when somebody accidentally sifts in a remark that pulls before your mind's eye some old horizon that paled out with the passing of your youth.

You see, this town of Leavenworth, Kansas, was a place that, with the sirupy sentimentality of a middle-aged man, I'd been hankering to go back to and have a look at for a good many years, without ever being able to grab the time to make the pious pilgrimage. For not only had I lived out quite a chunk of my ladhood in Leavenworth, but as a youngster I had worked with a lamp in my cap for three years on end in that very coal mine on the brink of the Missouri where, as Bill Cranston had said, this Barney Phelan of his had developed into a fighter.

When I was fourteen years old some distant relatives of mine came along from Kansas and took me out of the New York orphan asylum where I'd been since infancy. These folks had a farm on the Jim Lane Road outside of Leavenworth, and they carried me there with the idea of converting a tough New York kid, pretty clever with his mitts, into a competent hick or hired man. These relations of mine required me to do scarcely any work on that farm. All I had to do was to slide out of the chucks three or four hours before daylight, milk thirty-seven cows, peddle the milk around Leavenworth from a wagon, then, upon returning to the farm, saw and split a few cords of wood, after which, until the noon-day dinner, there was positively not a chore for me to turn my hand to except gather swill and such like for sixty-four hogs that always acted as if they would have preferred to eat *me;* then my entire afternoon and evening were free to fritter away as I liked,

barring the husking of a couple of hundred bushels of corn, swabbing out twenty-eight fifteen-gallon milk cans at the well, currying eight farm horses, washing four farm wagons and two buggies, and such diverting little light tasks as those, after which I was at liberty to crawl back into the feathers and sleep my head off for nearly four hours before starting another of those happy, carefree days.

After six months of this restful life I went ay-way from that farm on the Jim Lane Road, thereby proving myself, as my relatives had foreseen I would, a hopeless ingrate, and I got myself a job as a mule whacker on the dark ground floor of this bituminous coal mine on the brink of the Big Muddy. The work there—only twelve hours a day—was comparatively easy, except for the fighting, which became irksome at times, particularly when some mine boy who looked as if he might be a mark trimmed one to a T-bone. That's what happened to one, meaning me, at the finish of my coal-mining career.

There was a boy in the mine called Butch—that was the only name I ever knew him by—who in his undemonstrative way was idolatrously in love with the fourteen-year-old girl whom I also worshiped in an ineffective dumb manner of my own. Her name was Mary Monahan, and she was the daughter of the three-hundred-pound landlady of the boarding house on Pawnee Street where Butch and I ate and slept. Mary, with her eyes of Clonmel blue, was as pretty as a dew-drenched moss rose, but I know now that she was a horrible flirt. She played Butch and me off against each other with the skill of a dog showman making a couple of his mutt performers jealous of each other, and then reveled in our anguish. There could be but one end to that. Butch and I, each seventeen and wire hard, though I shaded him quite a bit for height and heft, had it out one moonlight night on the government reservation between Leavenworth and Fort Leavenworth, with seconds, timekeepers, bottle holders, a referee, and all the other comforts of home. I was in the prize ring for eight years a little later on before I became a manager of mittists, but nothing that happened to me inside the padded ropes, where I took my drubbings as well as gave them, ever surprised or humiliated me half so much as the colossal, corn-fed clouting this Butch boy handed me under the benign rays of that Kansas moon. The thing went nine rounds, with bare knucks of course. I was pretty good, too, then, you're to understand. But at the end of that mill I was the most painstakingly and completely licked checkerneck that ever pranced into a mitt grind with the idea that he was going to have something soft.

Exit, limping, from Leavenworth, yours faithfully, D. Delaney. The mortification was too great and I had to go. All that was thirty years ago. I'd never been back to Leavenworth since quitting it on the night this Butch lad had staked me to a head the size of a Great Dane's. But, as I began to wedge into middle life, the thought of Leavenworth sort o' haunted me. Wanted to take time, some old day, to go back there and smell the tasseled corn, dew-sprinkled along about dawn, out on the Jim Lane Road; wanted to have a slant at Leavenworth's sleepy old Delaware Street and Shawnee Street, and to listen, when the north wind was blowing, to the faint echo of the trumpet calls from Fort Leavenworth three miles away; wanted, too—though I say it as shouldn't, being a happily married man with grown children—to kind of gumshoe around Leavenworth and see if I could accidentally come upon Mary Monahan, with the wide blue eyes of her and the uptilted creamy nose with its one dull-gold freckle in the middle of it, though my reason told me that Mary must have become about the size of her three-hundred-pound mother and herself be the mother of perhaps nine well-grown children.

So here, after all that foolish dreaming of a man who has begun to look back upon life over his shoulder, and without any planning at all for what I had long hoped would be a purely sentimental journey, I found myself in my lower berth, bound from Toledo for Leavenworth, on a strictly business trip having to do with the likeliness or the unlikeliness for my stable of scrappers of a certain former coal-miner kid by the name of Barney Phelan.

II.

To avoid the rush and other folks' soapsuds, I'm always first man of a morning in the washroom of a sleeping car. One night out from Toledo, early in the morning of the day following the Dempsey-Willard massacre, I was safety-razoring the old jowls in the washroom of this Leavenworth-bound

sleeper, and humming a cheerful little pianissimo chant over the crafty way I'd tossed Jerry Cosgrave off the trail of my purposes, when Jerry, lugging his grip and with most of his clothes thrown over the other arm, walked into the washroom on me.

Well, that was all right with me; Kansas City, Jerry's town, is on the way to and close by Leavenworth, and Jerry, as I viewed the thing, wasn't under any compulsion to ask my permission to go home to Kansas City from the Toledo fight, if you'd call it a fight. Different, though, Jerry's way of viewing my presence on board that Westbound train. I could tell that from the hostile gleam of suspicion in his eye.

"'Lo, there, bo," he greeted me with phony geniality. "Headed the wrong way, ain't you, Dinny?"

"Not if this sleeper is routed through to Denver, as the ticket-office people told me it was," said I.

"Denver, hey?" said Jerry, handing me one of those Bud Fisher dotted-line eye glitters. "What's coming off in our line out Denver way?"

"Nothing that I know of," said I. "Lot of nice mountain air and stuff like that out there, though, and a little rest wouldn't kill me."

"Oh, rest, is it?" croaked Jerry, lamping another flock of Bowie knives at me. "Well, I should think it would make you tired just to look at that bunch of bums you've got in your barn in New York. Isn't Daly, your cheese lightweight, going up for another cleaning at Mulrane's hands in New York a couple of nights from now?"

I told Jerry that my Daly boy would be putting Mulrane away in New York on the night he mentioned.

"Well, don't you make it a practice to be on the gate or somewhere in the building on the nights your tramps fight, if only to count the house?" Jerry asked me, raking me some more with his Yukon stare.

"Generally I do," I told Jerry, continuing to scrape the old heather from my face, "except when I find myself riding on a Denver-bound sleeper or something."

Of course I knew that Jerry knew that I was on my way to Leavenworth to have a look at this bear by the name of Barney that Bill Cranston had tipped me to. And by this time I knew positively, too, that Jerry, until he'd overheard Bill's talk to me on the night before, had never even heard of this Phelan lad, located in a town less than thirty miles from his own, much less seen him and passed him up. So now we were a couple of box-fighter impresarios bound on the same mission, only Jerry, I could see, was ready for anything short of murder to beat me to an inspection of this Barney boy and to the lad's moniker on a document if he should look anything as like as good as Bill Cranston had said he was.

Jerry, tossing his truculent tone when he saw that he wasn't arriving anywhere in my vicinity with that, took another tack as he went ahead with his shaving. You savvy the abused tone, of course. Well, it appeared that Jerry had been abused by his friends, particularly by pals to whom he, Jerry, if you desired to take it from him, had given their first real start in life by setting them up in the pugilistic promotion business. The opening parable, oddly enough, was about an ingrate whom Jerry —said he—had established as a box-fight manager in this very town of Denver, whither Jerry knew I wasn't bound as well as I knew it myself.

"The danged gopher," lamented Jeremiah, now looking sad and sweet instead of puff adderish, "didn't have a pair of galluses, much less shoes for his feet, when I dug him out of a ditch and set him up in Denver with a stable of scrappers from my own K. C. shed. Then what does he do, after he's copped a capful of coin from the top-notchers I turned over to him"—the cue book had a laugh marked there for me, and I took it—"but begin to make raids for scrappers right in my own territory. I call Missouri and Kansas my territory, savvy, because I'm the out-in-front box-fight manager of that region, and I'm entitled to first pick among the birds that look promising in my own country, ain't I?"

"You're entitled to anything you can get, Jeremiah," I eased in there. "Some of us duff-domed fight managers around New York used to believe in the dope trance that we, being on the ground, were entitled to first pick among the New York boys that looked like comers until a passel of porch climbers, engaged in the management of pugilists, began to gumshoe into New York from small-time hamlets like Chicago and Kansas City and sign up speedsters right under our noses. A couple of years ago, I remember, I almost had McShane, the middleweight's, penmanship on a parchment,

after I'd gone to the pains of prying him out of a longshoreman's coop down on West Street in New York, when a box-fight manager from Kansas City of my acquaintance kitty-hoofed into New York between two days and took McShane away from me just like a hobo lifting a fresh-baked pie from a kitchen window sill. This wasn't what you'd call Hoyle, but I don't seem to remember that I hollered at the pitch of my lungs about it, even when this K. C. bird went barnstorming around the West with McShane and picked up fifteen or twenty thousand easy bucks for himself with him."

Wouldn't you suppose that that would have held Jerry for a brief period—considering that it was J. Cosgrave himself who had slunk into New York and swiped McShane from me? Well, there's another suppose owing you. Jerry's view was that New York was "different;" all bets were canceled always whenever New York figured, that town being all hands' happy hunting grounds, first come, first served, findin's is keepin's in New York if nowhere else, and so on—that's about the gist of his squirmout.

"Anyhow, be all that as it may," said Jerry, really believing that he had pinned me to a stanchion with this "different-in-New-York" stuff, "everybody knows that I'm the main squeak as a manager of mittists in Missouri *and* Kansas"—he staked me to another war-medicine glitter out of his wicks when he said "*and* Kansas"—"and the next buzzard that comes tippytoeing into my territory with the idea of plucking a ripe pugilistic persimmon right in front of my eyes is going to find out, pronto, how J. Cosgrave performs when he's sure-enough peevish."

Jerry, I believe, was disappointed because these menacing observations did not scare me into doing a Brodie out of the car window. But I finished my shave, and I was drying the blade when old Bob Gannon, who fought as a light heavy around St. Louis a quarter of a century ago and now runs a high-grade boxing school in that town, wedged into the compartment with his dunnage for his before-breakfast wash-up. I'd seen the clean-cut old lad, melting under the impact of that insane Toledo sun, at the ringside on the day before, take two thousand dollars' worth of Dempsey at evens just before the Utah executioner arrived in the ring.

"Fast, hard boy, Dempsey," said old Bob after giving Jerry and me the nod. "He'll last a while. But there are lads waiting for their breakfast right now, here and there, that'll take him when they're ready." He turned to Jerry. "D'ye ever do a little limp around your neighboring town of Leavenworth by any chance, Jerry?" he asked him, sousing his face in the basin.

Business of J. Cosgrave and D. Delaney, both Leavenworth-bound, sitting up and taking particular notice, but assuming at the same time an air of extreme indifference.

"Not often," said Jerry, yawning nervously. "Hick hamlet, Leavenworth—kind of a little old dopy up-the-line suburb of K. C. Nothing there for my game."

"Better take another smoke on that hick-hamlet stuff, bo," said old Bob, grinning over the top of his towel. "It's the hick hamlets, as you call 'em, that produce the best of the bear-cat box fighters. Better be taking a little prowl around Leavenworth pretty soon. Might pick up something there."

Here was Jerry's chance to hoist in some of his old beat-'em-to-it hoakum and at the same time throw me, as he figured, farther off the scent.

"Oh, I know who you're mumbling about," said Jerry, registering derision and disdain. "That Phelan bum. Know all about him. Fast as a ten-ton truck with a worm drive. Couldn't hit the Soldiers' Monument with a cobblestone. Speedy like a sea cow in an aquarium tank. Who's been kidding you, old-timer?"

Old Bob Gannon, who has forgotten more about how to pick promising mittists than most of us will ever know, and who hasn't gone wrong with his loose change on any big fight in thirty years, stopped drying his face and eyed Jerry curiously.

"Kidding me, hey?" said he, his ruddy old jowls creasing into a grin of sincere enjoyment. "Well," he went on, "maybe I've been kidding myself. But when, a while back, I saw this Phelan lad make a real good one at Fort Leavenworth take a nine-round joke, all the while under a double pull from gong one to good night, I don't remember thinking that I was merely joshing myself along about the boy. The soldier he played horse with was good enough to've got a four-round draw with Georges Carpentier in France, and this soldier could have put Willard away with a poke yester-

day. If that makes the Phelan sketch a sea cow in a tank, show me. He's got everything that Dempsey's got, plus about an inch and a half in height and a good deal more undiluted Irish."

That, from such a sage in the game as old Bob Gannon, was all the trailer to Bill Cranston's tip that I needed, and I hated to think that I wasn't Leavenworth-bound in an airplane instead of a lumbering sleeper. Jerry, when Gannon left the washroom, grinned sympathetically and tapped his dome with his fingers as he nodded after the old boy.

"Dotage," said Jerry. "Drooling dotage. Old Bob must be about two hundred and seventeen years of age by this time. He may have had an eye for 'em when James K. Polk was president but he's too doddery now to know the difference between a peanut and a pawpaw, much less size up a prize fighter. Let 'em all rave over this Phelan fillilloo. I'm off these birdies that are being tipped by people on furlough from the Old Ladies' Home."

All this, get me, from a box-fight promoter who was bleeding internally because the train bound for and through Leavenworth wasn't doing a hundred and thirty miles an hour instead of thirty and because D. Delaney, a fellow fancier of fisticuffers, was journeying on the train on the same errand as himself!

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when the train pulled into the Kansas City station. Jerry didn't, of course, make any move to get his traps together preparatory to being ditched in his home burg.

"Well, Jerry," said I, just to let him think he still had me kidded, "here's where you blow this roller. S'long. Drop in at my shed next time you make New York and I'll show you some live ones."

"I ain't going to get off here," said Jerry, kind o' flustery, as the train slowed to a stop. "Got a little business in a town up the line a piece. So you're going right through on this rattler to Denver—mountain air and all the like of that, eh?"

"Had sort of an idea I might," said I, suppressing a purely fictitious yawn. "But I bought a ticket with stop-over privileges."

Just then a big flat-nosed hombre with a cap on one ear, whom I recognized at a peek as Turk O'Neill, a pretty good heavy in Jerry's shed, swung down the aisle and greeted his manager.

"'Lo, Turk," Jerry said to him. "Got my wire from Cincinnati, did you? Want you to go up the line with me a piece. There's a road house that's going to be abandoned, now this no-booze thing is working, that I'm thinking of turning into a training camp, and I want you to take a slant at it with me. It's near Leavenworth. Shake hands with Dinny Delaney, the New York manager. Dinny's on his way to Denver for some high air and stuff."

So that's the way this Phelan expedition was rigged when, a little less than an hour later, the train pulled into the drowsy Leavenworth station.

III.

It was my turn, as the train passed under the station shed, to wear a detached expression, the mate for the one Jerry had worn when the rattler stopped at Kansas City. The dinge porter, having assembled my pair of bags in the aisle, stood me up for a brushoff. It was then that Jerry tossed his mask with the swiftness of a crab catcher throwing off his face cage to jaw at the umpire. O'Neill, the K. C. heavy, already was juggling with Jerry's grips preparatory to their stepoff at the Leavenworth station, so that Jerry could occupy himself exclusively with watching my moves and fanning the fury they aroused within him.

"So you're going to horn into my territory anyhow, are you, even after I've told you I wouldn't stand for it?" he shot at me in a husky splutter. "You figure you're going to cop this Phelan pup with me standing by and looking on with my hands hanging loose, do you?"

I told Jerry that, while I could entertain no hope of controlling the hang of his hands, neither could he reasonably expect to debar me from visiting a town in which a part of my boyhood had been passed and in which I had not stepped foot for thirty years.

"Nix on that boyhood-home-in-Leavenworth stuff with me, birdie!" was Jerry's still hoarser comeback to that. "You might as well try to tell me that you were born and brought up in Bombay when everybody knows that your boyhood home was on the Bowery. I'll lay a million to one in money or mangoes that you never planted a hoof in Leavenworth in your life——"

"All right, Jerry," I broke in there, the train at that instant coming to a jolty stop. "But if you'll study my curves carefully for

the next hour or so you'll observe, first, how nimbly an old skate like me can step around in a town that's totally strange to him, if you'll have it that way, and, second, how easy it is for one of these million-to-one gamblers to lose that kind of a bet when he's hell bent on giving himself so much the worst of it."

Cold bluff, of course—just something to say. There's nothing nimble about me any more except when I'm side-stepping the process server or somebody similarly poisonous, but you've got to project some kind of persiflage at a boob that's trying to bawl you out in the presence of the audience.

Anyhow, I wasn't nimble enough when, dragging my brace of bags, I left the train in the Leavenworth station, to grab a vehicle for myself. There were fully three conveyances, two sad surreys and an open-faced Detroit peace ship, lined up for the train alongside the station, but the day-coach passengers nailed these, leaving such Pullman goops as lighted in Leavenworth to stand flatfooted on the platform wondering why they came.

Not caring much for this left-at-the-post stuff, I cast my eye across the street and spotted a faint light in front of a garage. I made this garage in very few bounces considering my heft and the weight of my grips, and, seeing nobody around, I sang out the old ship ahoy.

A husky in blue dungarees swung from the back of the dark garage and, scratching under his cap, looked me over.

"Messmate," said I to this party in the blue-grease clothes, "I want you to throw me into anything on wheels that'll roll me to Fort Leavenworth at the rate of about one mile per lunar minute."

My idea being, you've guessed already, to beat Jerry to it by lamming up to Fort Leavenworth in jig time or better, getting hold of that soldier this Phelan lad had trimmed, and finding out from him just where in the town of Leavenworth I'd be able to dig up Phelan at the earliest possible instant.

"Guess I'll have to drive you to the Fort myself, then, cap," was this smiling big coot's reply. "There's nobody here but me at this hour—this being my garage, such as it is. There's only one bus now in the shed, and it's limping a little at that, but I guess I can shoot you to the post in the time you mention. Get in."

So I tossed my bags and myself into the rear seat of the big old-fashioned car standing in the dimness at the back of the garage, the willing cuss who was going to drive me stepping to a sink to swab the grease from his hands before taking the wheel. He was giving his paws a hasty wipe with a gob of cotton waste when from the front of the garage came the sound of several shuffling feet, and Jerry Cosgrave and his ring minion, Turk O'Neill, panting and on their tippytoes with eagerness, bore down on the young man in the blue-grease uniform.

"What ho, hombre—how 'bout a little pep, hey?" Jerry greeted the garage owner with an air of great confidence. "A little ride for me and my pal here to Fort Leavenworth—you can start us in about thirty seconds, I s'pose?"

So Jerry, you see, was playing the same gig as I was: Get hold of that Phelan-trimmed soldier at the Fort and find out from him where the trimmer could be found.

"Can't start you at all, guv, I'm afraid," said the dungareed lad, "unless the passenger I've already got for the Fort in the one car remaining here is willing to have you go along with him."

You won't have to dig deep to discern that I was about as willing to have Jerry go to Fort Leavenworth in the same chariot with me, in the circumstances as you know them, as you'd be to wake up to-morrow morning with a dose of the double-ring shingles.

"Nothing stirring in that line, son," I rumbled at the garage husky. "Let's go."

That was Jerry's first knowledge of the fact that it was old D. Delaney who was still blocking his path to this Phelan boy of promise. My rumble from the dark depths of the old car caused Jeremiah to explode like a toy balloon that Pettikin has held too close to the gas logs.

"Hey, Turk," Jerry bawled to this biggest heavy in his barn that he'd picked up in Kansas City for reasons of his own, "yank that old gumshoer out of that coach, will you? He only thinks he's going to ride to Fort Leavenworth in it. Just change his mind for him about that, Turk. *We're* going to be the passengers for Fort Leavenworth in that bus."

So Turk, his boss' say-so being aces-four with him, started to stroll for the back of the car to yank me out of there, as per instructions, while I half rose from my seat

in the dimness to stake Turk to a short-arm clout on the chin dimple the instant he got within range.

No need, though, for me to get ready for Turk—no need a-tall. The youthful owner of a small and somewhat feeble garage, who'd finished wiping his hands with the waste while this was going on, stiffened quite noticeably when Jerry ordered that I be removed from the car.

"Nothing like that, matey," he called out in quite an authoritative though nonboisterous tone to Turk, who halted in his progress toward where I was sitting and glared witheringly at the garage young man. "I told you the car's engaged. Step outside, you two, will you?" to Jerry and Turk. "I'm going to lock up when I run the car out."

It was then that Jerry beat his own going-up record.

"Step outside, hell!" he blared. "We're going to Fort Leavenworth in that car if I have to drive it myself, and I can drive it all right. Get that old devil out of the back seat, Turk. I'm in a rush."

It was only then that I caught my first view of the garage youngster's face. It was one of those placid, well-arranged, solid-Muldoon countenances, but it so happened that when I got this first peek at it the forehead of it was creased up a whole lot and the eyelids were pressed so close together that what I could see of the eyes looked like electric sparks.

"Come away from that car, you!" he called out to Turk. "And dam' pronto at that!"

"Take him, Turk!" Jerry yelled to his man, pointing to the garage youngster. "We got to have that car. Take him!"

So Turk whirled, obedient checkerneck that he was, and started for the lad in blue dungarees, who stood, hands down, waiting for him, steady like a tree that never thinks of running away from the tornado it sees approaching.

"I hate to smear youse up, Petey," Turk wheezed, starting a left swing, "but youse heard what.me boss said. He wants de bus, git me? So——"

Bwuppppppp!

The bwuppiest bwupp you ever heard at or away from a ringside. The bwupper was the tall lad in the blue working clothes, and the thing that made that bwuppy noise, like a back fire blowing out your muffler on a rainy night in the woods, was a left jab that only whistled through the air about eight inches. Turk sat down just like a man that's going to see if there's a stone in his shoe. He took about eight in that position, then scrambled to his feet with a roar, with J. Cosgrave, his manager, dancing around and barking at him. The boy in blue canvas waited for him again, mitts at rest and pointing southward, as before, and when Turk weaved in once more, this time with a hooded cobra meant for a haymaker in the right which he started from the garage floor in the very act of getting to his feet, the garage lad, blocking the murder wallop as you'd push away a Pomeranian that wanted to lick your ear, sent over a right uppercut that lifted Turk a couple of feet from the asphalt by means of chin leverage, and Jerry's likeliest Kansas City heavy lay down, full length, and listened to the lovely little orioles singing their mad, merry melodies in the branches of the onion trees.

The garage lad stood quiet for a couple of minutes, waiting for Turk to ooze out of the trance, while Jerry Cosgrave expressed his chagrin over the poor showing of his man, 'n' everything, by means of language that a man-o'-war bo's'n's mate wouldn't address to an empty scuttlebutt. Turk sat up and looked round, with a hand on his bean, with one of those where-am-I-Wilfred expressions. He was still groggy when he got to his feet.

"I ain't in condish now," he mumbled, not loud enough to strain his larynx, "but when I am I'll run up here from K. C. some afternoon an' make youse look like a dime's worth of dog meat."

The garage youngster laughed brittly, but that didn't prevent him from looking considerably resolute when he said, addressing Jerry and Turk:

"Out of here, on the jog, you two. I told you before I wanted to lock up."

He jumped into the driver's seat, gave the starter a tug, and ran the car out in front of the garage, where he braked it, leaving the engine throbbing, and leaped out again to lock up his building. Jerry nudged over alongside him, and, in his wheedling tone, began to ease a little of the old South breeze into the boy.

"Say, kid," I could hear Jerry say over and above the pulsation of the motor, "you're pretty handy with your paws, what?

I'm Jerry Cosgrave, of K. C., the box-fight contractor, and this bird you've just sprawled a couple of times is the huskiest heavy I've got in my hangar. How'd'je get that way, son?"

"I'm busy, mate," was my dungaree'd driver's choppy reply to that mess of oil; then he gave the old bus the spark and gas and shot her into Shawnee Street, leaving Jerry and Turk gaping after us like a couple of lumberjacks lamping the last clown in the passing circus pageant.

It was strong in my mind, of course, as the car weaved through the quiet, still-familiar old Leavenworth streets, all swabbed by moonlight again as they'd been the last night I'd spent there thirty years before—I was thinking, naturally, that this old burg of my boyhood ought to furnish pretty good rummaging for fighting material when a mere garage youngster could poke a not-bad heavy like Turk O'Neill to the asphalt a couple of times without even looking extended; and it was rattling around in the old bean, too, that if by any chance I should fail to fasten a contract to this Phelan lad I was searching for, I'd make some inquiries of this self-same husky garage boy as to what he himself really knew about the mitt pastime and where he'd picked it up, with the idea of giving him a try-out if it appeared that his treatment of Turk wasn't mere flukiness and flash-in-the-pan stuff.

But all those considerations of box-fighting business were soon dispelled by the trance that took hold of me as the car, turning from Shawnee Street into Fifth, sped northward past dinky old buildings the memory of which came back to me as sharply as if I'd seen them only yesterday on a movie screen. If actually put under the gun about it I'd deny, I suppose, with ferocity and with the last breath of my body that there's fifteen cents' worth of sentiment, much less downright sugary sentimentality, in my entire carcass; but I'm here to confess, in this hour of relaxation and weakness, that this moon-bathed picture of squatty old Leavenworth, so long ago left hull down in its hopeless struggle to be a sure-enough city, took me around the neck in a way that made me believe my Adam's apple had been suddenly turned into a goitre.

I was particularly grabbed by the gulpy symptoms when the bus, turning into Pawnee Street at the north end of the town to make the Fort Leavenworth road, approached the spot where, if it still stood up, the house of Mary Monahan's mother's boarding house, the old shelter for Butch and me, ought to be.

Well, it still stood up, bo. There it squatted, back on its little grassy terrace shaded in front by maples, and with the ancient and gnarled apple trees on both sides burdened with the ripening golden yellow apples that I remembered the taste of as well as I remembered the size of my shoes. The full moon, which in Kansas, it seems to me, has a splendor of its own, blazed mellowly upon the great mass of fragrant, waxy-pink roses on the rambling rosebush that clambered, as of old, all over the east side of the house, and the tall hollyhocks and sunflowers out by the barn on its west side nodded, as their ancestors had nodded for me three decades before, in the gusts of evening breeze.

"Pull up here for a minute, son, will you?" I said to my driver in the blue overalls when the car had got a hundred feet or so past the old house. "I want to rubber a little at that shack on the terrace. I used to live there—before you were born."

He brought the car to a stop without comment, and I looked back at the house. There was a figure in white, a woman sitting rather pensively in the moonlight with her chin in her hand, on the front steps. I got out of the car—not wholly responsible, I suppose, by this time. The youngster at the wheel watched me steadily, and, I know now, pretty curiously, too, but said nothing. So I walked across the street and up the steps, intending, I presume, to ask the slender, pensive woman in the neat house dress of white a few idle questions as to what had become of Mother Monahan and all the like of that.

She rose from the steps as I ascended them, and the glow of the big globe in the sky caught her full in the face—a pretty face still, with the same old sparkle of innocent mischief in the wide eyes of Clonmel blue.

Mary Monahan, of course; forever unforgettable by me, naturally; for you always remember the face of your first sweetheart, pal. It worked that way with Mary Monahan, too. She stared searchingly at my features for ten seconds of dead silence as I stood, waiting and dumb, before her. Then:

"By the Blessed Virgin, if it isn't Dennis Delaney!" said she in a sort of subdued gasp, pushing at the front of her silver-streaked black hair with a nervous hand, but smiling the old captivating smile.

"And your servant and slave, now and forever, Mary Monahan," was the florid bit of foolishness that made its escape from me.

There was a snort as of a hippopotamus, and the sound of a chair being pushed back, from the dark little parlor back of the front steps, and a bulky man in his shirt sleeves appeared, rumbling deep in his throat, in the doorway.

"What's all this shennannigin' goin' on out here—this callin' of me wife out of the name she now owns and all the like o' that?" the heavy voice demanded.

You've guessed it. Butch, none other. Same old looming, hostile Butch with a chip on his shoulder.

"Why, this is Dennis Delaney, James, come to see us after all these long years!" exclaimed Mary, Butch's wife, her tone a little faltering.

"Delaney, is it?" woof-woofed Butch, walking over to me with his jaw stuck out in the old Butch way. "Well, I put a head on Delaney once and, by blazes, I can do it again——"

"Shame on you, James Phelan, at your age, to treat an old friend, come on a friendly visit, in such a way!" Butch's wife, a gleam of the old Irish anger now showing in the Clonmel eyes, broke out.

Phelan! Her mention of that name caused me to wonder. Could it be possible that——

But I didn't have much time for wondering, seeing that Butch, this James Phelan as it now appeared he was, was standing menacingly in front of me, and even pulling his right back to plaster one on me for luck and for the sake of old times.

But I wasn't pasted. I didn't even have to put up my guard. There was the sound of somebody running springily up the yard steps three at a clip, and my driver in the blue dungarees showed suddenly among us. He passed a gentle big mitt through the crook of Butch's pulled-back arm, and smiled in his father's face.

"Nix on this rough stuff, dad," said he. "I heard it all. This gent here," nodding at me, "is all right. I saw his name on his bags at my garage when he hired my bus—'Dennis Delaney, New York'—and I've often seen his picture in the sporting columns. He's a manager of scrappers, and he's O. K."

"If you'd listen to Barney once in a while, James Phelan," said Barney's mother, that used to be Mary Monahan, "you wouldn't be in hot water all the days of your life!"

"And if Barney will listen to me," I put in there, "I'll have him climbing all over the frame of Jack Dempsey in a couple of years at the outside."

"I'm open to reason," said Barney Phelan, my blue-dungaree'd driver, with his mother's smile.

So that's how the tip on Barney Phelan—which isn't his name exactly, but near enough to it—worked out. I've got him under close cover in my shed, giving him the Tipperary touches before trying him out against the hard ones. He'll do. A new good man, as Bill Cranston said, is always a legitimate even-money shot in the fighting game, and it won't hurt you to have a little bet on Barney Phelan on the day he goes up against Jack Dempsey.

More of Cullen's yarns on the way to you.

SOMETHING ELSE TAKES TIME

IT takes a long time to dry a piece of wood. When the door frames and window sashes in your new house warp and bulge out of shape, it is because they have been made out of lumber that was not sufficiently "dried." Big manufacturers have developed a system of drying by steam, a forced process. Even that requires from seven to fifteen days.

But, in order to have a piece of spruce dry enough for the manufacture of violins and guitars, twenty-eight years are needed—another reason why a Stradivarius costs big money.

The Voice From the Mountain

By Charles Somerville

Author of "The Khalifa of Tangier," Etc.

Amru, the little Moorish donkey boy, was ambitious for a throne, and he put his wild visions into practical operation. The bold lad did not hesitate to take into partnership Allah and the Prophet. It is a story full of Oriental imagination and guile

GUARDED from the blaze of a dazzling sun, in the sweet, dark coolness of a thick grove of olive and lemon trees flanked by swaying cedars, back of the ancient fortress on the heights of the city of Algiers, young Amru, the Moor, sat cross-legged piping on a silver flute. The month was August, the year, 1903.

Fingers womanishly delicate tapped the keys of his silver flute. His slender figure held its cross-legged posture with ease, even grace. His turban and cloak were spotlessly white. There was a mere tracery of black hair on the upper lip of his handsome, clear-skinned, clever, youthful countenance. His years could not have been more than eighteen.

His long-lashed, velvety black eyes were half closed, their gaze fixedly yet dreamily, as one mesmerized, upon a shaft of brilliant sunlight which shot through an aperture in the thick, clustering foliage of the grove and splashed a big, irregular patch of gold upon the turf.

Sprawled at full length at Amru's side lolled Yezid, a huge negro whose heavily featured face was glossy black. He leaned on the elbow of a mighty arm, puffing slowly at a long, thick-stemmed pipe with a tiny metal bowl. Yezid's shaven black poll was bare, his great body clad in a single garment of coarsely woven brown cloth.

The piping of young Amru's silver flute brought forth no definite air. It emitted a repetition of mere musical phrases but the notes were sweet and there was fascination in their monotony. The youth continued to look unwaveringly through half-closed eyes at the bright patch of gold upon the turf.

Yezid's regard was doglike in affection.

"And to-day, little comrade," he said, "thou who art always dreaming—of what is thy dream to-day?"

Amru removed the silver flute slowly from his lips. But his gaze remained on the golden patch of sunlight.

"Of a throne," he answered calmly.

The black waited, but Amru said no more.

"How, Amru," Yezid asked, "how—a throne?"

The glance of the half-closed eyes swiveled toward the negro.

"Of myself upon a throne."

"Thou!"

Again the soft, monotonous cadences from the flute and again the piping stopped.

"Myself, Yezid," responded the youth, fully opening his big, intelligent black eyes and looking straight into the face of the negro. "Myself in pomp and splendor upon a throne—myself under the canopy of crimson and gold with all bowing before me, myself with a hundred wives, and stables of finest Berbs and Numidians, with minstrels and musicians at my beck and call, with great companies of friends come for feasting, with cages of wild lions and tigers to set fighting before me at my whim, myself with heavy rings and chains and girdles of gold and flashing jewels. And when I ride out——"

"But thou are not of saintly birth!"

"Well?"

"Nor even of noble."

"Yet, Yezid," continued Amru coolly, "have I come to know in a perfect vision as I sat here playing upon this silver flute, that I shall sit upon a throne, that I shall reign under the red canopy surmounted by the golden ball. I am to be Sultan of Morocco."

"Thou!"

"Within this very year!"

The negro raised his huge torso on both elbows.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he cried. "He, he, he! Thou sultan—thou who were but yesterday a donkey boy for the tourists at Tangier!"

The back of Amru's delicate hand struck the negro's thick-lipped mouth with a hard smack.

"Insolent!" snapped the youth.

Ferocity glared in the face of huge Yezid. He half arose, but sighed and sank back.

"I could crush thee, kill thee with a blow," he growled. "Yet I will not. Have out thy dream. I will not scoff. For after all——"

"For after all it is a lie that I do nought but dream. Visions come to me as to all great men. Out of them I perform deeds."

Yezid passed a great black hand across his stung lips and was silent.

"It is true that I have been but a donkey boy for the tourists at Tangier. Did I remain so? Did I not learn to speak all the tongues these tourists spoke—French, Italian, even German, as well as the Arabic and Spanish I naturally came by? Did I not hoard the contemptible baksheesh that came to me until I could purchase fine raiment and a ship passage to Algiers? Did ye not then stupidly deride these things as dreams when I confided them to thee in the tea house beside the great English Hotel Cecil on Tangier's long strand by the sea?"

"It is only the truth that comes from thy lips," admitted the negro conciliatingly.

"And did I not dream that I would arrive thus in handsome raiment in Algiers and with my silver flute, my many languages, my knowledge gained as donkey boy of the ways of foreign lords and ladies and my great intelligence become a very prince of the guides of Algiers? And have I not become so?"

"Ye have, Amru, ye have."

"And did ye not deride me as being of wildest fancy when I promised I should contrive thy escape from slavery under the cruel Khalifa of Tangier that owned ye? And did I not garb thee as the black woman of a Numidian family and thus pass thee aboard the boat for Algiers? I, the dreamer, did I not keep my promise that ye would accompany me as my friend and servant?"

"It is the truth, my young Amru, little master."

"Thou art a stanch friend, Yezid. But by the promise, my servant as well."

"I would not have it otherwise, little master."

"And the blow is forgiven?"

"Fully."

"I repeat then—I have had a perfect vision of myself upon a throne and but for your interruption, I would have said that when I ride out at the head of my troops it shall be thou, Yezid, shall bear the red umbrella with the golden ball that shields my person from the sun. And I shall decree that it shall not be death to thee nor desecration to me if thy hand touches my person."

"It is a wonderful dream, little Amru."

"It shall be reality."

"Did the vision but unfold now, little master, as we sit under the trees, thou making sweet music on the instrument of silver?"

"Nay. Last night it first came."

"In thy sleep?"

"Nay, as ye sat behind me in the French cabaret, and we watched the Italian magician, Fregoli."

Amru arose, shook out the folds of his white cloak, and tucked his flute within his embroidered silken girdle beside his short scimitar in its dull, chased-silver scabbard hung by a crimson cord slung across his chest beneath the creamy cloak. Yezid also arose.

"But how, Amru, should this magician cause——"

"Remember thou when he brought from out the tall, stiff hat of the Mister Nowell, the secretary of the British consul, a wriggling rabbit—a white, wriggling rabbit?"

"Aye, Amru."

" 'Twas then I began to have the vision of myself as king."

Perplexity came into the big, childlike eyes of Yezid. He rolled them and wagged his shaven poll.

"How that a white rabbit brought wriggling by the ears out of a tall, stiff hat should——"

"Nay, it would but make thee stare the harder, puzzle thee perhaps the more, if I sought to explain," laughed Amru. "But come. I have hunger. We will go into the city and to the shop of the meat cook, Hosein. But remember thou, Yezid, when we come to peopled streets thou art to go before me crying upon all to fall back that I may walk in public as one of quality."

"Aye, little master," beamed the giant.

black, "that will I do, and back they shall fall as if already the Moorish throne were thine."

"Ye think me mad?"

"I said not so. But that a white rabbit brought wriggling out of an Englishman's hat should——"

"In any event," and Amru smiled, "the mad are under the special protection of Allah."

"Be praised!" responded Yezid with a devout uplift of palms the color of tortoise shell. "But thou art not mad, little comrade. Indeed, I know thee to be most wise."

Amru took the compliment easily.

"There is another," he said, "one of wealth and power, and from a great empire, whom I hope thoroughly to make so understand this very night, Yezid."

He brought out of his girdle a long, thin, flat case of gold and from it offered the negro a slender cigarette. They passed beyond the lemon and olive grove and into the high sunlight with their faces turned toward the town.

II.

In 1903, Morocco, the last of the independent kingdoms of the western Orient, was the shining mark for European diplomatic intrigue. Morocco is the Mexico of Africa in its fertility, in its practically wholly unexploited possessions of precious metals and other minerals of high value. Besides being a land of hidden treasure it possessed great military significance as being opposite the British stronghold of Gibraltar.

At this time Great Britain held very definitely the upper hand. Kaid McLean, a doughty little Scotchman of most romantic career, a former British army officer and drillmaster at Gibraltar, was the real ruler of Morocco. He had won the heart and favor of the grim old sultan, Muley Hassan, because of his military expertness in training the sultan's army and his intrepidity on the battlefield at such times, which were frequent, when Muley Hassan issued forth to administer severe castigations to refractory tribes in his dominion. At the deathbed of Muley Hassan, Kaid McLean practically dictated the choice of the dour old sultan's successor. In Morocco succession to the throne does not go by priority of birth. The sultan is free to choose from among any of his sons. So it came that McLean placed upon the throne of Morocco youthful Abdul Azziz, son of a Circassian slave woman of Muley Hassan's harem. It was generally conceded that the boy was McLean's puppet. A royal command was not effective until visèd by the Bismarckian Scotchman.

The French had entered their claim to consideration in Morocco by the establishment of banks in the principal cities, the Spanish had recognition because of large colonies for centuries resident in the Moorish towns, and the Germans were seeking to thrust a firm tentacle into Morocco so that when the final partition or control of the land should be adjudicated among the Powers, Germany could demand a big slice of the pie. In 1903, however, their established interest in Morocco was tenuous. They had managed to establish a postal service.

It must be understood, that to travel through the interior of Morocco in this time was like stepping back three thousand years in history. There were no roads, merely camel and donkey paths through the rugged mountains and the valleys. There were no railroads, nothing, in fact, that traveled on wheels. There were no bridges over the torrential rivers. The Moors fought resolutely the invasions of such modern conveniences as telegraph, railroads, automobiles, telephones, bridges. And, rightly, from their standpoint. Sage Moors would point out to you that were the country opened to these things the land must immediately thereafter lie helpless before European invaders. Besides, their philosophy of life was and is wholly different from that of the Occidental. The Mohammedan religion rules the state and intimately rules the lives of the Moor. Modern bustle and progress they regard as futile—why fuss, fume, and fret through a state of life that is merely and briefly transitional? So the German postal service consisted merely of relays of riders on horses, donkeys, and camels between cities. If a river was swollen there was nothing to do but camp until it went down and became fordable.

Kaid McLean allowed the French some slight recognition and standing at the sultan's court. But he barred the Germans. There was a German artist who managed to make his way to an audience with the sultan in Fez and delighted Abdul Azziz, always on the lookout for a new plaything, with his

portraits and his rapid sketches and caricatures. But the German artist became too great a favorite with the young sultan. He suddenly found himself under escort traveling out of Fez to the cosmopolitan seaport of Tangier.

It was in the face, then, of this political situation in his native land that young Amru, accomplished linguist, musician, and dapper guide, greatest favorite with the fashionable and titled tourists who came to Algiers, former donkey boy of Tangier, conceived his high ambition to sit upon the Moorish throne. And certain it is that a plan bold and shrewd had evolved in the brain of the picturesque, slender, boyish piper on the silver flute and that he was soon to give amazing proof that he lacked not the mind, will, energy, or courage actively and skillfully to pursue it.

At the conclusion of their repast in the shop of the meat cook, Hosein, Amru, led by big Yezid bawling on the rabble of the street to hold back for the passing of his lord and master, made his way to the hot baths of the native city. With his person cleansed and barbered, his turban newly wound, Amru started some time after nightfall for the lower or new city where the Europeans live. Again he was preceded by Yezid, this time carrying a huge silver lantern in which burned two wax candles, a beautiful, ancient lantern hired for the evening at a native curio stall.

In the guise of an aristocrat abroad, the donkey boy of Tangier passed within the gateway of a high stone wall, through an extensive garden of palms and blooming flowers, and finally, with Yezid falling respectfully behind him and holding the silver lantern aloft, stood on the threshold of the Algerian residence of Herr Hans Kaupfmyer, a painter of talent, who had spent more than a year in Algiers studying the landscape gardening of the country which is the most beautiful in the world. Moreover, it had not escaped Amru's notice that noble, distinguished Germans visiting Algiers never failed to be guided to the home of Herr Kaupfmyer and his sharp eye had further seen that, no matter how pompous the caller, his manner had been deferential to the tall, brown-bearded German artist.

The native servant who came to the door was thoroughly impressed by the elegance of Amru's attire and the presence behind him of the big black with the gleaming silver lantern. Besides, Amru's nonchalance was perfect as he said in Arabic:

"Bespeak your master that Amru of the Hotel Carnot would see him on a matter of importance."

Word promptly came for his admittance. Signaling Yezid to remain behind, Amru followed the artist's servant into a big library. In a deep leather chair sat the bulky, brown-bearded Herr Kaupfmyer with bright, brown eyes fixed with a natural curiosity on his unusual visitor.

As well expect an Oriental to voluntarily dive out of a high cloud into a rocky glen, as to approach a subject directly. Perhaps it was the more effective for Amru that he began speaking as he did, for certainly it added to Herr Kaupfmyer's curiosity and speculation regarding the purpose of the call.

In the beginning young Amru bent his slender figure in a most courtly bow and smiled attractively.

"Last night, excellence," he began, "I saw at the French cabaret the performance of the Italian magician, Fregoli. He did marvelous things—the bringing of a wriggling white rabbit out of the hat of the secretary of the British consul, the making of flowers grow instantly upon the casting of a seed into an earthern pot, the changing of water into wine, wrapping the rabbit within a silken handkerchief and crushing it with his fingers until there was no rabbit, the making of five coins appear in his hand where only one had been. And then putting his breast forward to be shot with bullets that, striking him, fell flat upon the floor—that especially of all things, excellence, I beheld with wonder and amazement."

"I have seen such things done many times, Amru," said the German. "It is not the work of jinn. It is but the ingenuity of man."

"The falling of flattened bullets to the floor—bullets that had struck his chest?"

"The wearing of an inner coat of cloth-of-steel thread that can withstand bullets. But why, Amru, do you come to me to tell me of the magician?"

"Because, excellence, if you should arrange with the Italian magician to teach me his wondrous art so that I might perform these things—and surely I could learn for I have great intelligence, excellence—vast might be the results in the interest of thy empire."

Herr Kaupfmyer frowned.

"I do not understand."

"First, excellence, I am not of Algiers. I am a Moor."

"Well?"

"It has been a year since I have been in my native land, but I learn much of Morocco from the native travelers arriving here by caravan and from the ships—things, excellence, that do not always come to European ears."

"Yes, Amru," said the German with a show of interest.

"But perhaps I presume. Perhaps the excellence knows all that I would tell him of the situation in my country as it exists in this hour?"

"I know some things—many things perhaps," said Herr Kaupfmyer, "yet you, Amru, may know vastly more. I still grope for the object of your visit. But put yourself in comfort." He waved a hand graciously toward another large chair. "Speak freely."

Amru did not accept the chair. Instead he moved over to a leather lounge, settled himself cross-legged upon it, brought out his thin, flat case of gold, lighted a slender cigarette, and was thoroughly at his Oriental ease.

"Never was the time more ripe, the moment so favorably at hand, excellence, for the casting of Abdul Azziz off the throne of Morocco."

"Indeed?"

"Aye, my lord. And for the driving of the English Kaid McLean from power, banishing him utterly from the country!"

"So?"

"Does the excellence know that in every mosque in Morocco the sultan is now being denounced as false to the faith of the Prophet? And that the idea is with all Moors that he has been won over to Christianity?"

"I have heard something of it, Amru. But tell me more. What do you know of the reasons for these charges?"

"Excellence, first of all the absolute domination of the sultan by the Christian McLean. The sultan is now past his twentieth year, but"—Amru's lips twisted with scorn —"he is yet a mere boy, a child. All that McLean has to do is keep him amused, give him new toys. But in the choice of toys McLean has made grave errors, for these have been Christian toys. He has taught him the use of the picture-making machine —the camera. The sultan goes about his palace grounds at Fez and at Rabat making his subjects, his soldiers, his wives pose for these things that are called 'snapshots.' Excellence knows well that it is solemnly prohibited by the Koran to reproduce by imitation anything in nature. He not only imperils his own soul but those whose pictures he takes. Then there was the bicycle —a foreign bedevilment on wheels on which he rides. He has amused himself making his wives ride the thing, laughing when they tumbled to the ground. Moreover, he has forsaken the costume, the habiliments of his people. He goes about in European dress, the walking costume of knickerbockers and woolen stockings and belted coat and cap such as the English wear. It sounds, perhaps, a trivial thing, excellence, but consider did your mighty emperor appear in Berlin in the costume of the Moor or the Chinese, would he not be regarded as mad? Everything concerning the taxes and the business of the country is left in the power of the Kaid McLean. Again, excellence, the sultan caused deep bitterness by his attempted acceptance of the latest toy McLean would have given him—a little railroad, the tracks to be built around the six miles of his palace grounds at Fez. Six times have workmen laid the tracks—six times have the hillmen descended in the night and destroyed the tracks, bearing away many of the rails. Twice small locomotives and cars were landed at Rabat, twice the tribesmen of the Zemmurs have rushed down and cast the devil devices into the sea."

Amru would have arisen to place the smoldering end of his cigarette in a tray at a near-by table, but Herr Kaupfmyer hastily passed the youth an ash receiver.

"What more, Amru?" he asked.

"An act the gravest of all. It was of recent occurrence and the excellence may not know of it—the killing of the English missionary?"

"Continue, Amru."

"For years two English missionaries have labored in vain in Fez for converts. One, indeed, abandoned his project and became a merchant. But this other was not to be discouraged. In the present state of affairs, his activity aroused fierce enmity and a devout Mohammedan, a saintly man, from the roof of one of the houses, shot the Eng-

lish missionary and killed him. Then the good man ran to the mosque of Mohab-Algreb and there took sanctuary. It is a most sacred place, excellence, and none seeking its protection may be apprehended. Yet the Kaid McLean was enraged. He ordered the sultan to send soldiers to the mosque and take the slayer of the missionary into custody in defiance of the laws of sanctuary. It was hard to make the soldiers obey. They did so in fear. The prisoner placed upon his breast one of the placards to be found in the mosque which declares that he is under the protection of Allah and the Prophet and may not be harmed. Wearing such a placard he was brought to the sultan's presence. The order was given to remove the placard but the soldiers' fear then became so great they held back. The sultan cursed them and stepped forward, and with his own hand snatched off the placard and flung it contemptuously to the ground. He commanded that the prisoner be strapped to the back of a donkey and be led through the streets of Fez by six soldiers armed with whips who were ordered to beat him at every foot of the way. They were compelled to do this and later to cast him into jail. There was a trial afterward, and to the amazement of all the Kaid McLean insisted that the killer be sentenced to death—when, as the excellence knows well, in Mohammedan belief it requires the lives of ten Christians to equal that of one Mohammedan. The order was given for the man to be shot. But the soldiers have openly mutinied against obeying such an order upon one dragged out of sanctuary.

"The sultan's own uncle, excellence, has cast back all his estates, his horses, and his wealth into the teeth of the sultan. He refuses to draw revenue in the kingdom of a ruler who is an apostate to the faith. He has turned wanderer and beggar. They have given him the name of Bu-Hamara—Old Man on the She Ass—and he has been traveling among the tribes and to the mosques most bitterly denouncing the sultan. The feeling against the throne is in fever, my lord. If the power of Kaid McLean is to be broken, now is the time to strike!"

The German scratched ruminatively at his long, brown beard.

"And what has this to do with thy learning magic of the Italian?"

Young Amru was immediately upon his feet and the big black eyes which he brought fully to bear on the countenance of Herr Kaupfmyer were electric in their intensity.

"Excellence, the fighting men of the nation are the mountain men—the tribes of the Atlas. They are like children in love and devotion to the faith of the Prophet. They live in the fastnesses and are simple like children—shrewd in some things, fierce in battle—but as children in the faith. Were one to go among them—were I, excellence, with my intelligence, my will, my force"—Amru struck himself sharply over the heart and his eyes fairly blazed—"and declare himself divinely appointed of Allah and the Prophet to drive this false sultan from the throne I could arouse a rebellion that would sweep Abdul Azziz and Kaid McLean to the dust. But they will ask of me more than exhortations, excellence. As of old they asked of Mohammed, they would also ask miracles of me. Could I then do these things this Italian does—change water into wine, make five coins appear where one appeared before, make a flower spring in an instant from a seed, and above all, could I stand forth and let them shoot at my heart and they behold the flattened bullets fall—excellence, in a few weeks I could bring an army of fifty thousand men—men fearless of death, for they would be waging a holy war!"

"And you to ascend the throne?"

"I—to be proclaimed sultan!"

"But of the arming of these men?"

"That, excellence, is the chief reason why I have come to you."

"But if this support were given you, what reward——"

"The English power in Morocco would be destroyed."

"And you?"

"Would be faithful to that power that placed me on the throne—but skillfully, excellence, in every outward aspect a most devout Mohammedan and an avowed enemy of all foreigners. There would be no sedition talked against me in the mosques."

The German again scratched for a little while at his brown beard. He arose suddenly, abruptly.

"Amru," he said, "the Italian will be engaged to teach you."

"Ah, excellence, you favor my plan?"

"Go to his lodgings to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock. The lessons will begin then. Do not see me again until you have mas-

tered the tricks. Then I shall plan a trip to the interior. And you will be hired as my guide."

Almost the donkey boy came uppermost for Amru bent forward impulsively intending to kiss Herr Kaupfmyer's hand. But as suddenly he bethought himself as a future sultan. He repeated therefore simply the courtly bow with which he had begun the significant interview.

"My lord, au revoir."

"Learn quickly, Amru."

"Aye, excellence, I am very intelligent."

After Yezid had returned the silver lantern to the curio stall, he and Amru strolled to the Hotel Carnot, Amru to go to his little room among the eaves, black Yezid to his pallet of straw in the stables. But before parting Yezid said admiringly:

"The lord talked long with thee—thou must have great wisdom for him to have listened so long."

Amru patted his arm.

"It will be," he said, "according to the perfect vision I have had and thou, Yezid, remember that I promised ye would be the bearer of the red umbrella surmounted by the golden ball!"

III.

The autumn rainy season had passed, the swollen rivers had receded, Morocco was again laved in steady sunshine. These conditions found Amru, the whilom donkey boy of Tangier, fully prepared for his try for a throne. The Italian magician had no suspicion that he was grooming Amru for a crown. He had understood that he was training Amru to become one of a group of Arabian acrobats and entertainers who were to tour Germany, a country the Italian had no ambition to appear in himself. Nor did he wonder at the generosity of the fee sufficient to cause him to cancel engagements for three weeks in other ports of Algeria and remain in the city of Algiers to drill his pupil. He had always heard the tales of a pot of gold buried somewhere in every Oriental house.

It ended with the emotional Italian voluble in admiration of the rapid acquirements of his protégé. He taught the young Moor in his enthusiasm every trick he had in stock and, with Italian ports but a few days' sail away, was readily induced to part with his mechanical contrivances of legerdemain and with the bullet-proof coat.

Two other things were of prime necessity to complement Amru's qualifications for his great adventure. One was a knowledge of the Koran. This he abundantly had for the only education that comes to the children of Morocco is the study of Mohammed's book of laws and prophecy. Before he was ten years old he had been forced to con through the book at least fifty times. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of its most salient passages clung to his memory. And the other qualification was courage. Despite the dapperness of his appearance, his large-eyed good looks almost amounting to effeminacy, high courage was one of Amru's certain attributes, courage as large as the ambition which obsessed him.

The intuition of Amru, who was soon to become famous throughout all northern Africa and throughout Europe as the pretender, had been correct. The diatribes of the self-beggared, venerable Bu-Hamara, the harangues of a hundred other holy men in the mosques, had set smoldering a fire of insurrection against the sultan. The youth fanned it into flame.

From the moment of his appearance early in December in the Atlas range on the eastern borders of Morocco among the Rifs—the fanatical, fiercely fighting, blue-eyed, red-haired Rifs, news of his presence, of his amazing claim of divine appointment to rid Morocco of a sultan treacherous to the faith, of the eloquence of his exhortations, of the wonders he performed, of the sacredness of his body from the danger of bullets, of the marvelous communications he could infallibly make between the dead and the living, spread with that mysterious speed with which big news travels among isolated, barbarous peoples—the speed almost of the wireless.

Vibrant, electrical, hysterically intense and emotional was the slender, neurotic Amru. Impressive the half-chanted declarations he made with closed eyes and quivering lips, saying that he came under the approving eyes of Allah, convincing the description he gave of the vision wherein Mohammed appeared and solemnly placed upon him the mission of sweeping apostasy from the throne of Morocco, of restoring the kingdom fully to the faith.

With the air of one exalted stooping graciously to meet the whim of children, he performed as mere minor "miracles" the tricks with coins, the instantaneous growing of a

flower, the changing of water into wine, the bringing of rabbits and twittering birds from the cloaks and blouses of onlookers.

But it was with the shining eyes of one assured and fearless through divine inspiration that he stepped forward and struck his hand above his heart, demanding faith in his divine mission for that the deadly bullets could not pierce his breast challenging that an expert marksman be chosen, one that could not fail to send a bullet straight to the mark of his heart. Again and again in the villages through which he passed was such a marksman chosen. Again and again Amru faced revolver and rifle. And if there was a flutter in his heart there was none in the steady, exalted gaze in his eyes as he faced the marksman. Secretly there was to aid his calmness the knowledge that a Moor is almost invariably an expert shot. These tests were held in the awed silence of mobs. The falling of the flattened bullet to the ground, the smile of "holy" triumph on the youthful face of Amru were usually the signals for cries of amazement, admiration, prostrations, and prayers announcing to the Prophet faith and confidence in his messenger. There were rushes to kneel and kiss the hem of his garment, to kiss his hands. They clamored for the honor of aiding in setting up his tent, grooming his donkey, arranging under his direction his traveling effects.

And then, preferably in the mystic twilight or the hazy dawn, would come Amru's performances with the crystal ball. New awe and fear took possession of his auditors as Amru, staring, with drooping eyelids and trancelike gaze into the glistening crystal, called forth the spirits of the dead —the intimate dead of the particular village, singled out their relatives, gave them messages that they recognized could come only from those having close knowledge of their lives.

It will be noticed that no mention has recently been made of Amru's devoted black, Vezid. He was not accompanying Amru. Yezid's special business was obtaining material for the mystic readings of the crystal ball. He preceded Amru in the villages not only spreading advance tales of the wonderful powers and performances of the divine youth approaching but as well gaining all that intimate information which Amru later chanted so effectively while staring into the crystal ball.

Before the start was made young Amru had carefully mapped out the itinerary and all along the way fixed places of secret rendezvous with Yezid. The black, faithful Mohammedan was without realization himself of the use Amru had for this village chatter and information he was ordered to remember and repeat. It was sufficient that the youth to whom he had given his simple fealty, was served by these efforts. And in many of the villages Yezid entered ahead of Amru, it was to find that his former humble little companion of the long strand of Tangier was already famous, even already accepted as one divinely appointed to a holy mission, and Yezid began to be himself in awe of the slender youth with the brightly burning eyes. Amru noted with secret satisfaction that Yezid had taken respectfully to salaaming and at his later visits actually kissing the hem of his comrade's cloak.

"I have given you," Amru would say to the people ere he mounted his white donkey with the red saddle, "but the smallest evidences of that power which has been vouchsafed me from on high. Such wonders as ye have seen are but trivialities compared to the wonders I can and shall perform when ye have given me evidence that ye have received through me the heaven-born message to rise in a holy war and drive the trafficker with Christians, the betrayer of the faith and the holiness of his kingdom from the throne. If ye but follow me I will place in thy hands the weapons with which to sweep upon the disgraced throne with fire and with sword. At the great feast of the Rhamadan I send forth in the name of Allah and the Prophet a call for all holy men, all shereefs, sheiks, all governors of villages, and leaders of fighting men to assemble at Mount Omra in the province of the Berbs and to these I shall make demonstration to utterly confound those who have not heeded the message I bring and who dare deny the heavenly origin of the command that has called me in my youth and vigor and abiding faith to restore to full honor, respect, esteem, and veneration the Prophet in this disgraced and dishonored land! Ye that do not rally to my standard —the standard of the true faith undefiled— ye shall later know that never in thy lives may ye turn thy faces toward Mecca without fear and shame!"

And so Amru passed through the coun-

try of the Rifs, the Berbs, the Zemmurs, the tribe of Ben Ali Hassan and the province of the Fahs leaving populace after populace seething with religious unrest, with a rising, burning hatred and indignation of the ruler of Morocco and the British kaid, McLean. And all speculating as to the great event, the conclave of the holy men, the shereefs, the captains and bashas and khalifas at Mount Omra on the first day of the Feast of Rhamadan and what then on that day would be the great, overpowering demonstration he promised in proof that he was a celestial messenger of revolt.

IV.

Certain it is that some news of the appearance across the stretch of Atlas mountains of the dynamic and magnetic youth preaching for the overthrow of the throne, must have made its way to the sultan's capital at Fez. But one or two of the Moorish tribes were always in unrest and the sultan's guides must have bethought themselves that this was but another tempest in a teapot that would wax and wane and leave affairs unchanged as they had so often waxed and futilely waned before.

Therefore, anxious outposts of the hillmen reported no movement of soldiery toward Mount Omra bent on dispersing the great gathering that Amru's tireless efforts had called there for the first day of the Feast of Rhamadan.

And a great gathering it was, indeed—one that in its size and importance amazed the insouciant, egotistical little Amru himself as he secretly gazed out upon it through the flap of the large red-and-white-striped tent erected by the most zealous of his followers for his shelter and retirement. But it did not frighten, it exalted him.

The tent had been pitched at the edge of a grove of oaks and cedars belting the north face of Mount Omra halfway to its summit. Below for more than half a mile was a smooth, green surface of short-growth wild grass.

Rather there had been a vast, smooth, green surface for from nightfall of the day before, sheiks and holy men and their followers had been steadily arriving, the warriors on their sleek and spirited, narrow-headed, arch-necked Berb and Numidian mounts followed by the pack trains of donkeys; the holy men and their devout followers on humble asses or plodding afoot. A city of tents had bloomed overnight—bloomed in hues of blue, white, green, purple, or garishly striped. Little charcoal fires dotted the hillside through the night where coffee brewed or meat was roasted on metal slivers. There were several large groups for whose repasts beeves and kids were barbecued over huge, blazing log fires. Several sheiks on arrival—community leaders already won to faith in Amru's pretensions—had paid him dignified and courtly visits in his tent.

Nevertheless, Amru was aware that common assent decreed that he who should hold leading place at the conclave, whose verdict on the claims of Amru for the support of the faithful would constitute the deciding voice, must be Bu-Hamara, the sultan's uncle, the prince who had beggared himself in protest against the policy of friendship and favoritism to Christians evinced by Abdul Azziz. Unquestionably upon the judgment of the venerable Bu-Hamara most largely, if not entirely, depended Amru's hope for a throne.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when the aged Prince of Morocco, clad in the ragged old burlap jelab he affected to the humiliation of the sultan, rode into the encampment on the white, travel-stained donkey. A single attendant, a youth dressed as poorly as himself, walked beside the old man. Dignitaries of the assembled tribes hurried from their separate encampments toward Bu-Hamara, the rabble behind them.

Amru, from the seclusion of his tent, espied the arrival. There were those perhaps who thought that Amru, in view of his assertion of divine appointment, would hold to his tent awaiting a call upon him there by Bu-Hamara. But instead, the donkey boy of Tangiers acted quickly, tactfully. He appeared suddenly outside his tent clad in turban and cloak of white. Without haste, yet swiftly his lithe limbs carried him to the side of the old man before Bu-Hamara had time to descend from the donkey's back.

"O royal and venerable father, saintly upholder of the faith," said Amru, "I would the honor of aiding thee dismount."

The hawk-nosed countenance of Bu-Hamara with its long, white beard and shaggy, white brows under which flashed keen, penetrating eyes, remained impassive as he accepted the youth's salute of a kissed thumb and the upward raising of his palms.

Yet as his attendant came forward to assist him to the ground, Bu-Hamara waved him aside and courteously took Amru's proffered hand.

"I would offer, royal and venerable father," said Amru; thus encouraged, "the shelter and hospitality of my tent."

But Bu-Hamara frowned and negatively wagged his long, white beard.

"Nay, Amru of Tangier, I go as a beggar to shame and confound the false youth upon the nation's throne. Save when I take shelter in the mosques, I live under the sun and sleep beneath the stars."

At this Amru bowed and withdrew, wisely adjudging that it would not advance his cause to seem too zealous in efforts to propitiate the old prince. Yet he had shown a respect and courtesy to age coming graciously and admirably from youth. He saw in the glance with which he swept the assembled headmen as he bowed to them that the impression had been most favorable.

Finally, as the sun was descending, Amru found himself waited on by Jusuf of the tribe of Hassan, Aben Habuz of the Rifs, Abu Ayub of the Berbs, and Ahmed of the Zemmurs, four of the mightiest sheiks who had been attracted to the conference.

"All are assembled, O Amru of Tangier," Jusuf said to him, "and if as thou believest, thou art destined to bring our nation to a splendid renewal of the faith and humble the ruler who has strayed along the road of apostasy, if it be that thou art truly the medium of the Prophet"—all salaamed—"Allah grant that thy tongue be inspired to draw to you our hearts and illumine our minds. We marvel at thy youth in such a high mission, yet be of good heart, O Amru, for certainly thou already hast shown an extraordinary power in drawing together this assemblage to hear thy message."

Thus walking between the noted chieftains, Amru slipped forward until he stood directly before Bu-Hamara, sitting in a place of honor on piled cushions. Holy men and other leaders ranked about him, and behind hunters, warriors, and the horde of camp followers and back of them the multicolored tents and the tethered horses, donkeys, camels, and cattle. All the animals had been set to graze or stood before mounds of grain or hay that they might feed contentedly and by no misadventure neigh or bray.

A picturesque figure young Amru surely made as he stood on the sloping hillside, his slight, slender, white-clothed form erect, the golden, setting sun flaring upon the hillside and illumining his face.

"O royal, venerable father, learned, saintly men, wise governors, and great warriors, I come to ye," said Amru, hands hanging straight at his sides, his face uplifted toward the sky, "in the consciousness of my youth and lowly origin, yet how would I dare thus come before ye were it not in certainty through the holy visions that have been vouchsafed me that I come as the messenger inspired of the Prophet and in accord with the dictates of Allah, the Almighty?"

The youth dropped to his knees and lowered his forehead to the ground, and before him all in a great wave of genuflection did likewise.

"Was it power of mine, a stripling, that has brought about this great meeting of the wise, the valiant, the faithful? Nay, my lords, I have not the vanity to think in such wise. I report to thee only that which came to me overpoweringly and which has since directed me, shaped my language, guided my travels among the loyal tribes of the Atlas, people of unbroken fealty to Allah and Mohammed, his Prophet.

"Ever, my lords, from tenderest years have I found the Koran, that holy book, the fascination of my life. How that I, a lowly donkey boy, aspired to a holy scholarship of its wisdom and its laws, I may not give explanation. But such it was and always has been. I have lived, my gracious hearers, devoutly. The temptations of the infidel-ridden and possessed city of Tangier, have not soiled me. And when I left it, the purpose of the journey was to the sacred Black Rock of Mecca. I starved myself to save for the great and holy pilgrimage.

"And thus I found myself in Algiers and one day in the silence of a beautiful grove reading the beloved, exalted words of inspiration of the sacred Prophet. Suddenly the sky was overcast. A great darkness fell upon the grove—a mystic darkness. Then it was pierced by a slender thread of dancing silver light. It swerved and turned and played about upon the dark-green turf, and as suddenly flashed upon the pages of the book in my hand. There it remained, and turned into a golden disk. I could not draw my staring eyes from it. The disk widened. I found myself engulfed in a glare of blinding, golden illumination.

"Then I cried in wonderment and fell upon my knees.

"For I beheld in the flesh the Prophet of our Faith, holy Mohammed, clad in a black turban and the historic cloak of his grandfather—clad even as he was on that day when he confounded with miracles the idolatrous Koreishites who came to mock him in the Valley of Flints. And I prostrated myself and he bade me arise. 'Amru, true believer,' he said unto me, 'in thy youth and devotion have I chosen thee to sit upon a throne, to bring to a kingdom gone rotten with infidelity to my divinely inspired teachings, a great renewal of its faith. I have chosen thee of lowly birth that men in astonishment at the gifts and powers I will vest in ye, shall the more readily understand that thou art truly the bearer of my message, of my desire that the false and treacherous sultan must be brought to ruin and disgrace as a living example of the damnation that befall all who betray Allah and me, his Prophet.

" 'Already,' spake the Prophet further unto me, 'have holy men arisen in my cause, already the lash of denunciation and excoriation strikes at the traitor on the throne. Especially must men heed the inspired, enlightening words of him of my descent that the faithful in affection have given above his princely title, the name Bu-Hamara, he that has sacrificed all worldly things in my name and moves about as a beggar among men. Rich shall be his heavenly reward!

" 'Go, Amru, child,' he further said unto me, 'and carry my message. Look to the Koran for guidance of thy words. And when crying needs arise, withdraw thyself to lonely places in prayer, and further guidance shall come from me. And I will vest thee with powers to draw all men to thee in my cause. Those of the true faith will accept thee and unlimited shall be thy means to aid them in the conquest of the unfaithful. Fire and sword will be at thy command. Wealth will pour at thy feet to further thy hosts in war. I have chosen thee in youth before wiser and older men because ye shall ascend the throne for a reign of many years in the passing of which ye shall have completely rid this kingdom of its infidels and preserved it pure and whole in the faith.' "

Amru paused and his gaze settled fully, steadily on the eyes of Bu-Hamara under their shaggy, white brows.

"O holy and royal father," he cried, "in thy sacred communings has aught been vouchsafed, any message given of my coming and my mission?"

"Nay, Amru," said the aged prince. "Yet hast thou spoken in words well-chosen beyond that to be expected of thy years. Further thou hast also spoken modestly, and I doubt not the good faith in which ye tell of this holy vision. It remains, my son and true believer, that test shall be made of its genuineness. Very great proof must be given ere I can come forth as thy champion, to the breaking of the line of royal descent of the blood children of the Prophet.

"I repeat then to thee in all kindliness and respect, O youth of Tangier, the very words of Habib, the Wise, unto the Prophet when he appeared in the Valley of Flints to prove the divinity and holiness of his mission. Said Mohammed: 'Allah has sent me to declare the veritable faith.' Habib, the Wise, thus replied: 'Good. But every prophet has given proof of his mission by signs and miracles. Noah had his rainbow, Solomon his mysterious ring, Abraham the fire of the furnace which became cool at his command, Moses his wonder-working rod.' Straightway then, Amru, knowest thou what Mohammed performed?"

"Aye, royal father, he caused the noontide heaven to be covered by a supernatural darkness and made the moon to appear and move about in the heavens in directions obedient to his commands."

"And thou?"

"Reverend prince," said Amru, "I claim no such exalted mission as had Noah, Solomon, Abraham, Moses, and, above all, the sacred Prophet of Allah! I assert merely that he has deigned to appoint me a pliant, youthful instrument for the working of his holy will. He has guided my tongue in the exhortations I have made in the villages of the brave mountain folk. He has vested me, it is true, with the power to perform small miracles such as many here will surely attest. The springing, for instance, my lord, of a living plant out of a seed in the space of time of but the waving of a hand, the producing of live animals from within turbans and out of the cloaks of those standing before me and other such manifestations. But, these, I admit are of small character. It might be charged that some men have known similar magic whose learning came from evil spirits and not from on high. To

these small miracles I would not ask your august attention.

"But," and Amru straightened and held the gaze of Bu-Hamara, "the great Prophet has ordained that there shall be vouchsafed me military knowledge that shall rout and destroy the forces of the false sultan and that I may lead my forces in full security of my person. In this I stand ready to present proof that over my body has already been cast divine protection. See how the vision has already been justified that I would gain military knowledge! For thou in the past, royal father, hast been notably a warrior and by thy side stand military captains of ability and courage tried and proved. If ye espouse my cause I shall have the benefit of thy wisdom and guidance. And now I would offer you proof that as the direct agent of Allah and of Mohammed who is his Prophet, my body has been made impervious, sacred against deadly missiles."

"I have heard, O youth," said Bu-Hamara, "that bullets flatten against thy breast."

"Aye, my lord. Name thou whatever marksmen thou wilt and they may stand at whatever distance ye decree and they shall shoot straight at the heart of me. And yet shall I live!"

A murmuring and chattering sounded then from the multitude. Those who had witnessed young Amru pass successfully through this ordeal in his former proseltyzing appearances gesticulated and gave others rapid assurance that their eyes should perceive the wonder.

Bu-Hamara promptly took Amru at his word. He consulted briefly with the captains and they tolled off three expert marksmen. These were aligned scarcely one hundred feet from the youth. And when they were ready, Amru drew from his girdle a blunt-ended red marking pencil. He wound his white cloak tightly around his slender figure and fastened it firmly with a clasp.

"Look!" cried he, "that ye may see the plainer where is thy mark, my heart, I will mark a crimson circle around it!"

Soon the red circle was glaring sharply against the spotless white of his robe.

He lifted his big, black eyes then, as in an ecstasy, threw up his arms with palms upward and stood in this devotional attitude, his breast swelling, and fearlessly thrust forward as all could see in challenge to the marksmen.

One rifle was discharged with a resounding snap. Amru staggered against the shock. Then he straightened and smiled. He stooped and from the turf took up a twisted bullet and held it aloft. The bullet of the second marksmen knocked Amru down. But he was instantly on his feet again. The third bullet spun him. Yet there he stood with three sinister black holes burned in his white cloak within the red circle. He was trembling from the successive shocks, but because of the flashing lights in his eyes the spectators mistook this tremulousness of his form for throes of religious excitement and exaltation.

There was a silence of fear and wonderment over all. It emboldened Amru. The bullet-proof, sleeveless coat concealed by his cloak and worn between outer and inner tunics was clasped by a single, vertical steel band. One had only to push upward from the waist on this steel band to release the garment from the body. This Amru in a sudden melodramatic movement of tearing his garments from him, easily succeeded in accomplishing. Swiftly he ripped away cloak and tunics and tossed them with the bullet-proof jacket thus thoroughly concealed into a heap on the ground. With body bared to the waist, he stepped forward under the scrutiny of the many thousands. The spectators saw over his heart only a dull, red patch of unbroken flesh.

They were swept to their knees, raising hands in supplication and praise to Allah and the Prophet. Even the head of Bu-Hamara was bowed.

Then Amru's lips moved rapidly, his slender body writhed, his chest swelled and fell in the stress of what appeared wild emotion, his big, black, hypnotic eyes flared and flamed with an expression the onlooker felt was paradisiacal. There arose from him a wild chant, half screamed and unintelligible phrases of superlative praise of Allah and the Prophet.

As suddenly he grew waxen calm. He stared ahead at them with unseeing eyes. He went to his knees. He put his forehead in the dust. He remained thus in the passing of what seemed a great time. As abruptly he arose, his eyes once more alight.

"O ye that are faithful!" he cried. "There has come to me a mighty vision and a great and holy promise from the Prophet to perform that which can leave no little doubt in the mind of ye that are believers, a

demonstration, O ye faithful, that would confound forever the lips of infidels. Allah be praised and the love of my immortal soul lifts to Mohammed, his Prophet! He has deigned to give me a great promise. O Bu-Hamara, saints and captains all! To-morrow at dawn ye shall listen to the voice of Mohammed! Yonder, beyond this belt of woods, near to the summit of Omra, he will make himself known to you! He may not by the laws of Paradise appear in the fleshly habiliments in which he walked the earth. But his sacred words to me were: 'Summon all in the dawn of this next day and my voice shall sound from the mountain in command for all that are faithful to follow thee!"

For a little time they stared at Amru but then arose a storm of religious cries and prayers—half in fear, half in devotion. Only a few cried out in doubt and protest.

Amru's slender body bent, utterly relaxed, his eyes grew dull, their lids drooped, he swayed, staggered toward his fallen robes, gathered the bundle in his arm and went waveringly toward his red-and-white-striped tent. There ran toward him those who would relieve him of his burden and give him the support of their arms. But he checked them, saying: "Touch me not in this moment, for the presence of the Prophet is still before my eyes." As they drew away he turned once again to the multitude. Once again he drew himself erect.

"In the dawn of the next breaking day," he cried, his utterances pitched almost to the scream of hysteria, "the voice of Mohammed sounds from the mountain!"

Again he turned, his steps once more faltering, and half walked, half fell within his tent.

For many minutes none had the courage to peer after him. But finally Jusuf of the tribe of Hassan made bold to lift the flap of the tent. He backed away with cautious, silent feet.

"He slumbers," reported Jusuf and in tones grown tender with reverence, added, "Such seizures following visions frequently came upon the holy Prophet himself!"

V.

A volunteer guard of honor formed itself about Amru's tent as a moonless night enwrapped Mount Omra in its darkness. For more than two hours apparently he slept. Then he came out of the tent. He was fully cloaked and had renewed his white turban. Two of the watchers flashed upward their lanterns to light his way. The rays revealed the countenance of Amru to be composed, his eyes dull, mystically contemplative.

"I go," he told them, "according to the dictates of visions which came to me in my sleep. I go far up toward the summit of Omra. I go beyond this belt of woodland and beyond the open slope until I reach the next band of trees."

He moved onward. Some made as if to follow. But he raised a hand.

"Nay," said the youth, "it is ordained that I keep vigil alone. Yet I will accept of the lantern, for clouds obscure the moon."

One was quickly offered him and Amru disappeared among the trees and later upon the higher slopes could be seen the lantern as a jewel of light bobbing distantly and brightly in the night. And then it disappeared.

Many times Amru paused on his way up the mountain, looking keenly backward to make sure he was not followed. Not that he greatly feared it. He knew his volunteer guard of honor would in their awe of him implicitly obey his demand for solitude and that they would prevent others who might be more curious than superstitious from spying on him.

Finally, he stood at the edge of the upper belt of woods on the approach to the top of Mount Omra. It was fully a mile beyond the encampment of the faithful. He produced his silver flute. Soft yet penetrating, like the smooth, coaxing call of a night bird were the sounds floating from the instrument. Amru paused. Again he put the silver pipe to his lips, but lowered it instantly. For in the deep gloom of the beclouded night a whispering voice sounded immediately beside him:

"I am here, little comrade, little master."

"Good Yezid; ever faithful."

The big negro chuckled amiably.

"Is it finished?" asked Amru.

"The hole is dug."

"Deeply?"

"Twenty hands down from the turf."

"Good! And the breathing pipe?"

"Is at hand."

"Well done, Yezid. And thy speech?"

"I have said it over one hundred times and then one hundred times again. It cannot be that I could forget it."

Amru put out a hand and patted the negro on the shoulder. Then Amru passed him a cigarette and for a little time they smoked in silence. It was Yezid who spoke first.

"Little comrade that art to become a mighty king," he whispered, "I am troubled."

"The cause, Yezid?"

"That I am to utter words as if it were the holy Prophet's lips that spoke. It is sacrilege."

"What is this, Yezid? Must I again explain to thee that ye are serving the Prophet in the act? Do ye credit that I have had great visions?"

"Aye, Amru."

"And have I not told you it is at the suggestion of the Prophet as he appeared in these visions that this means be used as the final call to bring the faithful into vigorous war? I tell thee thou art but aiding me in procuring added honor and glory for Mohammed and effecting the confounding and damnation of his enemies."

"On thy honor is it thus, comrade and master?"

"On my honor have I spoken."

"Allah Achbar!" responded Yezid. "Gladly will I serve!"

"And, good Yezid, great shall be thy reward. Thou shalt be declared a freeman by my royal decree, ye will walk in a uniform of scarlet and gold and the scimitar at thy hip shall have a jeweled handle and a scabbard of platinum with lapis lazuli inlaid. I shall confer wealth upon thee and ye may acquire beautiful wives. I shall be grateful, Yezid, and good to thee—a true friend, Yezid. Never shalt thou feel stranger to me when I am upon my throne."

"I give my heart unto thy hand, little master. Ever and faithfully will I serve thee."

"The task is long and hard for my slender hands, Yezid. Lead me to the place."

"Hold to my garment, master, and I will guide."

They had not many steps to go but there were more than three hours of steady and most arduous toil confronting Amru before preparations had been completed for the great meeting at the dawn. For Yezid led him to a huge ditch, at least ten feet by four, in the mountainside. It was also fully ten feet deep. Within was a big, oblong wooden box of Yezid's fashioning, revealed to Amru by his lantern's light. The lid was raised.

"In smiling confidence the giant negro lowered himself into the grave ditch, stretched himself at length in the wooden box, and drew the lid down.

Adjusted exactly was a round hole in the lid above Yezid's mouth and into this Amru fitted a slender pipe of brass. In length was the pipe also accurately made. The top end of it after it was inserted in the box came just to the surface of the ground and no more.

"Art comfortable?" called Amru down the pipe.

"Aye, little comrade," arose Yezid's voice ending in a chuckle. "I fear only that I may fall asleep."

"Ye must not," said Amru sharply, sternly. "Ye would be false to the faith and false to me!"

"Fear not," came the answer. "I am true to the faith and faithful to thee who art my friend."

"Baring himself to the waist and with a spade that Yezid had left at hand, Amru fell feverishly to throwing back into the ditch the earth that had been dug from it. Unused to such strenuous physical effort Amru's back and legs and arms ached violently and insistently before he had worked for many minutes. But the young Moor would give no heed to the crying pain in his outraged muscles. He rested only in such times as he was breathless. When the ditch was filled he had yet a more painstaking, careful task at hand. There must be removed all signs that the earth had been disturbed. With a coarse broom he swept assiduously the mossy rocks and turf, clearing them entirely of the last traces of freshturned clay. He worked long at this, examining the ground minutely again and again by his lantern's light. After he was fully assured no evidence remained, he fitted over the yellowish red surface the green sod Yezid had placed there for him, and into this he replanted two hardy green bushes also uprooted and left for the purpose by Yezid. Over the upper end of the pipe leading down to Yezid's lips, Amru had fitted a little cap of gauze to prevent grains of earth falling within. Very carefully had he packed the sod about the pipe end so that it was hidden completely by the grass. Now he removed the cap of gauze and, taking shovel and broom, passed on upward along the

mountain and in the heart of the upper woodland far under a great rock concealed the implements. Returning, he stopped at a mountain stream, stripped and bathed. At the grave of the living Yezid, he resumed his tunic and cloak, turban, and slippers. He searched for and found the pipe end.

"It is I, Amru, Yezid. Is all well?"

"Aye, but curious. I feel as one of another world."

"Repeat for me the talk thou art to make. Speak softly."

Intently Amru listened. At length he smiled.

"Perfect, Yezid," he called down the pipe. "This day ye shall do great service to Allah and the Prophet!"

"Be praised!" came Yezid's voice guardedly.

"Until dawn farewell, O friend!"

"Until dawn."

The candle in his lantern had burned to its socket when Amru reappeared before his guard of honor at the entrance of his tent. They bowed low at his passing.

He indicated with a movement of his hand the red glow in a brass brazier over which steamed a pot of fragrant coffee.

"A glass of it, kindly," requested Amru. "I am chilled and my mind is too surcharged with holy matters to permit sleep."

Four of the men quarreled for the distinction of serving the coffee.

Daylight arrived very gradually, almost imperceptibly among the rugged Atlas peaks and valleys. In the beginning the northern face of Mount Omra was in a mist. It hung over the encampment like a film of gauze. And so remained while the multitude awakened, breakfasted, and made ready for attendance on the great promised miracle. It takes long among the Atlas mountains for the sun to come into sight above the summits. It was yet, therefore, in the blanketing mist that Amru issued from his tent and silently headed the procession, all afoot, toward the top of Mount Omra.

The theatrical effect of the mist just then could not have been better for Amru's purpose. It spread a stillness as of awesomeness upon the forest and the open slope beyond. Their morning prayers said, the thousands fell strangely speechless. The cloak of mist was weird. The slight figure of Amru leading, clad all in white, blended with the mist. He moved ahead wraithlike and shadowy.

His voluntary guard of honor marched respectfully a full hundred feet behind him. Leaning on the arm of his young attendant, the ragged Prince Bu-Hamara trod sturdily along. But his step was slow. And as none might precede him without discourtesy, the multitude was thus held to a halting and solemn step. So silent their footfall upon the deep turf, so still their lips were held by spiritual anticipation, they passed onward toward the summit like a procession of ghosts.

Nature continued to use its majestic efforts to the advantage of the donkey-boy aspirant for a throne. For as Amru halted on the grave of Yezid and turned to face the following throng—halting between the two bushes he had planted and within a step of where in his mind's eye he had marked the aperture of the pipe to be—the sun swept superbly upward between mountain peaks. The mist rolled away as if in simulation of the lift of a curtain and the mountainside was flooded in a splendor of warmth and light. The beaded moisture on turf and shrub and tree sparkled like a million jewels.

Consummate actor the little Moor was as he faced the thousands of staring, expectant eyes. The sleepless night had brought an added pallor to his delicately featured countenance. This he had enhanced by using the ends of burned matches in the secrecy of his tent to darken the shadows beneath his refulgent eyes. The smile that came to his pallid lips was wan, unearthly. He lifted his eyes to the sun. Then he went to his knees and with outstretched arms bent his head to the ground. Every man watching followed his gestures.

He arose. He flung upward his palms and cried, his voice high and tenor in its tone but clear and ringing far into space:

"O thou great and mighty Mohammed, holy and splendid Prophet, I, Amru of Tangier, that thou in the wonder of thy ways, hast called forth to be the special instrument of the justice and correction thou wouldst administer to this kingdom and its treacherous ruler, I am here having obediently followed thy instructions in assembling the royal Bu-Hamara, the sheiks, captains, and holy men, the mouthpieces and leaders of the mountain men of the Atlas that are unswerving in their fidelity to thee. In visions of glory vouchsafed me, thou hast promised on this day to sound thy heavenly voice

from the Mount of Omra bidding these royal, noble, and saintly men to rally under my standard for the salvation of the land. I have played thus far faithfully my part. In awe, in trembling, yet in all anxiety of heart, O august Prophet, I await thy will to make fair and true my prophecy that thy words of commendation and encouragement shall issue from this solid mountain wall!"

The twitterings of birds among the tree branches sounded riotously loud in the stillness with which thousands of men stood, breath bated, their arms crossed, their hands flattened against their chests.

Suddenly the sensitive features of Amru took on an ecstatic mask.

Out of the mountainside issued a voice, strong, magnificently resonant.

"Verily I swear to you by the stars which move swiftly and are lost in the brightness of the sun and by the darkness of night and by the dawning of the day," cried the voice with the swell and lilt of chanting, "these are not the words of an evil spirit but of Mohammed, archangel of highest dignity and power in the realm of Allah the Great, possessing the confidence of the Most High and revered by the angels under His command.

"I, thy Prophet, therefore say unto you that the lad who stands in your sight, Amru of Tangier, humbly born but made royal by his faith and great by his talents, shall lead you into battle against the false Abdul Azziz and the infidels who hold this wanton prince in their unholy influence, shall lead you unto victory and in my name shall take his place upon the throne! It is my command that he shall be first ruler of a new dynasty to hold this kingdom unswerving to the faith and the service of Allah the Great. Heed my voice, for if thou fail Amru and failing him ye fail me, terrific will be the vengeance descending from Heaven!"

The last sentence came with a veritable roar out of the mountain. It was answered by a great chorus of suppliant cries accompanied by a swooping sound, as if the settling of a host of wings, when cloaks of the multitude tossed as their bodies rose and fell in their genuflections of awe and fear toward the place on the mountainside where stood Amru and from which the stern, chanting, impressive message had come.

None questioned the genuineness nor the sacredness of the miracle. A sweeping cry of approbation went up as the aged Bu-Hamara came humbly forward, knelt and kissed the hem of Amru's robe. And after him the fighting chieftains of the Hassan, Zemmur, Rif, and Berbs and a newer figure, the chieftain of the more distant Fahs. Likewise they bowed and knelt to kiss the robe of the youth who now stood sanctified and precious above all earthly things in their sight. Other dignitaries began filing past to pay similar tribute. The lowlier merely huddled closer toward the place where the exalted donkey boy stood and at becomingly respectful distance prostrated themselves.

The eyes of Amru had now taken on a curious, startled expression. At first a shade of revulsion could have been detected in their expression. Not at the great, immediate conquest he had made. To this his emotions had gloriously expanded. But because of his innermost thoughts. They were sinister. They were of Yezid held in the box under a ton or more of earth, his life utterly dependent upon the slender thread of pipe that fed him air.

Amru's vivid imagination readily pictured the hulking, brawny form stretched full length in the pitch-black gloom of the wooden box with only a tiny eye of light shining down through the little pipe.

Memories of big, strong, good-natured Yezid that he would have liked to forget in this moment, flitted nevertheless involuntarily through his mind. There was Yezid with generous pity for the weakliness of Amru's slight physique, ever dependable to rescue him in his quarrels with the sturdier donkey boys of Tangier; Yezid, the kindly, the simple, offering an amazed, wondering affection to the little, sharp-witted boy of the streets; Yezid hundreds of times sharing his loaf, his meat, his salt with a small boy who must otherwise have hungered; humble, faithful Yezid, his truest friend.

But there was the new, august life opening, Abdul Azziz battered down from his throne, vanquished, Amru in kingly state and power! Pity, friendship had no place in a conqueror's creed. Cæsar, Hannibal, Napoleon had ruthlessly put these things aside. On this he had the assurance of Herr Kaupfmyer. It had ever also been true of the great conquerors of Morocco and Spain.

Amru closed his eyes and compressed his lips.

He took a step forward.

He put a foot firmly down on the little hole in the ground. He held it there while the devout throngs passed around him. He could not, try as he would, keep his mind from presenting the scene of what was happening below the earth. He saw the look of surprise and shock in the great back-and-white eyes of Yezid as the cooling draft of air was shut off from his lips. It seemed to him that on the sole of his foot he actually felt the physical force of the negro's cries for air and life. He saw the thick lips open, the throat gasping, the mighty chest heaving in the desperate demand of the strong lungs for breath. Sweat, icy cold, streamed past the temples of Amru. His own heart swelled. He felt himself that he could not breathe as seconds passed into a minute and yet another minute and then a third. He saw, while his will fought against it, the big arms and muscular limbs of Yezid thrashing in fright, panic, desperation within the box he had entered living but where, in the furtherance of Amru's ambition, he was doomed to remain dead.

For Yezid alone held the secret of the voice from the mountain. And Yezid, faithful though he surely was, was guileless, childlike in simplicity. In the very candor of his nature, he might betray. Perhaps Amru in his great influence could keep a living Yezid's lips sealed. But there was always the chance of an involuntary betrayal. The stake for which Amru played was too high and mighty. Yezid must die! Harder, with the pressure that all his weight thrown upon it could give, Amru's foot flattened upon the hole in the brass pipe.

"In the name of Allah and his Prophet," cried Amru, his tones shrill and shaking, yet strangely confident and commanding, "I have further message for ye! The miracle has been vouchsafed most graciously and wonderfully. The great and the humble have pledged to me their fealty. I have a second wonder to relate.

"Know thee that in my visions Mohammed has led me to hidden treasure and in full confidence and expectation of what this day has so splendidly occurred, I have for months past expended this treasure in the purchasing of the finest rifles and bayonets and bullets made by the infidels. Ye need not fear to take such weapons in thy hands. They are blessed and approved of Allah and his Prophet. What better than for the Faithful to use the weapons of the infidels for their own destruction in our precious land?

"Secretly across the border from Algeria, over the desert of Sahara, by ships to hidden landings on the 'Iron Coast' of the Atlantic, these armanents have been brought into the country and all undiscovered in striking proof of the divine protection thrown about our holy cause. I am prepared now to give to the generals who shall marshal ye and lead ye, the locations of these hidden arms. I bid them to my tent."

His guard of honor came quickly forward, proudly, bristlingly, their eyes shining with devotion for the wonderful, divinely acclaimed youth. They would escort him in royal state on the return to his tent.

But Amru, his foot still fast and hard upon the pipe, waved them away.

"I would linger and pray," he said almost curtly. "I would be alone. Bid all return to the encampment."

Swiftly and humbly his order was immediately accepted and obeyed. The thousands moved down the mountainside with voices raised in the swinging, high-pitched chant of the Moorish national hymn.

Amru, prostrated as if in prayer, remained for several minutes motionless. Slowly, stealthily he lifted his head, and when he saw that the last ranks of the departing host were well down the mountainside and a furtive glance on all sides of him had disclosed him to be wholly alone, he picked up a handful of turf and clapped it down hard and fast upon the aperture of the pipe. Yezid must even now be dead. But Amru would not risk the chance of a final cry of agony from the big man in the grave.

Again and again he reassured himself as he moved swiftly now after his adherents that he must regard the murder of simple, devoted Yezid, his tried friend, as only a minor, unpleasant deed, and, as well, a vital necessity to the furtherance of his own advancement to kingly estate. He fought again to remember all that he had heard of the ruthlessness of heart of the ambitious who had achieved greatness and power.

But halfway down the mountainside there came over him almost blindingly with its suddenness and force, a great wave of heart-sickness, of wild remorse. Hardly realizing his actions, he found that he had turned and rushed back to the spot between the two bushes on the turf above Yezid's grave. Frantically he kicked away the turf with

which he had mercilessly so shortly before choked up Yezid's only avenue of life and air a few minutes before.

Of what use? he reflected in the same instant. Yezid must be already dead—must be. A queer, short sob, like a cry, was drawn from his lips. The torture he was undergoing was sharp and keen—the torture and the fear. The fear was so great that he did not dare bend to the pipe and call down Yezid's name. For he felt then that if no answer came, if thus Yezid's death became absolutely a certainty he must be seized by shrieking madness or an overwhelming weakness that would send him back to the encampment with an involuntary confession of the duplicity he had practiced, of the utter, blasphemous falsity of his claims, even knowing that the most of such a confession must be the destruction of his own life by a religiously fanatical horde.

But perhaps with a current of air renewed to Yezid in his close-fitting box and with the small quantity of provisions and water the negro had provided himself, his faithful friend and servant would be revived, and sustained by the food and water until nightfall, when Amru fervently promised himself he would return and, come what may, fetch the shovel from its hiding place in the upper forest and dig Yezid out and back to life and freedom. For the sake of his own life, he might not dare the task in daylight.

So then Amru fled from Yezid's grave and to his tent for the consultation with the chieftains. Nor did he emerge from the tent for many hours. He managed to meet his generals with outward calm. But left to himself he was flayed with remorse as with stinging whiplashes. He found it utterly futile to try to call up for his mental relief the delightful imaginings which his morning's success might well have afforded —his great triumph on the mountainside, the complete hoodwinking of the wisest, the whole-hearted adoption of his cause by the influential Bu-Hamara. The pictures of himself upon a throne, of the luxurious, splendid, autocratic life of a sultan which by his sheer wit now seemed a goal near and wholly possible of achievement, all the vanities and panoplies, pleasures and thrills that it promised—these pictures would not come or if they did they were always sharply, vividly displaced by visions of strong Yezid in wild death struggles in the grave. He heard Yezid's first cries of heartbreak and horror at the frightful betrayal. He saw at other times Yezid stretched rigidly in the narrow yellow box, the giant's glossy, ebon countenance changed to a ghastly grayish-green mask of death.

He endured this agony of solitude until the setting of the sun. Then he appeared outside his tent, his boyish face white and gaunt. He started up the mountainside waving back all who would follow.

But when he neared the place where he had buried Yezid and which he sought fully resolved to dig him out again alive or dead, he stopped in dismay.

Under the orders of Bu-Hamara a high wall of stone had been builded in the afternoon around the spot now considered immortally sanctified. There had been left an entrance in the wall. And Amru found it guarded by two giant blackamoors, big as Yezid himself. They were armed with rifles and in their sashes were long, unsheathed knives.

At any cost, however, Amru was resolved to know if Yezid lived. He realized that he might not without arousing strange speculation among his followers, countermand Bu-Hamara's orders for a constant guard upon the "holy" place. Should he find Yezid alive, should the negro's voice make answer, then Amru would even assume to override Bu-Hamara in order that he secure opportunity to dig Yezid out. But was Yezid alive?

Amru went within the stone walls. He prostrated himself so that his mouth came to the aperture of the pipe. With his lips pressed hard against it he called softly, knowing the whisper must sound clearly and the louder in passing through the pipe.

"Yezid! O Yezid, my friend, speak. It is Amru!"

But there was no answer.

"Yezid, speak!" he called again, his voice sharp in its great fear.

The big black man, so faithful of heart, so true a friend, made no response from the grave below.

VI.

It is Moorish history that Amru of Tangier, boyish pretender, drew to his back sixty thousand fanatical fighting men. They advanced upon Fez, the principal capital, south of the Atlas range. The English Kaid McLean realized the size of the rebellion

with genuine alarm, the weak Abdul Azziz with consternation.

In the face of fired sentiment against him, McLean prudently decided it would not be wise for him to lead the sultan's forces in battle. There was the danger of mutiny. Yet it was imperative that the advance of the rebels be stopped. He ruled that Abdul Azziz must take the field, a figurehead, of course, but an essential one. The sultan was put to addressing his soldiers, assuring him of his unswerving devotion to the faith, even declaring that his seeming surrender to the customs and thoughts of Christians and other infidels was but subtle diplomacy to discover their aims against his country.

Veteran commandants of the regular soldiery under plans devised by Kaid McLean led their contingents into battle against Amru. The forces were about equal. A smashing defeat met the sultan's army. Five thousand dead were left upon the field after three days of fiercest fighting. The regiments and divisions of Abdul Azziz made absolute, frantic retreat. Nor did they stop in their flight until they put between them and Amru's army—the ancient, ponderously thick, gray stone walls inclosing the city of Fez. The young pretender a day later pitched his tents outside.

It was then that the little Scotchman screwed his monocle hard upon his eye and dealt the rebels a staggering surprise. All unknown to the Moorish populace, shipping the parts separately, cautiously, camouflaged as agricultural machinery, the kaid had within the city several batteries of high-powered cannon, with rapid fire and machine guns of small caliber as well. He had, moreover a picked company of artillerymen, discharged British soldiers retained by him under high pay. The modern gunnery was mounted on the ancient wall of Fez.

Amru's army had naught wherewith to make effective reply. Old-fashioned cannon they had and small arms. But for the operation of modern Krupps German officers and crews would have been necessary, and the kaiser's empire did not at that time dare thus openly to take the field against British influence.

Literally, the modern guns blew the rebel army to pieces. For a time, inspired by their religious fanaticism, they stood against the appalling certainty of destruction. But panic swept them. The cry went around that the voice from the mountain had not been that of the Prophet but of a spirit of evil. Back to the mountains the chieftains led their remnants into hiding. But many were captured. They were decapitated, their heads stuck on spikes above the arched gates of Fez, Rabat, Magazan, Tangier, and the city of Morocco where for months afterward they wagged gruesomely in every changing wind.

Amru's guard of honor utterly deserted him. He was captured in his tent. It was a certainty he would be sentenced to death. But first in surpassing anger now that his own danger was passed, Abdul Azziz decreed that the upstart and pretender should be subjected to a long period of public humiliation. He was put into a big cage on wheels. Drawn by teams of oxen, it was dragged through many of the cities, towns, and villages and the inhabitants invited to come forth and heap contumely upon Amru. He was stoned. He was spat upon. He was prodded with daggers and with poles. Satires and speeches of execration were addressed to him.

Yet Amru bore himself valiantly. When the jeering crowd would let him be heard he screamed defiance at them, held fast to his claim of divine agency, made threats of the crushing nature of the terrible vengeance that would eventually fall from heaven upon all who wronged him. Some of the most fanatical shot at him. But always in their deadly intent at his heart, and he still wore his bullet-proof coat.

Battered, bruised, half crazed, after more than a month of such ordeal, Amru was brought in his cage to Rabat, which nestles by the sea.

Two days and nights was he there on exhibition. But on the third morning a great wave of reaction favorable to him, of wonderment and fear spread over the populace and the amazing news of what had been discovered flashed through underground channels throughout Morocco.

On the third morning the cage was found empty! Yet there had been no sawing of the sturdy steel bars of the cage, no twisting of them. The great steel-hinged padlock on the door of the cage stood unharmed. Superstition immediately read into the mystery divine interposition for Amru. In the mountains there was rejoicing. It was taken as evidence that, despite misfortune, they had followed no false and evil leader.

In Morocco the disappearance of Amru;

the pretender, is still a mystery. For the first time publicity is given the genuine solution:

Four of the sultan's soldiers had been left to guard the cage of Amru. But there came a fifth soldier among them on the second night carrying bottles of rich and heady Spanish wine. In defiance of the Koran the soldiers drank. There was hilarity and some dancing. And the soldier who had brought the wine told of robbing a miser of a hoard of gold. He exhibited handfuls of glittering yellow coin. He asked for gay company into the town. But they pointed unsteadily to the prisoner in the cage.

"Can he eat steel bars, can he tear them with his teeth?" demanded their tempter. "Can any man's hands, the strongest, wrench away the ponderous lock? Nay, comrades! I would have gay companions for drinking, for feasting, music, and the dancing by the prettiest women of Rabat!"

The allurement proved irresistible.

Some hours later, still in the darkness of night, this fifth soldier returned alone. He was a huge, blue-clad fellow and his face was glossy black. There was a high moonlight which, shining upon his countenance, turned it a livid green.

He approached the cage of Amru stealthily. The youth was huddled in a corner of it, his arms crossed on his raised knees, his head bowed upon his arms. The negro soldier pressed his countenance hard against the bars.

"Amru," he softly called. "Amru—little comrade."

The youth shot to his feet, straightened and screamed in fright.

"Amru," called the other soothingly. "Amru, it is I, Yezid!"

But again Amru screamed. Then he gulped and stared. The beaming eyes of Yezid he mistook for the eyes of hate, the wide grin on the face of the negro for the leer of vengeance. And Yezid was dead—surely dead! This then was the spirit of him come back to earth poisonous with violent hatred against his betrayer! He fell upon his knees, sobbing, pleading for mercy but with words unintelligible as they came through his chattering teeth.

The voice of Yezid again reached his ears. He clenched his chattering teeth that their rattle should not prevent his hearing—hearing the strange words the man he believed he had murdered.

"Amru, comrade, didst think I had deserted thee? Look, it is Yezid! Didst think I was dead? Nay, I am no ghost! It is Yezid—big, strong Yezid, and I have come to save you."

"But——"

"Within a very little time I was out of the grave."

Amru fought for self-possession and won. His wits took again to working with their characteristic swiftness.

"It was that," he faltered, "that which made me surely think thee now a ghost. Ye say ye were out of the grave in a little while? I came later to rescue thee and thou answered me not when I called down to thee through the pipe!"

"Most surely, Amru. For I reasoned that, perhaps, ye in thy new state leading thy armies, would be constantly surrounded by those whom ye wished not to know of my presence beneath the ground. There might not have been the opportunity for thee to come and dig me up again. The upper end of the box, Amru, was left open and beyond I had dug and secured with bracings of the branches and boards a passageway to the surface some twenty feet away from where the grave was dug. I knew the method well, Amru, from working in the mines of the Khalifa. A stone of small weight for me to lift hid the opening of this passageway to life and air."

"Ah," said Amru, "Yezid, friend, I returned stealthily in the night when the camp slept and called and called again down the pipe and there came no answer. I believed thee dead—that thou died in sacrifice for thy friend. O Yezid, the joy of seeing thee alive again! Even if I am held like an animal in a cage and in a few days at most myself must die, yet great is this moment of joy!"

"Ye are not to die!" said Yezid.

"How sayest thou—not to die?"

"Verily. I have come to save my little friend and master."

"But how, Yezid?"

"Remember then at Fez one who rushed forward and seized the door of thy cage and madly shook it, one who would not be denied thrusting his face to the very bars to spit upon thee, who slung mud at thee, who had at last to be forcibly driven away?"

"There were many such, but I think him I remember. He was like one stark mad—the worst of all."

Yezid laughed.

"It was Gonzalez, the Spanish locksmith of Tangier!"

"Nay, this one was a Moor."

"A Spaniard in Moorish costume looks much like a Moor. The while he shook at the door, he made an impression on wax of the lock. Look, little Amru, I have here the key to open thy cage."

"O Yezid, gratefully I could kiss thy hand! And did you so wonderfully plan?"

"Nay, Amru, I but served. When thou moved on with thy army I bethought me I would take on the sultan's uniform and perhaps gain for you knowledge of value such as you would send me to secure among the Atlas people. I was making my way to you when the great guns roared from Fez, thy army fled, and thou wert made prisoner. I thought then to seek of the Kaid Kaupfmyer in Algiers for aid. I stole a fleet horse and journeyed to his house. He gave me gold, put me on a ship to Tangier, where my soldier's uniform disguised me and saved me from recapture as the khalifa's slave. It was he who instructed me in the strategy of the locksmith and the plan of possessing the key, debauching the soldiers and"—here Yezid turned the key and it worked faultlessly—"bring ye freedom and safety."

Amru, weak from hunger, from ragged nerves and the crushing blow of defeat that had struck him, could hardly stand. Yezid swung a powerful arm around him and drew him out of the cage. Then he swung him up on his shoulders.

"I will carry thee on my back, comrade."

"Where, Yezid?"

"Down the cliffs to where the Kaid Kaupfmyer has a long and slender fireboat to bear thee to the safety of Algiers!"

An hour later young Amru lolled on a steamer chair, his stomach content because of a good meal, his senses soothed by the aromatic smoke of the cigarette between his lips.

Big black Yezid sat hunched on the deck beside Amru's chair. The youth looked long at the great, flaring moon and the brilliantly starred canopy of dark blue as the fast boat cut ripplingly through the water.

"Amru," said Yezid, "I have been thinking that the Prophet meant not for thee to sit upon a throne, but only that by thy wonderful cleverness shouldst thou arouse the people to renewed faith and by the force of the great uprising bring the sultan back to his people. This, Amru, thy friend Yezid can bring gladness to thy heart by telling thee ye have done. The sultan has put away all infidel amusements and devices and it is announced that Kaid McLean is to make pilgrimage to Mecca and embrace the Faith. Allah Achbar! Dost thou care, little master, that thy vision was wrong only in that it promised to place thee on the throne?"

The youth put out a hand and patted the negro's shaven poll.

"I am thinking just now, Yezid. that far better than a throne is the possession of so true a friend as thou."

The negro fell contentedly to humming a wordless chant, ancient as the Pyramids.

Have you noticed the stories by Somerville? He is one of our latest "finds." Other tales of his are to be in the magazine from time to time.

ALWAYS READY TO GO

FRANK W. MONDELL, Republican floor leader in the House of Representatives, was in the cloakroom one evening listening to a group of congressmen describing the meanest, stingiest men they had ever known.

"When I was a young man," he said, carefully dating the occurrence in the misty past so as to remove from his stingy constituents' minds the idea that he referred to one of them—"when I was a boy, I knew a man who was a bigger tight-wad than any you fellows have talked about. He was so stingy that he never paid his rent.

"Naturally, he kept his household on the go. To them and their belongings, life was nothing but one big moving day. It got so bad, the neighbors said, that, whenever his daughters began to take down the parlor pictures and pack up the kitchenware, his one hundred and forty chickens would assemble, fall on their backs, cross their legs, and wait to be tied and pitched into the wagon."

Blondes and Brunettes

By Henry Vance

Delilah weakened Samson by cutting off his hair. The charmer in this case used different methods with the prize-fight hero. How successful she was you have yet to learn, but "Kayo" Smith makes a sweeping vow at the end

THIS here philosophy stuff is a wonderful thing as long as it holds good. But, when a fellow hits a flaw in his philosophy—bam! Just like old Mount Vesuve when she has a hop to her fast one, or like unto a carload of T. N. T. in a bad frame of mind.

I made a couple of philosophical assertions some time ago. One of 'em was: "There are two kinds of women—blondes and brunettes; and the best policy is to steer clear of both brands." I'm still clinging to this statement, like a drug store to a corner location, but my other dope was all wrong, Mawruss, totally wrong. The theory which I later saw knocked lop-sided was: "The sucker citizenry hails from the silo districts and every man born and raised on a R. F. D. line in a boob."

This brings me to that well-known and justly famous character, Knock-out Smith, the champ heavyweight prima donna of the squared arena. I hate them blokes who are charter members of the "I knew him when ——" club, but that fits my case to a T, concerning this Kayo Smith person. For, take it from me, neighbor, I was his manager when he wasn't as well known as now, and when horseshoe lunch counters made up our daily itinerary.

I'm not making any excuses, y' understand, when I admit I didn't tote fair with Knock-out, for I really furnished the brains—or thought I did—for our partnership, and I figured I had a little extra graft coming. Besides, the majority of prize-fight managers are as crooked as one of Harry Lauder's pet walking sticks and my dope at that time was that if I didn't trim him some one else would, getting away with the sum total of the gate revenue, while I contented myself with pinching a few dollars here and there. At that, Knock-out, who was then just a few months from the land of furrows, burros, and red bugs, was making more money by his fistic prowess than he ever dreamed there was in the world before.

It was in New York where the trouble started. And, let me say right here that Manhattan is the king-pin place for trouble to get a flying start. Knock-out and me hadn't been in town but a short while, and I had him matched to meet a mick by the name of Kelly over in Milwaukee. We was eating lunch one day in a little fricassee foundry, where table manners, table linen, and finger bowls were taboo, and I was marveling a few marvels over the dexterity with which Knock-out was transporting peas from plate to mouth via the knife route. He didn't permit one to roll from the knife.

Knock-out was invariably in a loquacious mood and this day was no exception. He takes a swig of java from his saucer and suddenly says to me:

"I writes my buddy back home the other day that the last time he heard from me I was in New Orleans and that he would probably be surprised to see my letter trademarked New York. 'I seem to be stuck on The News,' I writes him, 'and the next thing you hear from me I and my manager might be in New Z Land or New London, Connecticut, or some other seaport town.' I always would have my little joke, you know, Jake."

See! Jake—that's me. My last name's Sandow.

"Yes," I replies, with a hamper basket of sarcasm, "you're a very humorous person, you are." But, that sarcasm goes over his head.

"I'll say I am," he replies, his voice reeking with ego. "Why, Jake, it would be difficulty for me to take a funeral seriously unless it belonged to me."

I hook another voltage of sarcasm by replying. "You should never be taken seriously," but he boots that last remark, and continues:

"And, you know, brother, I won't never have no funeral until I reaches a rotten old age. No boob will ever be able to land a kayo that will send me to the sleep internal. That being the case, it looks like I am doomed to be a oxygenarian."

I follow up this last remark with a six-cylinder guffaw, and still Knock-out wasn't hep. He wanted to know the reason of said chortle. I Ananiased with an explanation that I was merely given over to mirth by thinking of the fat chance that any man would have of croaking him with a punch.

Knock-out bayonetted a biscuit with his fork and threw a pleasing grin of the ear-to-ear dimension my way at this bit of flattery on my part.

"You tell 'em, Jake, while I pat my foot. I must be one of these here supper men what you read about. But, I'm a breakfast man, and a dinner man, and a between-the-meals guy as well, when it comes to handing out the old sleep powders."

I see it's about time to take a fall out of this rube, so I serve him some advice right down the groove with a lot of stuff on it. I kick in with a bit of info to this effect:

"You meet this Killum Kelly soon and you're not training like you oughta. Too many feminine names on them cuffs of yours and too many phone numbers. If you don't get down to business this Emerald Isle entry is going to carve his initials on that mug of yours."

Knock-out's cheeks take on a crimson tint, and I can tell by that country blush that this reference to women has got his goat. Then a touch of anger creeps into his face, and he comes back:

"Looky here, Jake; too much is enough of anything and a insufficiency is a plenty. I and you ain't going to get along the best in the world if you make personal speeches about I and my lady friends. I realize that everybody what is anybody in pugilisten has got to have a manager, but managers is to flx up dates, Jake—boxing dates—and that's all the authority they has about dates. Lay off of this other stuff while the laying off's good."

Following this show of anger on his part I salve up his feelings with a little diplomacy balm and inform him that what I had said was in good faith and for his own good, and in a jiffy his good nature is back on its feet and he's as garrulous as ever.

"Wonder where they ever got that handle for this guy I'm to meet?" he asked. "Killum Kelly! Who did he ever kill—if any? But that'll be some mix-up, indeedy, Jake—a United Stateser battling a son of Old Erie in a Chinese community like this here Milliwaukee."

"Yes, and if you don't change your tactics you're liable to get licked," I reminded him.

Ever equipped with a heavy tonnage of braggadocio, Knock-out's answer is:

"The only way that Irishman stands a show with me is to biff me over the beezer with some Irish confetti, or a pile driver, or something. And, even then it would be well for him to remember, Jake, that I am a polar bear for punishment."

"You're all right if you'll can the skirts," I tell him.

And, I'm telling you, as man to man, the rube gives himself away right at this juncture. This nut actually thought I was jealous of his record as a lady's man, instead of just being anxious as to his training. He springs a regular tirade about me being sore because he stood ace-high with the dames, saying:

"You just miffed because all the Janes fall for me and won't pay you no mind, Jake. You know I'm the idol of any queen what strikes my eye—except, of course, no living being would be brave enough to strike anything but my eye. Course, I ain't been in this here town a great while, and it ain't the best community in the world to get acquainted. Why, Jake, you don't know your next-door neighbor up here, but if she's a blonde, they ain't nothing like getting acquainted. Jake, you might as well confess that you're jealous because I'm such a good mixer in civilian clothes as well as in the ring."

I saw that he was talking like a guy with a shot in the arm, and I decided to assume one of them "Let-him-rave-on-McDuffy," policies. So, Knock-out cranks up his lungs with some more guff, to this effect:

"You should ought to be ashamed, trying to hamper my socialist prestige through unadulterated jealousy, Jake. A fella's just got to have himself a party now and then, 'specially when he's as well known and popular as I am, and when the chickens won't let him alone."

My temperature began to run about one hundred and ten in the shade beneath the neck band, at these here remarks. In other

words I was hot under the collar, but I held on to my equilibrium by a thread and kept several ounces of composure. By doing this I avoided having one of them explosions a fellow usually throws when he gets all disgusted and exasperated. Again I assured him that I was not by no means envious of his standing with the squaws, and that I merely wanted him to train, and train hard for his coming fight with the biffing Blarney bloke. To this the rube slings back:

"I ain't worrying about this Irishman. He looks like the Dub from Dublin to me."

"Killum's a comer and you got to watch him," I tells Knock-out.

"I'll make a goer—or a goner out of him."

Then I told the rube that he was too fresh.

"I'll be just as fresh after my ten rounds with this mick, cause they ain't nothing that raises my ire like the Irish. But, don't get so cross ways about me and my training, Jake. I ain't flocking any with the girlies now. I got me just one angel, and she's the only sweet mamma for me."

I perked up my cauliflowers a bit at this announcement. It was the first tip I had received that friend Knock-out had chosen a steady.

"Where'd you meet this dame?" I queried.

"She met me in a cabaret one night. Say, Jake, she's as light on them trilbies as a cream puff."

"Terpsichorean queen, I'll bet."

"Nope, she's a American girl."

"And she likes to dance with you?"

"I'll say she does. Why, she told me the other night I might of appropriately been named Grace if I had of been borned a girl."

"Quite a compliment!"

"Correct, sit down. We was a-dancing along and of a suddint she pipes: 'I wanner shimmy.' Right on the spurt of the minute I says: 'Why don't you buy yourself one then?' And she gets tickled at my reparty. You see, Jake, the shimmy is a kind of dance and not some unmentionables or something like I thought at first."

All this shower of information got me groggy for a few moments, but I mentally grabbed for the ropes and adjusted myself. You see, I hadn't been hep until that moment that some siren had hooked my pet lunch ticket. And, believe me, he had fell for her good and strong. I finally got my mental bearings by shooting a query at him as to how he knew the girl thought so well of him.

"Well, when I introduces myself, I could tell right off the jump that I had kind of went to her heart, and that I and she was four ordained to be good friends. I says to her 'You haven't met me, but my name's Smith.' She chirps back. 'Oh-oh, Mr. Smith, I would just love to be your little Porky Huntas. Are you a piano mover or something?' You see she had been struck by my physeek. I says: 'No, ma'am, I am Knock-out Smith, the coming champion,' and she's all ears by this time. Well, I hadn't oughta say she was all ears, because she's a beautiful gal and has got perfectly normal ears. You know, Jake, I mean she was a good listener."

Well, it looked like that gazabo was going to tell me the history of his life before I could ditch him, for that afternoon. He informed me that the girl was tickled to death to meet him as she had just recently came over from Milwaukee, had seen his pictures in the papers and on the billboards, and that since that first meeting the two of them had been as thick as deputy sheriffs on circus days. Also that they would more than likely be united in the holy bonds of matrimony after he had fractured the jaw of Mr. Kelly in Milwaukee and had raked in the bulk of the gate jack for so doing.

Our one-sided conversation was brought to a close when Arthur Pankey stens in and the rube hangs up one of them "Welcome-to-our-city" smiles. They immediately get into a chinning bee, and realizing that they're buddies, I excuse myself, put my kelly on the roof, grope for the exit at the main entrance, and beat it.

I might as well confess, while the confessing's good, that I pulled a bone in my dealings with this Pankey person, referred to above. He's to figure prominently in this narrative, but when I first learned that him and Knock-out was good friends I thought he was going to be a nonentity. That's where yours truly booted one. For, by figuring that his intellect would run a nose and nose race with the intellect of Knock-out was one of the monumental mistakes of my life.

Still, I was caught with my guard down on this bloke and left him a wide-open entrance to step in and give me a political

pummeling. And, I haven't ever really blamed myself for pulling a Hohenzollern and falling into the trap, for I had no advance knowledge that this boy was out to do me good.

He was a young chap, rather blue of eye and thin of lip, and while his raiment didn't look like the weary Willie type of suit by no means, still it was rather threadbare in spots, and his collars had saw edges. I merely figured that he was on his uppers, that him and Knock-out had met in some joint, had developed a friendship for each other, were about on an equal basis in the mentality league and enjoyed each other's company.

Letting it go at that, I allowed him free sway, didn't try to keep tab on his movements, and was the nicest little lamb you ever saw. There was him and Knock-out hob-nobbing together all the time and me actually glad that he was taking the rube off my hands, for to be with a guy who don't know nothing, has never seen nothing, and who ain't ever traveled none is one of the biggest bores in the world. It will run a fellow nutty answering all kinds of foolish questions and the like, so I was really tickled green that the rube had himself a nice, little innocent playmate.

Well, the days rolled by, just as the days have got a habit of doing, me preaching training to the rube all the while, and the Pankey person backing me up in all of my curtain lectures, to the rube, when he happens to be around, but Knock-out ignoring our advice and letting our lectures roll in one cauliflower and out the other.

I was sitting in the gym one afternoon giving a sport sheet the up and down, when Knock-out arrives for his daily workout some forty minutes late. Mr. Pankey drifts in some fifteen minutes ahead of the rube and parks himself in a chair, takes out a fat cigar, and occupies his time in blowing smoke rings toward the ceiling. He don't say nothing to me, and I say the same thing to him, except that I just nod and keep on glimming my paper. We're about as conversational as a couple of B. C. mummies.

Knock-out ambled into our august presence, his face wreathed in smiles.

"Oh, boy," he chirped. "Maybe I ain't getting onto this New York style of feeding your face."

"Making progress, are you?" I asked in one of them don't-give-a-doggone tones.

"Am I? Say, bo, when I hit this burg I didn't know a casserole from a camisole. Now I'm calling lots of them highbrow, fancy dishes by they first names and the chef by his middle name."

Pankey horns in on the conversation with:

"How did you get hep so quickly?"

"Brain-work, my boy. And, Maggie has helped me wonderful. Say, that there girl is a gem. Did you ever see a Jane like her? Don't mind running around little old New York with a greenhorn like me a bit. Excepting, of course, men, I ain't exactly what you would call a greenhorn."

Pankey asks him a lead question about how much these dinners he's been giving Maggie O'Connor set him back, and Knock-out gives us another earful to this effect:

"Oh, it's a mere bag of shells to a man like me, what has made considerable of the filthy Lucretia in the squared area, and is on his way to pecks of kopecks. Maggie don't care nothing about Jack and she wouldn't go out with a member of the nickel-nursers' union for worlds. She told me so herself, but that was supper flewus, for one can tell by just looking at her that she's used to more luxuries than Carter had liver pills. Course Maggie likes wine, but she's sure making herself a sacrifice when we put on the feed bag together at some gilded calf, for I don't buy the high-brow drinks she's a custard to."

"I see you're very much wrapped up in the lady," I chimed in, so that the rube could get his second wind. He takes a deep breath and continues his monologist barrage:

"Of course I think a whole lot of her, men, but not near so much as she does of me. It's real pitiful the way that baby has fell for yours truly. Last night I sees her waiting on the mezzaline floor of the Disaster House, and just as soon as I gracefully strides toward her, I could see the love light in her lamps, and as I gazed into the tantalizing blue objects of her'n, I realized that, if I should suddenly be took away and I should go out of her life forever, that she would be so sorrow-struck she would unanimously vote to drink a sign-eyed potassium cocktail or eat a bichloride of mercury club sandwich."

"The damsel must surely be wild over you," Arthur chimed in, his words coated in

six inches of sarcasm, but the rube don't get hep and he raves on:

"Modesty forbids me telling you how much that Jane really does care for me, Art. But, man is a funny thing, eh, son? Of course, I think the universe of this here sweet sugar, but I'll never be able to settle down and give her the sun total of all of my affections. As long as I'm in the spotlight of the ring, which will probably be until I contract a chronic case of palsy brought on by old age, and as long as I got heart-smashing habits and jaw-smashing wallops, Janes will keep falling for me, and I'll just have to pay 'em a little mind. Sometimes, men, I believe I got Turkish blood in my veins."

I might have known by the interest Mr. Pankey was taking in this rural product that he was more than casually interested. He comes back at friend Knock-out with a regular curtain lecture and there I am, his manager, not saying a word either pro or con, or fore or aft. I'd already handed out my theory on the W. W. and S., stuff, however—meaning wine, women, and song—and I didn't feel like wearing out a good pair of lungs on desert air.

"Knock-out," Mr. Pankey said, looking at the rube in a serious tone of voice, "your bout with Killum Kelly is just one week away. Instead of concentrating your mind on this fight you have allowed a woman's wiles to sidetrack your thought. Unless you desist you'll enter the ring with this Kelly at a decided handicap. Jostle Janedom, turn prohibitionist and pass up the champagne conservatories for at least one week. If you don't your name's Mud."

Knock-out is good and peeved by this time and he flies off into one of his pet tantrums. I felt kind of unnecessary, sitting there listening to a quarrel between a coupla friends, but I stuck it out, wanting to hear the outcome. Knock-out in one of his meanest moods, comes back at the Pankey person with this:

"I'll be dog-goned, Art! I'm free, white, and twenty-one. If I feel like I want to march two abreast up to the wedding halter, that's my business. You should ought to know better than mix in a fellow's love affairs. Now, if I was already married and this was one of them internal triangles and you was helping me out of it, I'd have gobs of gratitude. But, this here case is different. Don't get personal with me no more, don't get personal!"

Arthur shoots a couple of sneers the rube's way and also a wink my way, stating:

"Be calm. I was giving you some real advice, and if you don't take it that Irishman will make mincemeat out of them features of yours."

"Don't kid yourself, Art," comes back Knock-out. "I'm going to hit this mick so hard that the ref could count John D.'s bank roll before he comes to, instead of the customary ten as laid down by the Marquis and Queensbury rules. What's more, Maggie is going to see me knock this four-flasher cold. Her blood will no doubt stand on end, when I crash in with the haymaker, but it's something I want her to see. My only regret is that the rules of boxing is such that I won't be able to pick him up off'n the floor, and bust him again, responding to her encore. Maggie's going to be my accompanist over to Milliwaukee. That point's settled. Ah, men, I can see that there angel a-setting there in the crowd, her beauty standing out in that ocean of faces, like a one-spot in the collection plate at church."

Arthur would have remonstrated further, but he saw it was no use, Mr. Smith blocking his argument with this assertion:

"After that Milliwaukee fight, which will really be more of a massacree, instead of a fight, I and Maggie are going to become wife and man."

"Just one word more," I happens to contribute. "Don't let the female of the speeches gum the game."

And, Knock-out knocks us both dead with this:

"She won't gum it. From now on Maggie is to furnish the inspiration for my fights while I furnish the perspiration."

First thing I knows the fight for the big mill is in the offing—and then she's there. It was one of them starlit and moonshiny nights what the long-haired boys rave over when they grab a pome out of the ozone. The weather was perfect and the enthusiasm of the Milwaukee fans was about one thousand feet above the sea level.

In spite of the fact that the State laws held the pugs to ten-round bouts the ring bugs were all agog over this feature attraction. Knock-out and Killum had reps as rough-and-tumble scrappers, and while the

fans deplored the fact that these boys couldn't maul Hades out of each other for twenty rounds or more, they was bent on seeing that ten-round scrap, if it took the last dime in baby's bank to do it.

By the time the first prelim was on I saw that the old house was playing to capacity with a capital C, and I knew that by the time the big-time act was ready to serve, the men in the box office would have to dust off the S. R. O. sign and hang it in the window.

"Packing 'em in to-night, brother," gayly chortles Con Strouthers. You see Con was the guy what was managing this Sinn Fein delegate. I ain't never had no special fondness for Con, but having a hatchet to grind, I'm the affablest person this side of the north pole for the time being.

"I'll say we are," I comes back. "Looks like we'll wear a half dozen pet turnstiles to a frazzle to-night."

"You tell 'em!" allows Con. "Biggest mob me and the Irishman has ever played to since we been hooked up together."

Con is wearing a double-jointed smile and has satisfaction written all across his map in raised letters. The best time in the world to put a proposition is when a fellow's in a good frame of mind. Having worked the diplomacy gag I grew bolder, and says:

"Ooze down to Jeff's place for a few minutes, Con, I would speak with thee."

Down there with a couple of cold ones staring us in the face, the plot begun to thicken. I put my proposition straight from the shoulder and Con never looked surprised, nor insulted, nor nothing. He just drank in my little monologue along with his beer, in silence.

"I wouldn't think of doing it to a regular fellow," I told him, "but this hick is a big, country boob. He's got more money now than he ever thought there was in the world. And all because I took him under my wing, and made the dates and managed him."

"Yep, but just where do I come in at?" Con question-marks me.

"You guys make me sick," I tells him. "One of these days you're going to die of the itching palm."

That don't go a little bit with Con. He gets all fussed up over my last remark, saying:

"Cheese that sort of stuff! You're framing to jip a innocent gazaboo out of a coupla thousand. My man is a direct descendant of that bloke, Solomon. He's wise. He keeps tab on every nickel, and I ain't got a chance to get away with any of that stuff. And, here you are, wanting me to pull something free at your own benefit performance."

We have a little nip-and-tuck haggling match, me telling him that I'm going to kick in with some dough for his silence, and Con holding me up for more jack. Finally, however, we reach terms by me agreeing to slip him five hundred bucks for keeping mum, while I put the minus mark on some of rube's share of the gate receipts.

Ambling back to the stadium I told him:

"Remember, not a word!"

"Oh, you can count on me," he replies, "I'll be as silent as the letter X in fish."

I must've been money mad that night. I had a perfectly good take-off in sight, which would have been a good-sized bank roll within itself, but when a fellow gets just so much lettuce, he wants just so much more. I'd kept tab on Knock-out, knew he wasn't in no shape, realized that he's been running round considerable with this dame Maggie, and I had a hunch that he was going to get the wadding knocked out of him. My rule has always been that when you meet one of them hunches or premonitions face to face, hang up the "Welcome-to-our-city" placard and play it forty ways from taw. So, before the big fight starts, I place five hundred wheels on the Irishman to get the decision.

Felt kinder like a sheep-killing canine, at that, but as I say, I was hankering after the grapes so much that it went to my belfry.

The prelims was over and ditched, and the big boys crawled through the ropes, Knock-out and Killum simultaneously slipping robes from their muscular frames, their gigantic backs glistening in the calcium glow.

Kelly acknowledged his introduction by grinning defiantly and looking like half man and half beast. I could see his eyes roving over the crowd, though, as he made a mental calculation of those present.

Mighty Knock-out looked as docile as a milch cow while being introduced and I felt like my five hundred berries was safe right then, for Knock-out had to have the old fighting spirit before he could battle, and it was evident that he didn't have that spirit.

As he was being introduced I saw Knock-out's eye find its range in aisle J., row five,

right. He was beaming upon the kalsomined countenance of Maggie O'Connor. I got a glimpse of Arthur Pankey, too, and he looked mad enough to bite a keg of tenpenny nails in two, as he saw the rube bow awkwardly, as that Jane fluttered her handkerchief.

It was a battle from the word go. The Irishman waded in with all the speed and might of a battering ram. Knock-out woke up from his tranquil thoughts as a short jab braised the skin under his right lamp. This blow shook for the moment reveries of his adorable Maggie.

Putting some real pep into his fight, Knock-out tried for an upper-cut to the jaw. Kelly's head swerved and the upflying duke connected with the Irishman's proboscis. Wasn't any harm to the blow, but it started a streak of gore from the wounded member and was a good lick for effect.

Gloating considerable gloats over the fact that Maggie had seen this blow, Knock-out dropped his guard and sent a grin full of ego her way. Killum took advantage of this and shot a staggering left to the jaw. Knock-out reeled ropeward, the gong sounding just in time to save him from further pestilence.

The first round was Kelly's and I felt like my five hundred simoleons was safe. That blow was a lesson to the rube, however, and the next five rounds was even, my protégé from the sticks paying strict attention to his business. But, in the seventh Maggie again caught Knock-out's eye and sent such an appealing smile his way, that the rube felt almost like crawling through the ropes and giving her one of them F. X. B. movie hugs F. O. B. Detroit.

The thrill of love is a peaceful one. Knock-out experienced it at this critical moment. Kelly didn't. And, a boring blow to the tummy sends Knockout to the floor with one of them deep, dull thuds. He comes up for more at the count of seven and that sweet-sounding gong was again music to his listeners.

Hep to his own mistake, Knock-out again concentrated his mind on the fight for the next two rounds and pulled a strong comeback, though he must've known he was losing on points. He got in some telling jolts. A thunderous right crashed to Killum's cheek and his left eye was closed for repairs. A blow over the heart caused the man in green trunks to gasp. I saw my five hundred slipping. I looked out Pankey's way and his mug had took on a carload of radiance.

The men sprang from their corners like a coupla catamounts at the start of round ten. Like a peeved cyclone Knock-out tore into the Irish entry. Plainly Killum was worried, and I had one of them sinking sensations myself. It looked like a lead-pipe cinch that Knock-out had his man at his mercy and would deliver a haymaker. But, there's many a slip 'twixt the stein and the lip. A shrill cry rent the atmosphere and shot into the ears of Mr. Smith.

"I've been robbed! Police!"

It was Maggie. Her cry dazed Knock-out. His hands dropped limply at his sides and he stared her way. Kelly guided a terrible blow to the solar plexus. With wonderful stamina this rube shakes off the wallop, but the gong brings on the grand finish and the ref rushes over and hoists ceilingward the hand of the grinning but exhausted Mr. Kelly.

That was my cue to collect.

About thirty minutes after the fracas Knock-out steps from his dressing room bedecked in civilian regalia and gloom.

Arthur Pankey rushes over to greet him, and it's up to me to kick in with a fake pat on the back. I already felt like he knew it wasn't genuine, however.

"Where's the funeral?" grins Pankey.

"Which funeral you speaking of?" muttered Knock-out.

"That mug tells me there's a death in the family, or a wayward child or something."

"I ain't feeling well," the crest-fallen rube replies.

I ain't said nothing till yet, so I manages to sympathize thusly:

"Too bad you're indisposed."

The rube then admits he's humiliated something awful.

"I hate to look the vox-popu-liars in the face," he said.

When Arthur and me wanted to know why he let that ham, Kelly, beat him, the rube saw a chance for a alibi and he tried it out on us to this effect:

"I could of laid that Irish idiot away in the first if I had of wanted to. But, I gets a happy thought in my beezer. 'I'll let this ham hit me all he wants to and show these Milliwaukese that I'm a polar bear for punishment,' I says to myself. And then I lets him kick me with his dukes just

whenever the idea happened to strike him. I discovers this Shillally slinger ain't got no more Punch than Judy had when her husband ran away with a handsomer man."

"Yes, yes, go on!" I sarcastically encourages.

"But, I gets confused in the conk," continued the rube. "I had it all mapped out to wait until the tenth and then knock this guy to king done come. Somehow or other I lose count of the rounds and we goes into the tenth, me thinking all the time it's round number nine. Just out of generalosity I let him bounce one to my bread basket. A second later the gong sounds and I started to my corner, thinking they's one more round to go, when the ref rushes in and holds up this here Kelly's lunch hook. It was like a crate of thunderbolts out of a sky to me. Believe me, men, I'll tell the world I hate to think what would of happened to that there Shamrock hound, if I'd only of known it was the tenth. I'd knocked him so cold they'da had to of soaked him in the spirits of ammonia, or '76 or something to of brought him to."

Me and this here Arthur person emulates a coupla clams following this here fluent flow of alibis. All the time, though, mind you, this Pankey ain't paid me no more mind than if I was a 1903 calendar.

"Let's take a stroll," says Pankey, addressing Knock-out.

"Nope," replies the rube, "I think I'd better stick around for a while."

"What's the big idea?" asks Pankey.

The rube turns about the color of the tail light of a flivver, and blushes sundry blushes, finally admitting that Queen Maggie had promised to meet him at this spot directly after the fight. The time was past due for her appearance though, and Knock-out had a worried look.

"Something serious might of happened to the girl," he confides. "She hollered she was robbed, when the bout was just closing out. I would of gone to her assistance right then and there, if they hadn't been so much at stake. If she's okay though, her and Kayo is going out and eat up about half of somebody's ex-milk cow, though."

"Guess she's all right," retorted Arthur, "probably trying to steer some cop onto the velvet-fingered geek who picked her pocket."

I feel kinder out of place, Pankey ignoring me both ever and anon, and then some, so I wishes 'em good night and pleasant dreams, and I strolls around to Jeff's place, parks myself at the bar, and with my instep on the third rail, I'm blowing the foam off of my fourth one, when who should slap me on the back but this Killum Kelly person.

Killum's already thrown a few drinks under his shirt which, by the way, was one of them streakady-stripedy, stick-candy looking silks. In fact, he's all dressed up with no place to go. He's got on one of them little go-to-hell hats with a fancy band, got on a ice-creamish suit with a pinch-back effect in the coat, and is wearing a gangrene tie and a silk handkerchief to match peeping from his breast pocket; to say nothing of a cane. Imagine this big rough neck, all sartorialed up with them glad rags on!

Working on the theory so forcefully carried out in the melody, "One more drink won't do no harm," me and Killum had several on this basis. These internal baths puts us both in quite a talkative mood, and we get quite confidential.

Finally Killum confides that he's got a date to carry a dame over to the Green Beetle Café, and won't I come along? I know the G. B.'s got a rep as quite a gay place after the sun has gone to pajamaville, and being all stewed up, I'm in a mood for wine, song, and the louder members of the gentler sex. So I votes yes, and the motion is unanimously carried.

You might think my veracity ain't Simon pure, but I'm on the level when I tell you I didn't experience no thrill or surprise or nothing when I found out Killum's date was Maggie O'Connor. Maggie is kinder upstage to me at first, but Killum tells her I'm a regular fellow, and 'all wool and a yard wide.' 'All fool with a thick hide,' would have been better.

So we taxies down to the Green Beetle; don't even hesitate out in the main dining room where the orchestra is running full blast with the muffler off, and we don't stop till we get into one of them little private booths in the rear of the establishment.

"Waiter, ooze a couple of quarts of champagne in here by return mail," orders Killum. "Also a trio of steaks about two feet thick. Do you get me?"

"He heard you the first time, dearie," says Maggie, who has seen to it that her throat didn't get parched before Killum filled his date.

"How's your eye, dearie?" cooes Maggie.

"Sore as a boil, and it don't seem to be improving. I could kill that confounded rube for getting me in this shape."

"Remember, sweetie," she advises, "you'd have been in much worse condition if it hadn't been for yours truly."

At this Killum chortles in his cuff, and me, seeing that the plot is beginning to thicken, I'm all ears. They're both so full of grog that they don't keep no secrets from me, and while I'm feeling a little bit unnecessary, I'm enjoying it largely.

"Maggie, I always did say you was a pippin," says Mr. Kelly admiringly. "I got you to thank for this triumph to-night."

"Keep the change, Killum. You know, dearie, I'd do anything for you. But I gotta admit that running around with this country gink for three weeks is enough to send a lady like me to the hospital with nervous prostration. Honest, Killum, he's as green as them tights you wear."

"I didn't think the world and all of this stunt when you doped it out," admitted Killum. "When you told me you was going to New York and vamp this guy I was the dubiousest person what was. I thought it wasn't practical. Really, hon, I figured if you was successful in playing the siren, you'd not be able to get his mind off the fight by shooting him a few coy glances, while this big boob Knock-out was in the ring. But she worked to a gnat's heel, and, believe me, Maggie, I'm strong for you."

And it's my cue to spill some thanks to Maggie, myself. I pats her on the shoulder blades, getting my hands all covered with lady dust in so doing, and I says:

"Here's to you, Maggie. I win myself five hundred dollars to-night by that trick of yours. I play Killum for a winner."

Killum hoists his glass at this juncture with a toast:

"Here's to the rubes, and here's to the boobs. You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy."

It was an old one. But I didn't have time to tell him so. At that moment the walls to the booth's partition was pulled away with one fell swoop, and Knock-out Smith and his friend Arthur Pankey waded over the debray. Knock-out brandishes his fists and rocks Killum Kelly to sleep with a mighty wallop right to the Adam's apple. Kelly, fearing a return engagement, picks himself up off the floor and slinks out of the room, leaving me and the terror-stricken Maggie to the wrath of Knock-out.

Then, Knock-out looks at me, and he don't say nothing for fully a minute. Finally he rasps:

"I'd give you the same kind of licking, but I don't want to soil my hands on such a crooked little shrimp. Art's told me all. How you crooked me on the gate recipes 'n everything. Now hand over that one thousand and five hundred dollars you stoled from me, or I'll bust you in the jaw."

There's nothing for me to do but cough up, and after I've did so, he demands the five hundred dollars I won by betting against him. I've got just enough gin in my system to not use no discretion, and I hand him some brave talk.

"What's Arthur got to do with all this?" I says insultingly.

"He's my new manager, that's what he's got to do with it. You're fired!" explodes the rube. "Now, hand over that five hundred dollars."

"Get out, you big boob," I yells, but it's the whisky talking, not me. That don't keep the rube from hauling away and slapping me with the palm of his hand, though, and knocking me and about one thousand three hundred and sixty dishes into the corner. And, though I'm most too feeble to do it by this time, I reaches down and hands him up my five-hundred-dollar roll to avoid further punishment.

I'm almost in a state of comma about this period, but I ain't got any particular hankering about being knocked down again, so me and the dishes keeps company down there on the floor.

Knock-out has turned his attention to Maggie by this time and has backed her against the wall.

"I ought to punch you in the jaw," he tells her, "but it would hurt me more than it would you."

"You already look like you was suffering 'scruciatingly," Maggie tells him. Apparently she ain't much scared.

"Gimme my dimont ring," insists the rube.

"No, please let me keep the ring," she says pleadingly. "You don't understand me, Knock-out. I—I want the ring as a momento. A hundred-and-fifty-dollar ring don't mean much to you, but it's all the world to me."

"One-hundred-and-fifty-dollar ring!" the

rube pipes, and I see a grin creeping into his face.

"What do you mean?" interrogates Maggie, looking puzzled.

"Oh, I guess you might as well keep the ring."

"Thank you, Knock-out, dearie," she chirps all full of enthusiasm.

"Can that there dearie stuff," says Knock-out, "I and Art was in the adjoining booth and heard all them goings-on twixt you and Killum."

"Well, anyway, it's darling of you to let me keep the ring," smiles Maggie very fetchingly.

"Not so very darling after all. That's one of them pastry dimonts. She cost me five bucks, and I guess you're welcome to it, at that. One hundred and fifty dollars my eye! And you played me for a rube. Say, kid, don't let nobody try to sell you the subway when you leave this joint."

At that moment Knock-out Smith gave me more real pleasure than he ever had in his life. He signified his intention of leaving. Linking his arm with Pankey's and looking back as he made exit, he lamped me there on the floor, and give one loud guffaw, saying:

"That little shrimp, Sandow, did do me one good turn, when he told me to steer clear of a certain kind of women, though, Art. Henceforward, I'm off of blondes and brunettes forever—and a fraction."

MAKE ME NO GRAVE

MAKE me no grave within that peaceful place
Where friends shall sadly view the grassy mound
Silent with memory, for a little space,
As though the spirit slept beneath the ground.

For me no sorrow, nor the hopeless tear,
No chant, no prayer, no tender eulogy;
I may be laughing with the gods—while here
You weep alone. Then make no grave for me:

But lay me where the pines, austere and tall,
Sing in the wind that sweeps across the West,
Where night, imperious, sets a coronal
Of silver stars upon the mountain crest.

Where dawn, rejoicing, rises from the deep,
And Life, rejoicing, rises with the dawn;
Mark not that spot upon the sunny steep,
For with the morning light I shall be gone.

Far trails await me; valleys vast and still,
Caverns undreamed of, cañon-guarded streams,
Lowland and upland, meadow, flower-girt hill,
Forests enchanted filled with magic dreams.

And I shall find brave comrades on the way;
None shall be lonely in adventuring,
With each his chosen task to round the day,
New glories to amaze, new songs to sing.

Loud swells the wind along the mountainside,
High burns the sun, unfettered swings the sea;
Bright are the trails whereon the vanished ride;
Life calls to life! Then make no grave for me.

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS.

The Secret City

By Roy Norton

Author of "The Glyphs," "The Liberator," Etc.

Not long ago you read of the eccentric Doctor Morgano and his fellow adventurers seeking a lost civilization in the jungle fastnesses of Guatemala. The story was called "The Glyphs." You will remember that Morgano at the last moment, instead of returning to the modern world, preferred to remain with the Maya people. We wondered how he would get along with this prehistoric race. Here is the answer. Norton felt impelled to tell us. As we anticipated, Doctor Morgano, the brilliant archæologist, scholar and ne'er-do-well, finds himself in desperate circumstances and sends a cryptic S O S to his friends.

(*A Three-Part Story—Part One*)

CHAPTER I.

"MONSIEUR has had a visitor," wheezed the fat concierge, rushing to intercept me as I was entering the stairway that ascended from the inner court.

I turned toward her inquiringly, not because visitors were so rare in the Rue Bonaparte of old Paris, but because something in her manner indicated emotion, whether exasperation, indignation, or extreme annoyance I could not yet determine. It proved to be a blend of all three.

"Who was it? Did he leave a card?" I asked.

"Card? No, m'sieu! Not him! I think he was a burglar."

"Then it must have been thoughtless of him to leave no card," I commented. "I've always understood that burglars do so."

She took no note of my sarcasm, but burst into a voluble and excited explanation, punctuated by gestures, shrugs, shakings of her fists, and occasional epithets.

"I was in my little office when I heard a voice outside trying to ask of my little Juliette where the apartments of Monsieur Hallewell were. And he offered her a franc if she would show him without letting any one know—the dirty apache! *Vraiment!* m'sieu, I listened. Juliette took the franc and said she would consult me, her mother. The *méchant chien* caught her arm and stopped her and whispered that he would give her a franc more not to tell her mother. Truly, I was beginning to suspect him. One does, you know. I leave it to you, m'sieu, if one would not? Eh? *Vraiment!* But, thinks I, let the honest little Juliette earn the other franc. She is a good and worthy child is my little Juliette and—a franc is a franc, *n'est-ce pas?* So I let them get halfway up the steps before I called to them. The man was tiptoeing it like a cat crossing a muddy road. Ah! You should have seen him stop when I called! I made him come back downstairs, and, m'sieu, judge of my surprise when I saw that he was some kind of a nigger. Not a black nigger, but a pale-blue nigger—a kind I have never seen before. And he spoke scarcely any French at all. Just a few simple words. Annoyed he was, m'sieu! Very! He tried to tell me that he was calling on you, and when I made it plain that he couldn't climb any steps in Number Sixteen without my consent, was terribly disappointed. I told him a few things about the way this house is run! I did! *Vraiment!* I told him that if he wanted to see you he must come back to-night at nine o'clock and I would then show him the way and that otherwise he would never get in!"

"And is he coming back?" I queried.

"I think so; but he would leave no name. He—he offered me two francs to show him your door, m'sieu! Think of it. And—oï

course I did not do so, although two francs are two francs, m'sieu, and what with Pierre's needing new sabots and François being out of work it was a great temptation, I—well, m'sieu understands."

I did. I immediately gave her two francs as a reward for her rare honesty. I knew that was what she was after. I had not lived in those apartments in Number Sixteen for more than three years, after my affluent return from Guatemala, without learning a few things concerning her character. She was very honest—when well paid for being so.

"Well, if the dark one comes at nine, bring him up," I said. "But if he comes when I'm not at home, never let him pass the doorway. He doesn't sound right to me."

Now the singular part of it is that, had this visitor acted as any other visitor might have done, he could probably have gained his objective with ease; but the fact that he had sought to gain my apartments without my knowledge was enough to set my mind to wonderment and to put me on my guard for what followed.

It was just nine o'clock when madame, the concierge, came up to my door, rapped and whispered like a fat stage villainess, "He has come again, m'sieu—the nigger!"

"Oh! I never expected to see him," I replied. "Show him up."

I heard her voice calling down the stair well to some one to ascend, and a few minutes later a most extraordinary individual appeared in my doorway and gravely bowed. There was something peculiar about even his bow. It was as if he had learned it in the Orient and with difficulty restrained himself from spreading his hands in a salaam. Although his skin was dark, I could not fix his nationality; yet there was something familiar in his type that I strove to recall.

"Monsieur Hallewell?" he asked, and on my acknowledgment began in very broken French and stammered and came to a halt and then suddenly changed to understandable English, although distinctly foreign, "You are Ingleese? Then it is so I shall spik!"

And he did thereafter, and what I quote is his meaning, not his exact language.

"Sit down," I invited, being rather curious concerning him, and he did so; but I noticed that his eyes, that were of singular sharpness and blackness, seemed roving hither and there as if seeking something. He seemed disappointed as if whatever it was he sought were not visible.

"Well," said I, "what is it you wish to know?"

The directness of my question appeared to embarrass him a trifle, and he backed and filled for a minute or two and then said, "I had understood that you were—that is—that you had some—some curios."

I could not restrain a smile of amusement. Evidently the man was badly informed.

"No, I haven't," I replied. "I have never been a collector. It's true I used to have a few hunting trophies, but I have disposed of nearly all those; in fact, given them away to friends and clubs who value them considerably more than I do."

He regarded me searchingly, as if to assure himself that I was not evading, and then said something that brought me to a mental alertness so acute that I almost gasped with astonishment.

"You were a friend of a learned doctor named Morgano, were you not?"

"Morgano? Doctor Morgano? What do you know of him?" I blurted out, now keenly anxious to hear anything he might say.

Evidently my very eagerness threw him off again, for he looked away, fidgeted a trifle, and then sat back in his chair with what I interpreted as a pretense of composure, before he said: "He had some objects in stone that I wish to see. I believe you have them in your care."

Now, if I had not been given reason to suspect this peculiar visitor of mine, I do not doubt that I should have at once told him the truth, which was that I did not have in my possession a single object of any kind belonging to Doctor Morgano, the great archæologist with whom James Dalrymple Wardrop, the fine British sportsman, and I had invaded Guatemala and discovered the lost capital city of the ancient Maya race. Doctor Morgano, the greatest cryptologist of his age! Doctor Morgano, the crank, who had led us to a fortune, and then, intent upon his own scientific studies, slipped away from us, disowned civilization, become an adopted priest of the Maya tribes, and by his own avowal returned to live with them in a mountain fastness of which only we three, of all white men, knew. More than three years had passed since that

day we had last seen him, and neither Wardy nor I had ever had a single line from him, or any information. It was as if the doctor had actually stepped from life itself, and often had we speculated as to his fate.

"Where is Doctor Morgano now?" I asked, ignoring his words.

If I had required more to convince me that my visitor was playing anything but a frank game, it was supplied by the time he took to formulate his answer. Certainly no difficulties of speech could have accounted for it, or for the half-furtive manner in which he shifted his eyes away from mine, and cleared his throat. He was sitting calmly enough in his chair by now, but I observed that the fingers of one hand that rested on his leg were twitching, suggesting to me something of rapacity, eager but under restraint; for all the world like the talons of a vulture waiting for a wounded man to die. I've had that experience in Central Africa and am not likely to forget my observations!

"I don't know," he said at last, and then, suddenly, "Do you?"

"No," I replied, with assumed indifference. "But what led you to believe that I have anything belonging to him?"

It was his turn to be on guard again, but he acted poorly.

"I thought—I thought that you must have them," he said. "Either you or your friend, Mister Wardrop."

That last definitely settled it in my mind that I was confronted by a puzzle of far greater import than was involved in the mere inspection of some of that mass of rubbish which Doctor Morgano had collected, and which only Wardrop and I knew was now safely locked in a safety-deposit vault on the other side of the Seine.

"Perhaps Mr. Wardrop could tell you," I suggested. "Have you seen him?"

This time his answer was prompt. Evidently he thought I was about to give him the true lead.

"No," he said quickly, "I have not. Maybe you could give me his address. I have been unable to find him."

"Unfortunately, I cannot," I said. "He is at present in London, I believe. But he may return soon."

I saw the look of disappointment on his face, and added: "If you could call here day after to-morrow, I might find out for you."

That encouraged him again. His eyes glittered avidly, as he thanked me and arose to depart.

"By the way," I said, as I got to my feet, "I have neither your name nor your address. Perhaps it would be as well to leave them with me."

He took a card, cheaply printed, from his pocket and handed it to me. It bore the name "Pedro Veguitas," but no address.

"Your address?" I said, returning the card and proffering him a pencil.

Again he hesitated, and then, somewhat reluctantly, I thought, scrawled the name of the hotel Escargot d'Or, which I knew was an obscure little place in an obscure side street beyond the Boulevard St. Germain. He backed out of the room as awkwardly as he had entered, and again I was impressed that he was not entirely accustomed to what one might call civilized life.

I waited for half an hour to give him a chance to clear, then turned off my lights, descended the long flight of stairs, and by good luck succeeded in getting a taxi almost in front of my door. In less than twenty minutes I was being shown into Wardy's apartments where, good luck again favoring me, I found my closest friend at home.

"Come in!" roared his booming voice when the concierge rapped and I entered to see six feet four inches of giant comfortably stretched on a lounge with a pair of carpet-slippered feet sprawled on a convenient chair at the foot, and the whole room in a blue haze of pipe smoke. A bearded face turned, a monocle firmly set caught the light and glared at me, and then again the voice roared, "Benny! Beni Hassan!" and added in Arabic, "Bring a siphon bottle and something to go with it. Make haste, lazy one!"

And Benny, the Arab who had accompanied us into the unknown land, and who was a devoted slave to the big sportsman, came hurriedly into the room, grinned affably at me, saluted me by name, and disappeared.

"Say, Wardy, this is no casual, just-dropped-in visit," I declared as he still lounged on his back, smiling affectionately at me. "We're up against a mystery. And it concerns Doctor Morgano."

The carpet slippers thumped on the floor, and the big man came to a sitting posture like a startled jack-in-the-box.

"No! You don't mean it!" he declared incredulously.

"Fact," I asserted, and then proceeded to tell him all I knew of Veguitas, and my impressions concerning that peculiar individual.

"Um-m-h!" ruminated Wardy, as I concluded. "Does seem most extraordinary. This chap Veguitas didn't say what led him to believe you or I had any of the doctor's junk in our keeping, did he?"

"He said he thought we must have them."

"But did you ask him what made him think so?"

I admitted that I had not, and the big man laughed quietly.

"I'm afraid you would have made a very indifferent lawyer as far as cross-examination is concerned," he said, and then, as if to remove any implied reflection on my wits, added: "But never mind, Henri, you can show any chief justice on earth through any wilderness, and make him ashamed of his ignorance if you can get him on the veldt or in a jungle! Which proves that it is best for every man to stick to his trade. Now let's think this over. This man wants something that he doesn't seem quite frank and honest in obtaining. He resembles our long-lost friend, the doctor, in that respect; for the doctor simply stole anything that pleased his fancy, even if it was for the purpose of immediately thereafter giving it to some one. I take it that this man has something to fear, from direct inquiry, or otherwise he would not have tried to gain admission to your rooms when you weren't there. Next, what he seeks is of importance to him, or he wouldn't risk jail for burglary. But it doesn't seem as if he could have been in communication with the doctor, because the doctor would have told him, plainly, that neither you nor I had anything in our care belonging to him, and that he had instructed us to give the keys to the locks protecting his belongings to the secretary for the Assyrian Research Society. If this man had come from the doctor the latter would have therefore merely given him a note to the secretary asking for the keys. Um-m-mh! Veguitas. That's a Spanish name. Did you try him in Spanish?"

"I never thought of it!" I exclaimed, annoyed with my own stupidity.

"Perhaps it's just as well you didn't," commented Wardy, as he got to his feet and moved about his room. "A card up one's sleeve often helps in a pinch if one sits at a table with rogues."

"Hang it all! I wish you had been there!" I exclaimed. "I'm so deucedly helpless when it comes to this sort of thing. I can't find anything out without just going straight to the point."

"You aren't exactly—er—diplomatic," said Wardy with a grin. "But there's no harm done. Let me have a talk with this Johnnie. You bring him over to me when he comes to-morrow. No, I think it's best that you send him my address and tell him that he will find me at home at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon, and that I've just returned from London. You come over at about three o'clock and I'll hide you in the next room."

"Hide me? What for?"

"Because, in an emergency, your face might give things away," said Wardy, chuckling. "You are about as secretive as a mirror. You can't help showing what you think and feel. I think I'd best talk to this Veguitas without any outside assistance. Don't you?"

I had to agree, and we wrote a note to Veguitas which I was to send by messenger on the following morning to his hotel. And then for an hour we sat and talked about poor old Morgano, and wondered if he were still alive, and if he had returned with some of the Maya tribe to that mountain-locked city which Morgano, Wardy, and I were the only white men who knew how to enter—a city guarding the gods of a great race that had flourished perhaps thousands of years before a Caucasian ever set foot on the American continent; a city of magnificence from whose vast treasure chambers we had carried away a fortune in precious gems; a city whose splendid temples, crowning an island in a lake, formed for us an unforgetable memory, and a frequent topic of conversation. Oh, we had enough to talk about, all right, whenever we thought of what we had endured, and found, and suffered, in that unknown and forbidden heart of Guatemala! And, moreover, we still felt great affection for that master scientist, that peculiar genius who alone could read the stone inscriptions of the Maya race, who had unraveled the secret of the glyphs, and then, carried away by zeal for further knowledge, had deliberately turned his back on men of his own color, on all civilization which men knew, and disappeared from our knowledge and our sight. There was mystery enough in Doctor Morgano's disappearance alone to

keep his memory alive in our minds and frequently we had considered the advisability of trying to get news of him despite his emphatic admonitions that we were never to try to communicate with him, or seek him in any way.

In accordance with our plan, I was at Wardrop's apartments, shortly after three o'clock on the day following, and promptly at four I observed Veguitas for the second time—through a fold in the curtains of an adjoining room. He seemed considerably impressed by the appearance of Wardrop, who towered above him like a huge mountain. Indeed they were a wonderful contrast, the great, broad-shouldered, bearded Britisher, and this sinewy, lean, swarthy wasp of a man. But somehow I took note of the fact that despite Veguitas' air of furtiveness and manifest unfamiliarity with such surroundings, his nose was that of a leader, and his face not lacking in characteristics of firmness. I observed, too, that his lips were as thin and cruel as one could imagine. Somehow I made a new estimate of this peculiar man and concluded that, however awkward he might be in his present environment, there might be some spot on earth where he was dictator rather than suppliant. And I wasn't sure but that in that particular spot he might be a man of whom one would stand in fear. In Paris he was at a disadvantage; but in that other place, where he stood on his own ground, I doubted not that he would become highly formidable. How well I estimated his character I did not then dream we were to prove. Sometimes it is a blessing that we are not gifted with foresight, and are thus spared suspense and fear!

Veguitas seemed more assured than on his visit to me, and at once said: "I suppose your friend, Mr. Hallewell, told you why I wished to speak to you?"

"He told me that Mr. Pedro Veguitas wished to see me at my convenience, and I suggested four o'clock as a suitable hour," said Wardy, eying his visitor steadily.

Veguitas seemed to accept this as the full statement I had given, and very brazenly said: "Ah, then he did not tell you I wished to see the stone tablets which Doctor Morgano gave you to keep and which are doubtless here in your rooms."

Behind my curtains I gasped at his calm effrontery. I was watching Wardy at the moment and his face did not move a muscle, nor did the twitch of an eyebrow betray the slightest astonishment. In fact, he was as placid and cool as if he had not the slightest interest one way or the other in the subject.

"Oh, you wish to see Doctor Morgano's tablets. Have you seen the doctor recently?"

"Not recently," admitted Veguitas. "But if he were here he would be very glad, I am sure, to let me study his collection. I shall not, of course, harm it."

"Are you an archæologist?" demanded Wardy, eying him.

The term appeared to puzzle the visitor, but he finally said, "Yes."

"Then," said Wardy, "you can understand my position. I know nothing of the value of anything in the doctor's collection. It might be worth—that"—and he snapped his thumb and finger—"or it might be priceless. I gave the doctor my word that I would look after his possessions carefully."

He paused impressively, and now I saw that his visitor had lost all shiftiness and uncertainty of eye and was regarding Wardy with as searching directness as one might conceive.

"Under those conditions," Wardy went on coolly, "it is impossible that I should permit any one access to those tablets without a direct order from Doctor Morgano."

Veguitas settled back in his seat, and as far as I could decide was disturbed by this announcement, but he rallied quickly.

"Very well," he said. "That is sufficient. You have Doctor Morgano's order. He told me to tell you to let me see the tablets."

Wardy smiled and slowly shook his head.

"I'm sorry, but that won't do," he said, calmly lighting a cigarette he had picked up from a tray on a table near at hand. "It's not sufficient. I must have the order in writing."

"What? You think my word not good?" demanded Veguitas, not without a rather heated dignity as if he were unaccustomed to being doubted.

"Not at all. Why should I? But that is my way of doing things, and I wish to assure you that you shall never see those tablets without a written order from Doctor Morgano."

For a time Veguitas sat stiffly, and glared at him. Wardy, unperturbed, appeared

rather disinterested. If Veguitas hoped to overawe this big sportsman, he had come to about the most hopeless task on earth. He was merely wasting time on one who would have as steadily looked death in the face, as I had reason to know. Veguitas finally lowered his eyes and with the tips of his long, slender fingers held together in front of him, seemed pondering some exigency. At last he appeared to arrive at a determination. "Since you insist upon it," he said with palpable reluctance, "I shall get an order from Doctor Morgano; but would you recognize his handwriting?"

"I certainly should," said Wardy with what I thought undue emphasis. "There is not a man on earth who could fool me on that point. I should know it anywhere. You bring me a written order from Doctor Morgano to show you the tablets I have in my possession, and you shall be shown them immediately."

"May I ask where they are?" questioned Veguitas, looking about the room for the hundredth time.

"I have them stored away here in my rooms for safe-keeping," said Wardy, much to my astonishment.

"Then," said Veguitas, rising from his seat, "I shall at once secure Doctor Morgano's written demand." He moved toward the door as if to depart; but suddenly turned upon Wardy and in rapid, fluent Spanish asked: "Would the señor have the kindness to direct me to the Spanish consulate?"

But Wardy was not to be caught napping. He stared at Veguitas with about as lively an expression as a tallow image in a chandler's shop, and slowly shook his head as if failing to understand.

"I beg pardon?" he said interrogatively.

Veguitas permitted himself a faint smile and said in English: "What I asked was if you could tell me the nearest cab stand. I forgot that you do not speak my native tongue."

"Sorry!" said Wardy with that same wooden air. "There is a cab stand just around the first corner to the right."

Veguitas passed out and the door had barely closed upon him before Wardy clapped his hands to summon Beni Hassan and said hurriedly: "Benny, follow that man without letting him know it, and see where he goes. Hurry! Hurry, man, before he can get away!"

CHAPTER II.

"Well," said I, emerging from behind the curtains, "what do you make of him?"

"I don't make much of him one way or the other, except that if I'm not badly mistaken he is a clever devil," growled Wardy.

"But what's up? Why did you tell him you had any of the doctor's rubbish here in your apartment? You haven't any, have you?"

"Of course I haven't," said Wardy with a frank grin. "And that's the part that puzzles me. In all the doctor's collection there is but one set of tablets and those are ancient Assyrian and worthless save as curiosities, because he told me so himself."

"Maybe this chap thinks they are highly valuable and that he can nip them and sell them for something," I guessed; but Wardy had dropped into his chair and seemed meditating.

"No," he replied, scowling thoughtfully at the window, "I don't think it's that. And —I don't believe Veguitas is a common garden variety of thief or second-story man at all. Benny found that he really stops at the Escargot d'Or. What puzzles me the most is the Morgano connection. How long will it take him to get a written order from the doctor? Where is the doctor if not in the Sacred City of the Mayas, which is many thousands of miles from here? If the doctor wanted those tablets, why didn't he write to us direct to ship them to him at some given destination? Again, if this Veguitas is honest, and is merely a messenger, or a queer fellow scientist of the doctor's, why does he beat about the bush and act the way he does? Frankly, I can't at all understand the situation, and am wondering if something of more importance than we conjecture isn't at stake."

"Anyhow, it will probably be months before we hear anything further from this chap Veguitas," I said, and Wardy agreed with me.

All of which shows that men can be mistaken!

It was just nine o'clock on the following night when I returned to my apartments after visiting a friend on the other side of the Seine, and found Wardy comfortably seated in my sitting room, smoking and poring over a paper which he had spread upon my table.

"Hello!" he said, as I entered. "You've

still got that letter Morgano wrote us on the night when he took French leave there on board the ship in the Guatemalean harbor, haven't you?"

"Yes, of course," I replied. "Why?"

"I want to see his handwriting," he said, and wondering at his whim I went into an inner room, and took from a strong box the last letter we had received from the doctor.

"Here's the letter," I said, as I reëntered the room where Wardy sat. "Fortunate that we have it so that we can make comparisons if ever that chap Veguitas produces a written order from the doctor, and we——"

"Veguitas," said Wardy looking up at me, "has already produced his order!"

"What? So soon?" I exclaimed. "Impossible!"

"Well, here it is," said Wardy, tapping the open paper on the table. "He brought it to me this evening, and I told him that to-morrow afternoon he could see the tablets. I got possession of this note by sticking it in my pocket despite his protests. He didn't want to part with it. Here, read it."

I took the missive, which was written on what I presumed was a leaf torn from one of the doctor's notebooks, and read:

HENRI HALLEWELL, ESQ., 16 Rue Bonaparte, Paris, or

JAMES DALRYMPLE WARDROP, ESQ. (address unknown, but probably obtainable through Sportsman's Club, London, England).

DEAR FRIENDS: I find it necessary for a continuance of my research to consult the seven tablets which you so kindly stored for me in your rooms, the ones called by me "Treasure Tablets." Will you please permit José Basta, who is being sent by the High Priest Ixtual, your friend, to make copies of the inscriptions in the manner customarily used by Siberian Politicals, which any archæologist can explain? I am well contented and happy, so there is no necessity for you to either seek me or communicate with me. My wishes in this respect are firm, and by our old friendship I enjoin you to grant them. With kindest regards to you both, in which Ixtual joins, I am, ever your friend, PAOLO MORGANO.

"Good heavens!" I remarked. "The doctor is either here in Paris where Veguitas could see him quickly, or else the Spaniard had this order all the time."

"The first being the case," said Wardy dryly, "why do you suppose Morgano didn't come to see us himself, and the second surmise being true, why do you think Veguitas didn't present the order when he first called on you, and why did he try to enter your rooms without your knowledge and—— Rubbish, Henri, you would make the worst detective on earth!"

He chuckled as if secretly amused by my reasoning, then suddenly becoming very grave, turned toward me, and went on:

"In the first place, you know as well as I do that we have no seven tablets and never have had such. Moreover, the doctor knows it as well as we do. Next, this letter was written so long ago that the ink has become a firm black, thoroughly aged, and you know as well as I do that the doctor invariably used a fountain pen with an ink that was a faint blue when first used. Next, I have an idea that note was never intended for Veguitas to carry at all. How he got hold of it, I don't know. I asked him point-blank how he happened to have it, and he lied. I could tell it by his face and eyes. He said his true name was José Basta, and that he was a Mexican. I asked him point-blank if he was a Maya Indian, and he said 'No,' and I'm not so certain about that, either. I asked him why he didn't present the order in the first place, and he made a lot of excuses so poor that they wouldn't fool a child. Now, how do you explain all this?"

I didn't know how. "Maybe—yes, it must be—that the doctor has gone mad, or lost his memory, or is doddering, or——"

"Nothing of the kind," interrupted Wardy gravely. "That letter was actually written by our friend, and it is as clear and sane as any letter could be except for one point which puzzles me most of all, and that is the reference to the Siberian political method. Siberian politics are as far removed from archæology as chalk is from cheese. But—— By Jove! I have it! Do you notice how a lot of these words are broken—that is—the letters of a word are not always connected? Look! In the first missive the doctor wrote us the letters were never disconnected and sometimes the words themselves were run together with a sweep—just as telegraph operators who write rapidly sometimes do."

"Well?" I asked, still puzzled.

"Plain as the nose on your face! This letter is cryptographic and the doctor means to tell us that if we will find any escaped political prisoner from Siberia, that man can decipher it for us."

"Then that's easy," I assured him, glad to be of some use in unraveling the mys-

tery. "I know one. I'll bet I can find him to-night—even now—over at the Deux Maggots Café. Old Petranoff, the professor, who, by the way, does a lot of translations for the prefect of police."

"The very man!" declared Wardy, slapping his hand on the table. "The very man! Suppose you go and get him at once—if you can find him. But can he keep his mouth shut if there's anything in this we wouldn't like to have published?"

"That's his specialty," I asserted. "But, anyhow, we've got to take a chance, haven't we?"

I found Petranoff sitting alone in the corner of the café sipping vodka. I had done him a few favors now and then—little financial favors that pleased me and that I could well afford, for I was sorry for the old chap who had suffered more than twenty years of misery and persecution, and certainly merited pity. He was not only willing but eager to assist me, and profuse in his words in telling me so. Within half an hour from the time I had left my rooms on my errand, I returned with him, and he was sitting at the table with the so-called Veguitas order spread out before him, while Wardy and I, silent lest we disturb him, watched him curiously.

"Admirably simple! Admirably so," he declared, after a moment's inspection of the letter. "The man who wrote this must have suffered in Siberia himself, or have been of assistance to those who did. In that alone is a bond of sympathy which I could not ignore. Get me some sheets of blank paper and a pair of scissors or shears."

He took a sheet and along the top and the left-hand side drew little squares which he numbered from one to nine across and from one to nine downward, talking as he did so.

"The Siberian political exiles almost invariably used what was called the checkerboard code," he said. "It is only within the last year or so that by its means the most vitally important messages were not passed under the very eyes of the subtle and experienced officials on the staff of the merciless Russian police. The secret of this ingenious cipher is based upon a simple peculiarity of handwriting quite common to most writers of western civilizations, which is that nine men out of ten do not connect all the letters of a word; but in using this cipher the breaks are intentional. The secret depends upon the grouping, and whether the final letter of a word slants upward or downward. A numeral is written above each group. For instance, in your letter I find 'it' is one group and above it I put the number seven. 'Neces' is another group consisting of five letters, so I write above it the numeral five, and so on. Now we shall proceed."

Rapidly, with the skill of an adept, he jotted down numbers and then took his checkerboard and began to experiment, first with the plain alphabet of twenty-five letters in twenty-five squares, omitting the letter I.

"Probably," said he, "your correspondent would have the letters of his code running in regular order like the alphabet does; but of course, if he did not, but disarranged the letters from their natural sequence, it would take endless experiment to discover the right one. But, knowing that no code checkerboard arrangement had been provided between you, I think we shall learn that he took the very simplest form. Now we shall see. Um-m-mh. Five in this group, and five is either 'e' or 'v.' Eleven in this group which with one at the side and one on top making eleven brings us the first square or the letter 'a.'"

And so he continued, and now, recalling it all, I remember with what suspense Wardy and I hung above his shoulders and saw letter added to letter and word to word to that message which was to lead us into further adventure, to dangers that involved our very lives, to intrigues and unexpected perils. It was well past midnight when Petranoff leaned back and said: "Gentlemen, that is all. And—although I know not whence this came, I sympathize with you in grave anxiety for your friend. As far as I can determine he is in hopeless difficulty and as close a prisoner as I myself have ever been. And my shoulders and my memory are alike scarred by twenty years of servitude in Siberia. If I can be of any further help, command me."

He made his departure and we reread the letter which was as follows:

Hopelessly held prisoner at high priest temple. Forbidden communication. Ixtual friendly but fanatic. Probably have you killed if come or kill me if you bring strangers in to force entry. If you two venture here to rescue, possible you never escape but that my sole chance. Consider well before attempting. Don't trust bearer whoever may be. Best kill or have him

detained if you come. I am desperate hopeless, but maybe your ingenuity will conceive some way. If not farewell.

"That," said Wardy, "is an invitation to as pleasant a party as one could wish, isn't it? Good deal like sending a man an invitation to his own funeral!"

"Yes, but—what the deuce can we do? We can't leave the poor old chap there without trying to do something. And, besides, I am under not only the obligations of friendship, but owe to him the fact that I am a wealthy man. Of course, with you it is different. You are under no obligations at all."

"Which means?" said Wardy, looking at me curiously and half closing the eye that did not retain his monocle.

"Well," said I, "it means just this: that if I were you I wouldn't take the chances. They are too narrow. But as far as I am concerned I can do nothing less. I've got to go, even if I never come back. And—well—I'm going. One can't desert a benefactor and a friend, though it cost him his life."

Wardy slapped his knee. "That," said he, "is just what I was certain that you would say. Good! We must start just as quickly as it can be arranged."

"And that," said I, mimicking his tone, "is just what I knew you would say!" And we both laughed a little nervously, I now think, for certainly we, better than any others, knew how difficult and desperate was the venture.

"The only hope, of course, is in exigencies and circumstances, and good luck," said Wardy, a while later. "And again it may not be so difficult as the doctor fears. We both know that he is such an old simpleton when it comes to anything other than his marvelous gift for archæology, he couldn't make a plan to escape down the back stairs of this house if the front door was locked. I never knew a man who had less idea of practical matters in my life, did you?"

"Never," I heartily agreed, remembering all the doctor's vagaries and peculiarities. "All of which doesn't remove my responsibility. And what a gentle proposition he puts up to us concerning this chap Veguitas! Evidently the doctor's love for the lost Maya race is diminishing. Which one of us is going to kill Veguitas or have him put safely out of the way?"

"Oh, you do it," said Wardy.

"No," I replied. "You do it!" And at that, so strange are the vagaries of men's minds, we both laughed.

Talk and discuss and plan as we could, we were no nearer anything definite or feasible when we parted that night. Wardy's last words were that he intended to get up bright and early and find seven tablets of some sort that would satisfy Veguitas for the time being, and when I turned in it was to dream of the great Sacred City and of Morgano, and once I awoke from a nightmare in which Ixtual, the Maya priest we had known on our first adventure of discovery, was calmly preparing to cut my throat with a sacrificial knife.

Early in the following afternoon I learned from Wardy that he had secured seven tablets that he thought were copies of something Egyptian, from a curio dealer, and had transported them to his rooms and given Veguitas permission to come there and copy them.

"But you can bet I ordered Beni Hassan to never, for a moment, let Veguitas out of sight!" he added with a grin. "The oftener I see that chap, the less I like his looks. But you should have seen his face when I put those little slabs of carved stone in his hands. Talk about triumph after difficulties surmounted—he looked as if he thought he had discovered a new world. He asked my permission to take them to his own rooms to copy them. Then when I said a positive 'No,' he suggested that he take one or two at a time. Of course I refused that also, and I think he was a trifle angry, for there was a pretty nasty look in his eyes; but he made the best of it he could, and has set to work making his copies."

"I think the best sanity I ever knew the doctor to show was when he warned us against him," I commented; "but what puzzled me is why he wanted to make certain that Veguitas shouldn't return."

"That," said Wardy, "is easy. The doctor possibly isn't the only one that can read glyphs over there in Mayaland. Whenever Veguitas or any other messenger hands these copies over, they might learn that he has been imposed upon by us and take it out of the doctor in payment. They might at once suspect that the doctor fooled them, and as you know, they are a mighty suspicious, mistrustful, fanatical lot who

don't have much mercy on any one or anything that gets in the way of their antagonisms. I never entirely trusted Ixtual himself, and he was the only one we ever knew very well. I tell you those people believe in the sacredness of their religion and their cause. Men of any race don't hesitate when something sacrosanct is involved. No, the doctor reasoned that his own safety as well as any possible chance of our success rested upon our getting action before this messenger returned. I think that as it was he must have cut it pretty fine to induce them to send out his message. Probably he made his fellow high priests believe that some prodigious discovery rested upon his securing at least copies of the fictitious tablets. Something so vital that they didn't dare refuse. Wonder what it could have been?"

"That part doesn't matter at all so far as I can see," I said. "The fact that he got the message out, and that we were lucky enough to be able to read it and learn his plight are pretty good."

Wardrop smiled to himself, hummed a bar or two of an English hunting song, and said: "Lucky is the man without imagination! He is saved such a lot of worry."

Then he pleaded some appointment and said he would see me on the following day and left me. Somehow my usual round of a club or two, and my habitual rubber at piquet with old Colonel Dunois didn't fill the bill that night. I'd been contented enough with it all until the receipt of Morgano's wail, and yet, to confess the truth, whenever I thought of the danger of any attempt to rescue the savant, my courage waned. Frankly, I didn't see how it could be done. It may have been that pondering over that proposition kept me awake until the early hours of the morning, or that it was merely sleeplessness, which seems rather unlikely because I am an inordinately healthy animal; but when I did get to sleep I made up for lost time and overslept. I was aroused by a thumping clamor at the door created by Wardy, who always came up at any time unannounced.

"Get up, Henri! Get up, you lazy beggar! Open up, I say."

I scrambled into my bath robe and let him in. Plainly he had something of importance to communicate, and he lost no time in doing so.

"Well, what do you think of it! In spite of all the care we took of those silly pieces of rock I bought from the curio dealer, they are gone. And that greasy bounder Veguitas has disappeared with them!"

"No!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "You don't mean it?"

"But I do. It's a fact. I kept them in the back room. Somebody got into it last night by coming over the roof, down into the gutter leads, and then through the window. It was open this morning and the tablets were gone."

"Humph! Some nerve. Must have been a steeplejack. I shouldn't like to trust my neck to those ancient lead gutters, seventy-five feet above the cobblestones," I commented, thinking of the cool but reckless courage required by the thief. "But what makes you think it was Veguitas?"

"When Benny got up this morning at about eight o'clock, he found the window open and saw that the tablets were missing and called me. I dressed at once and went to that hotel where Veguitas stopped. Veguitas had paid his bill at seven o'clock this morning and disappeared with all his luggage, which consisted of a suit case and a bag. Then I drove to the police headquarters and lied like a Basque to get the detectives stirred into action. Told 'em the tablets were invaluable and offered a reward of two thousand francs for the recovery of the tablets and a thousand extra for the apprehension of Veguitas. By Jove! They were swarming like hornets when I left. I think they dropped all other investigations."

I thought it over for a moment and then laughed.

"It strikes me as being mighty good," I said. "They'll surely nab Veguitas, and we can insist on prosecution, and he will be sent up for at least a year. It saves us the trouble of finding a way to hold him. France does it for us."

"But suppose they don't get him? Suppose he gets away and returns to Guatemala with a lot of worthless tablets that the curio dealer told me he understood were merely Egyptian copies of tablets up near Luxor? Don't you see the doctor's life wouldn't be worth a centime? They'd know at once that he tried to communicate with us, had betrayed them, and—if we can't stop Veguitas it's a finish for the doctor most certainly."

I had to admit that, viewed from that

point, things didn't look so cheerful. Furthermore, it was quite certain that if we could not beat Veguitas to Guatemala our shrift would be exceedingly short if ever we attempted to reach or communicate with the Sacred City of the Mayas. Indeed, our lives would have been taken almost as soon as we landed, despite police protection and all else, because the Mayas would adopt no halfway measures to preserve their secrets.

For three days we waited hopefully and then began to be discouraged. The detectives, under the stimulus of another reward, worked harder than ever. They placed great hopes on the fact that they had obtained excellent thumb prints of the hands on the white window sash. There were at least a dozen of them, and they removed the window sash bodily and kept it to use as evidence. And then, when both Wardy and I were convinced that Veguitas had escaped, they arrested him in a country village not more than thirty miles from Paris. The police sent for us, and we at once responded.

"I am sorry to tell you, messieurs," said the prefect, "that although we have apprehended the man Veguitas, and proven incontestibly that it was he who committed the theft—for his thumb whorls, and indeed his whole hand prints, both right and left, are indubitably those of the robber—we have been unable to find any trace of the tablets."

Wardy and I looked at each other and could scarcely repress a smile; but Wardy recovered quickly and made a great pretense of anxiety.

"We would be inclined, Monsieur le Prefet," he said, "to consider forgiving the burglar if he would return the tablets."

"Impossible!" declared the prefect with great severity and decision. "Impossible! We do not conduct criminal matters that way in France. The man must be punished whether you wish it or not. The prosecution has already begun and you must appear as chief witness. I trust I shall not be put to the necessity of placing you under bonds, or detaining you for that purpose, monsieur?"

"No," hastily assented Wardy. "I shall be there when called; but I pray you to stimulate your men to recover the prized tablets."

"No stimulation further than the pecuniary rewards are necessary," dryly remarked the prefect, and when Wardy and I were outside and at a safe distance we indulged in a laugh.

The trial took place a week later. Veguitas was sullen and ugly until the prosecutor turned loose his wrath on Wardrop and stated that Wardy had been guilty of trying in an indirect manner to shield the criminal and bargain for the return of the missing tablets by letting the culprit go free. Veguitas warmed up at that, and I think for the moment was on the point of expressing his gratitude. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment. In a way both Wardy and I were sorry for him, because after all, he was fighting for something that he believed of value to the Mayas, and which he had probably come to get. We got a letter from him in English which read:

SENORES: My very sorry takes stones but great necessity for said stones. Them have I hidden but for reasons no can tell, them I cannot return to you. Sorry. You understand not importance them stones. Very important. My sorry for you lose them but no can help it.

PEDRO VEGUITAS.

For the mere sake of appearance we visited him in prison, and then, somewhat to the contempt of the chief warder, who thought us soft, and very much to the surprise of Veguitas, who was inordinately grateful, we arranged specially that he was to have the best possible comfort and clemency the prison could provide. Indeed we paid enough so that he should get the same treatment as a distinguished prisoner of state, and might, save for the restraint, have rather a nice year's vacation. We bore him no malice, and to tell the truth felt somewhat guilty for having raised such a pother over a few pieces of stone that were worthless and that had cost him a year's freedom.

Just one week later, accompanied by Beni Hassan, Wardy and I sailed for Guatemala with no plans at all, many misgivings, and resolute in but one thing, which was that we would take all chances and try to release our friend.

CHAPTER III.

To avoid meeting any one who might have recognized us as three men who, three years before, had entered the unknown regions of the far interior, we stopped but a night in an obscure place. We had cabled before sailing from Cherbourg to a village in Mexico asking a muleteer, Juan,

who had been with us on our previous trip, to meet us, and to provide the best pack animals that money could obtain for our purpose, and he, grateful for our having made him financially comfortable for life, was punctual. But when we told him that we intended if possible to find our way through the poisonous, trackless, and almost impenetrable jungle through which we had twice endured the tortures of the damned, he demurred. Stolid as he was, and courageous, he offered many objections.

"When we went before we had the native, Ixtual, to guide us," he said.

"But there are four of us here to remember the way," I insisted. "And furthermore, you have the native gift of never forgetting a route over which you have once gone."

"Perhaps, señores," he said, shaking his head lugubriously. "But not through such a jungle as that. The jungle is an eater of trails."

"But surely all the blazes we made on the trees, all the little cairns of rock have not entirely disappeared," I insisted. "And again we know that the two peaks beneath which runs the secret passage to the Sacred City where lives the God Icopan, are our landmarks. Those we can surely find means to see."

He found nothing to oppose to this, but finally blurted, "Señores, the truth is that I believe we could pass the jungle; but have you thought of what may lie beyond? Do you remember the threats of death that were made against me by Ixtual if ever I came back? If ever I so much as whispered of what I knew? That I took the sacred oaths never to mention to a living soul? If I go, and they find me, I am lost, and I now have a wife and family. I beg of you not to ask me to go with you!"

We could not move him by bribes, or argument, and consulted.

"Why not let him take us within sight of the peaks and then return?" suggested Wardy, at last. "If we gain entrance to the Sacred City, we can never get out again without the assistance of Ixtual or the doctor anyhow, and then should probably have no need of our pack animals. Again, they should be able to provide us with some if the Sacred City is now inhabited, and they are willing for us to depart. If they are not willing, there isn't a chance in ten thousand of our ever escaping with our lives."

"I think you are sound on that," I admitted. "But I do like to have a way for retreat left open. Yet I shall not be responsible for asking this poor devil of a muleteer to really enter the city. All I wanted of him was to see us as far as is safe, then lie in hiding for us until our return."

"How could he protect his animals and himself from the black jaguars without a rifle?" asked Wardy. "And if he fired a rifle within earshot of any one who might be guarding the entrances to the great caverns through which we must pass to get within, don't you suppose those guards would hear it and like a pack of wolves on a fresh scent set chase to find him? Of course they would!"

We had been talking in English, of which Juan had no knowledge, and whilst we discussed the situation he stood and eyed us in turn, with the expression of a faithful St. Bernard dog whose fate is being decided. There was not the slightest doubt of his affection for us, nor of his distress because we had determined to venture into the lion's den of whose menaces he was perhaps more fully aware than we.

"Juan," I said to him in Spanish, "we have decided that you shall help us through the jungle barrier only, after which you are to return and forget us. Can we get that far?"

He stood and puzzled for a time, and took off his sombrero and scratched the thick stubby bristle that served him as hair, before he replied, "We might if we could avoid meeting a Maya, or asking directions from one."

Now Wardy and I, because the tongue had been a puzzle to us, and because we were interested, had devoted odd hours for three years in studying this language—more as an amusement than anything else, and frequently when alone tested our knowledge of it and gibed at each other's mistakes. We did not know how far our knowledge might carry us, but as boys play with "hog Latin" we had toyed with it, and as both of us were rather good linguists—that is, Wardy was, and I spoke two or three tongues besides my own—we had no doubt that in emergency we could make ourselves understood for simple needs, and perhaps understand. Therefore I told Juan that in that regard we believed ourselves fairly equipped.

Juan tried a dozen dissuasions. We parried. Then, finally with a sigh of surrender, he agreed to go with us until the formidable band of jungle had been passed and the peaks were in sight.

"I shall then bid you farewell, and pray for your souls," he said, with an air of profound misgiving.

But just the same we derided his fears and in the hours preceding dawn were on our way over a route that we had a good and sufficient cause to remember. I need not waste time in giving the direction save to say that the twin peaks are in what the Mayas and some white men call the Sierra Chuchumatlane mountains and that beyond this barrier but three white men, James Wardrop, Doctor Paolo Morgano, and myself, are ever known to have passed; that to reach sight of them there are twelve days of travel, first through cultivated lands ever trending upward, thence in to the little-known areas inhabited by descendants of the ancient Maya race.

Fortune favored us in that we gained the jungle barrier without discovery, and with comparative ease found the place where we had before entered, and plunged therein.

"I feel somewhat as if I were returning to the fringes of Hades after a three-years' leave of absence," remarked Wardy a half hour later. "And if we didn't have Juan with us, we'd have about as much chance of passing through as if we were in that locality without a pass."

The remark seemed justified; for although both Wardy and I were anything but novices in wilderness or jungle, I doubt if we could have made much progress without the astute experience of the Mexican. He had that almost incredible fifth sense of the native for discovering overgrown traces and blazes that we had made in our previous journey. Now it would be a mere scar in a tree trunk, and again it would be a remembered hollow in the midst of a swamp oasis. And, slowly as we advanced, we did succeed in getting forward.

It was on the third day in this malevolent growth when Juan, who was scouting out to one side, called to us and we found cause for conjecture.

"See, señores," he said, pointing to a mark high up toward the top of a tree where it had been trimmed and then banded with four white rings of paint. "And look there!" He pointed to a place where undoubtedly several men had at some time within a few weeks passed. "I have followed that for a short distance, and then it is no longer to be seen. There it was that those who traveled separated. But—see here!"

He turned to the opposite direction and there, but a few yards farther on, the jungle was open sufficiently to afford through its green density a discernible route. Fronds of the giant palm, and great branches of the incredibly vigorous undergrowth, it is true, made it difficult for any but the experienced eye to trace, but that was not to be wondered at in a country where by actual measurement vegetation has frequently grown at the prodigious rate of half an inch every twenty-four hours.

"The Sacred City is no longer uninhabited," said Wardy quietly, as he turned toward me. "From this time on we must travel with the utmost caution. We are moving now, constantly, into danger."

Up to then I am not quite certain that I fully appreciated the danger of our attempt. It had been too remote. But now we were like travelers who had wondered what a crossing would prove to be, and had suddenly come upon it with all its known and unknown terrors.

"But there is one thing in our favor," I said, after inspecting the trail with great care. "There is no indication whatever that any one has passed this way for weeks. It shows that save for an unlucky chance, we are not likely to meet any one. It appears to me that communication between whomever is in the Sacred City, and the Mayas outside, is but rare and at wide intervals."

"That is probably so," agreed Wardy. "They would be taking no chances of discovery that they could possibly avoid. Well, we shall soon know. Let's move ahead."

We traveled now in a new order. I took the lead, endeavoring to keep at least a mile in advance of Beni Hassan, Juan, and the pack mules, and Wardy kept about a mile behind them as a rear guard to prevent surprise. Now that we were relieved of the necessity for finding our way, we made rapid progress. Indeed we traveled as far that day as we could have journeyed in two whole days under previous conditions. We made a fireless camp, we took

turns at sentry duty during the night, and were off again at the earliest sign of dawn, and so rapidly did we advance, by late afternoon I debouched from the jungle and halted in its edges. The twin peaks towered above me as cold, aloof, and deserted as they had appeared on that day when first I had seen them. The trail was scattered and broken again as if it had been the deliberate purpose of those who had made it to take the additional precaution of leaving no trace for any daring and successful explorer to read. I went back and met Juan, and when Wardy joined us we scattered our pack animals and took them by separate routes to a point at least a mile farther off the direct route, where we made another dark camp and rested. We selected landmarks with care, and found a secure hiding place for our outfit in a tiny cavern well up in the side of a small cliff against whose feet the jungle swept. Far into the night we worked to store our belongings which, besides food, included quantities of spare ammunition, a score of excellent rifles, spare clothing, and compasses.

Before dawn Wardy and I were making our way on a scouting tour to where we could obtain a view of the entrance to the great cavern that we knew passed through the mountains beneath the twin peaks to the city beyond—a cavern that had in its center an impassable chasm of blackness which in ancient days had been spanned by a suspension bridge that for centuries had been destroyed—a cavern that we had explored, and when all hope of crossing it had been abandoned had by accident discovered a secret way hollowed out around its borders and entered by a concealed passage through an old guardhouse flanking the cavern entrance.

We came to the well-remembered reaches of an ancient stone roadway that we had once followed into the cavern itself, and, cautiously avoiding it and taking care to make no noise, moved forward to a point where, when daylight came, we could study the situation and learn what guard was kept. We lay behind some huge and broken piles of rock, covered here and there with lichen, through whose crevices we could peer, and waited for daybreak. It came with its tropical rush as if the curtain of a camera that had obscured the sun had been suddenly removed, and Wardy, who had been looking through a pair of binoculars, forgot all caution and exclaimed aloud, "Well that beats me! Something is wrong. The cavern entrance isn't there."

I crawled up beside him to where I could get a better view, and took my own binoculars. What he said was true. There was not the slightest sign of that great black opening into which the road had entered. The road itself seemed to have disappeared long before it reached there. The guardhouses, stately and solid, that had been built into the hollows of the mountain beneath overhanging shelves, were no longer visible. It was as if nature had suffered a great landslide and obliterated all that ancient work in one great grave. I turned my glasses upward to scan the peaks, thinking that we must have made some mistake and were in a place we had not visited before; but there beneath our perch lay a great stone conduit for a spring, carved monolithically from living rock, concerning which there could be no mistake. Wardy must have been thinking as I did, for he muttered, in perplexity, "I'd swear this is the way we went before. I'm positive of it!"

"So am I," I replied. "I'd stake my life on it; but—what do you suppose has happened?"

"If it's a landslide," said Wardy, turning his monocled eye toward me, "those who are in the Sacred City can never get out, and those who are out can never get in. They are as dead to the world as we are dead to them, and we can do nothing to help the doctor. A spot that has defied all exploration for centuries will continue to defy it."

Taking all precautions possible to keep under cover, we crawled round our pile of rocks, and, screened by others, made our way closer. From point to point we worked, silently, and with long intervals of waiting and watching to discover any signs of life; but none came, and at last we ventured up to where the guardhouses themselves should have been. Nothing but enormous masses of loose bowlders could be seen. The guardhouse in which once we had discovered the bones of a dead sentry, as well as a similar place on the other side, had totally disappeared. With boldness we moved forward to inspect the marks of the catastrophe, and then Wardy stopped, gave a soft exclamation, and, speaking in a low voice, said,

"Here! Let's get back out of this. I don't believe this is natural at all."

"What do you mean?" I asked, but already he was seeking cover, and threw himself down behind some rocks, where I joined him.

"Look up there at the mountain side," muttered Wardy. "There is no trace of any landslide at all. The shelf that overhung the front is still there, but—by Jove! —they have filled it in so completely and so naturally that no one without positive knowledge could ever suspect that it was not done by nature."

I studied it for but a moment before muttering, "You're right, as sure as I'm alive! Ixtual was taking no chances at all of our return, or of any other explorer finding the way in. He's barred the world out."

"It might be," said Wardy thoughtfully; "and of course those within could easily maintain life there for centuries if they didn't overcrowd the great valley; but somehow it seems unlikely that they should cut themselves off entirely from all other Mayas of which there are still some millions of the undiluted stock, worshiping their ancient god Icopan and——"

He stopped suddenly and clutched my arm. I lifted my head a little higher and looked between two bowlders. There, not more than a hundred feet from where we were hidden and some forty feet to the left of where the guardhouse containing the secret entrance to the mountain had stood, we saw a man. He was tall and clad in a uniform not at all unlike what we surmised the ancient guard's uniform might have been, save that in the hollow of his arm he carried, carelessly, as if unapprehensive, a modern rifle. Immediately behind him we saw a black opening and studying it, discovered that it was a stone door which he had propped open with a slab of stone. The sentry, for such he appeared to be, rested his rifle against a rock, and produced a small pair of binoculars which he adjusted and through which he slowly scrutinized the whole landscape below, methodically beginning at one side and working across to the other. He walked forward from time to time, to avoid different projections of rock that hid his view and stopped within twenty feet of where we lay hidden, and restraining our breathing lest he hear us. Then as if this were a routine part of his day's work, he yawned, closed the binoculars, carefully replaced them in a small case he carried slung to his belt, and moved back toward the black opening.

I suppose that he must have been careless in blocking the door open, and I conjecture from what I afterward learned, that it was against orders for a sentry to ever come through it without closing it behind him; but I am certain that accident and his carelessness favored us, for even as he advanced toward the entrance the stone slab fell and the door swung shut with a sharp click that was audible to us where we lay. The sentry did not seem either disturbed or annoyed, but continued to advance and now, to make certain of his movements, we both fixed our glasses on him. He walked over a patch of bare rock some three or four paces to the left, caught hold of a projecting point with both hands, threw his weight heavily downward, and we saw the door reopen; but this time it swung inward. The sentry leisurely recovered his rifle, and without so much as a glance behind and again yawning heavily as if tired by a night's watch duty, passed through the opening and shut the door behind him.

"Did you see that? That blighter had my little pocket binoculars that I gave Ixtual as a present when we bade him good-by," growled Wardy.

"What of it?" said I. "I think we're mighty lucky to have found how they get in. It proves that they aren't entirely cut off from all outer communication. You were right about their having hidden all the old marks. I am going to see what they did to the old road that led into the cavern."

We went boldly down and studied it, to learn that it had been carefully buried with earth and liberally sown here and there with seeds. The jungle air and wind had done the rest. We then made certain that we could find the projection of rock that gave entrance to the opening, and trudged back to where Juan and Benny were camped with the mules.

Our plans had already been made as far as we were capable of planning, and there was now nothing left to do save to liberally pay Juan and bid him good-by. At the last moment Wardy tried to dissuade the Arab from accompanying us, but the latter was determined not to desert.

"No! By Allah, no! Is it well that the master die and the servant live?" he de-

manded. "Have I not been with thee for nearly twenty years and been faithful? Then it is fate and the will of the Prophet that I go with thee to the end. If we come out, it is well. If we die"—he shrugged his shoulders and gestured with his hands—"then it is decreed, and not to be altered."

"All right! Have it your own way, Beni Hassan," said Wardy. "But if it goes hard with us, remember that you insisted on coming, and that I urged you not to do so."

And Benny turned away with a satisfied smile, and stood with us when Juan, almost tearfully, bade us farewell and turned back into the depths of the jungle for a journey that I should not have cared to attempt alone and companionless save for mules.

"There goes a good man," said Benny, and then added, as if to himself, and rather irrelevantly I thought, "I won fifty pesos from him last night at cards."

CHAPTER IV.

To assure ourselves of as much of the customs of the Sacred City as possible, we put in three days and nights watching the entrance. We learned that punctually each morning at eight o'clock, and again at six o'clock in the evening, a guard emerged and studied the whole landscape. Invariably this watchman carried the same familiar pair of binoculars, but none of them discovered Juan's departure. Aside from this watch there seemed no other kept.

"They take it for granted," concluded Wardy, "that they are in complete security. And I don't doubt at all that these daily rounds are made so that in case of emergency when some runner from the outside brings messages, the latter may know at what hours he can gain entrance. In fact, I doubt very much if any others than the guardians of the gate possess the secret of the entrance."

"Yes, and we know enough of the inside galleries to be quite sure that if they depend upon the entrance to preserve their secret, it is unlikely that any guard is maintained on this side at all, save for those who come through to make this daily inspection," I hazarded.

"There would certainly be no sense in keeping a man there constantly in perpetual darkness," Wardy agreed. "The permanent guard is probably kept on the other side."

We decided to conduct our first reconnaissance in the morning, after giving the regular look-out an hour's time in which to return, presumably to the other side; but for fear of accident or discovery, we made all our preparations as if we were intent on invading the Sacred City itself.

The morning watcher came punctually, all unaware that we were close by and regarding him. He turned back through the entrance and it closed, and we waited for a long and trying hour to give him full time to clear out of the way, and then boldly walked to the spot where we knew the passage was located, and studied it.

"Well, I'll be blest if I can see where the door is now," declared Wardy, scowling at what appeared nothing more than the natural face of a sheer cliff with tiny cracks in some of which moss had collected, running here and there in irregular directions.

"Nor can I," said I, admiring the cleverness with which the doorway had been constructed and concealed, for I am positive that I could have searched the face of that cliff with a microscope, had I not known that such an opening existed, without ever discovering it.

We stood back, and I tried the projecting point of rock as I had seen the watchman do, and I admit that as I did so I wondered whether there might not be some form of bar inside, independent of the opening mechanism, that would effectually lock it against us; but my fears were needless. The door opened and we had a chance to examine it closely for the first time. We were amazed at its simplicity, for it was nothing but a well-hung monolith of rock swung on modern hinges, and operated by a mechanism as ordinary as a farmer's automatic gate, save that the cross bars were of heavier steel and the catches strong enough to defy a battering ram. We saw that it was not even provided with a padlock, which, more than ever, convinced us that its makers confided in its cunning and on the fact that but a few trusted men knew the secret of its outer mechanism. We closed it cautiously and for some minutes listened, with restrained breath, for any sound. It was as noiseless as a tomb, for not even a drop of water falling on stone disturbed the silence.

We removed our shoes, slung them over our shoulders, and in moccasins moved forward in the light of electric torches. We learned that a new tunnel had been ex-

cavated, and so fresh were the drill and chisel marks that the work might have been done but a few months. It led straight and true to a newly constructed doorway through which we passed, and we paused in astonishment; for we found ourselves in the front room of the very guardhouse where once we had camped when its windows opened out boldly toward the east and gave from their altitude an outlook over the jungle and thence into the great distances beyond. It was from here that we had ventured into the great cavern. Curiously we passed through the side door we knew and looked at our surroundings. The entrance to the great cavern had been walled in solidly before the huge masses of rock had been piled in front to screen it forever from sight. It was now nothing more than an enormous cavern that we knew led back to the edge of the huge interior abyss across which none might ever pass.

Reassured by the continued and profound silence, we reëntered the guardhouse that was now underground, and inspection showed that there had been no attempt to occupy it since we had camped there. Indeed, in a corner of the room we had used for a kitchen we saw empty meat tins that we ourselves had opened more than three years before. It seemed sad that the light, airy, and comfortable place we had known had been converted into this underground dungeon.

"Well," said Wardy softly, "it's best for us that we learned the secret passageways of this mountain. Now let's see if we have forgotten. No wonder they regard themselves as absolutely secure from intrusion."

We moved to the rear room of the old guardhouse and to a stone slab against which we threw our weight as we had done in that distant period of discovery, and huge stone beams and counterpoises behind the walls swung open as they had swung before, and the side of the wall slowly and ponderously shifted as it had done countless times in the dead centuries when the Mayas were the supreme and civilized rulers of a continent, and the way into the mountain was open.

"Allah be praised! We have not forgotten how!" muttered Beni Hassan, as if up to then he had doubted our ability to reënter the road, and we passed through, put our weights upon the levers, and reclosed the wall.

Moving silently, and but seldom speaking and then in cautious whispers lest the sound carry and echo through the vast hollow heart of the sacred peaks, we advanced over the secret way, constantly watchful for signs of change. There were none. The great passage was as we had last seen it. The ancient braziers on the wall had not been disturbed, and still contained their burdens of ashes and charred fragments. We passed the side entrance that Wardy and I knew led hundreds of feet downward to those ancient treasure houses filled with the wealth of a nation in gold and silver and precious stones—treasure houses which that strange little dreamer and unraveler of glyphs and ancient signs, Doctor Paolo Morgano, alone in all the world, knew how to enter. Wardy halted, lifted his torch, and looked at me significantly; but Beni Hassan, who had never been told of the secret, merely stared at the doorway and perhaps wondered at our interchanged glances and gestures.

"We must go cautiously now," I said as I recognized a turning that I knew must be the last before we came to the guardhouses on the inner side of the twin peaks. A few yards more and we were again confronted by great stone mechanisms and counterpoises identical with those on the opposite side, and we halted.

"Do you think it safe to try it now?" whispered Wardy. "Suppose there are men on guard in the entrance?"

"It is noon," I replied. "We must take the chances. I see no other way and this should be as safe an hour as any. If we could only hear through the stone, and listen——"

"But we know we can't, so here goes," said the intrepid Englishman, and walked across to the great stone beam which we knew set all the mechanism in motion and would open the way into the entrance of the great cavern. Benny and I stood to one side, anxiously, speculating as to whether the sliding of the great inner wall would be immediately followed by cries of alarm, and possibly conflict. It was a moment of expectancy.

The light came slowly through widening cracks, the tons of stone moved in a stately way until finally opened to full breadth, a breadth through which a jaunting car might be driven, and yet there was no outcry. We moved cautiously forward and peered

round the cavern entrance. On one side was the dense blackness where the ancient highway entered the mountain, on the other the great entrance with its flanking guardhouses, and beyond that the marvelously beautiful setting. We went to the guardhouses and looked in. They were empty and clean, and on one wall hung several cheap modern lanterns such as are in common use on farms. We convinced ourselves that the inner entrance was unguarded, and that we need fear no surprise. From previous knowledge we knew that the nearest human habitation was nearly two miles away, and so we suddenly felt at ease.

"It looks the same, and—no; it doesn't, either," said Wardy, gazing downward, and both Benny and I sat down and stared through the guardhouse windows, taking care not to get too far forward where any chance observer might from a distance discover us in that strange white light of midday. The great valley, like a deep bowl in the tops of the impassable mountain barriers, when we had last seen it had been overgrown with forest and jungle right up to the shores of the marvelous blue lake in which was the sacred island bearing its huge and magnificent temples; but now we saw that great clearings had been effected in the growth and that in one place acres and acres of terraces had been uncovered, and cultivated, and that the white buildings that had been glimpsed but here and there through the jungle now stood out clear and clean as if they had been repaired and were inhabited again.

"The Maya nation is quietly and secretly returning to its ancient capitol," said Wardy in a voice that indicated how deeply he was impressed by such an extraordinary fact.

"They do seem to have done a lot of work here in the past three years," I agreed. "And a lot of the roofs needed it."

Wardy looked at me severely as if condemning my material viewpoint, but the practical side of affairs always appeals to me more than the poetic. Perhaps it was this side which made me suggest that we return to our hidden supplies on the other side, select more articles necessary for comfort, further stores of food, and with these return to the cavern in which we could camp while making observations preparatory to our next step.

"We can certainly find a place to hide ourselves here unless the sentries make close inspections," Wardy agreed. "And of course we must put in some time scouting around and observing the habits of the people before we can play anything at all likely to prove successful. We must find some way to let the doctor know that we are here. If we could only accomplish that without any one else knowing it, he could surely find some way to join us. And after that——" He stopped and made a gesture indicating that we must trust to the gods of luck to get away.

By nightfall we had our little emergency outfit transported, and actually witnessed the arrival of the evening sentinel who came leisurely up the road from the city below, carelessly, as if in certain security, entered the guardhouse, possessed himself of a lantern which he lighted, rolled a cigarette, and humming a rather mournful air passed into the mountain passage. When he returned he did not trouble to look about him, but extinguished his light and trudged away down the mountainside as phlegmatically as a lamplighter might move homeward after making his final round.

"Wonder if we couldn't bribe one of those chaps to take a message?" I suggested, as we sat in the guardhouse staring at the lights that now shone from the temples and priestly homes on the island out in the lake.

"It seems dangerous to me," Wardy replied. "I think we must take it for granted that Ixtual would permit no others than those he can absolutely depend upon to reside in the city. To even approach one of such a band of fanatics might end the whole project in a way that would be decidedly unpleasant for us. Let's go slowly. A single false move may upset our whole box of tricks."

Confirmation of the care that was exercised was unexpectedly given us on the very next morning when the guard arrived and made his early inspection. From the darkness of the cavern entrance and a position well screened from sight but so close to him that we could almost see the color of his eyes, we saw him depart. We knew that he would return in just about two hours, and were therefore back in our hiding place at that time. To our astonishment he was accompanied by another man, who from his travel-torn and stained garments we surmised to be a courier of some sort bearing messages from the Mayas beyond the great jungle. And then our amaze-

ment was completed when we saw that this man was effectually blindfolded, and that his guide did not let him from sight until he had closed the secret entrance to the passage. At first I thought from this fact that it must be the first time the courier, or whatever he was, had ever passed beneath the twin peaks; but on this point also we were not left in doubt.

The guard stepped behind his visitor and unbuckled the huge and effective leather blind from the latter's head. The visitor faced the temple island, dropped to his knees, and gravely mumbled his salutation or prayer, and then stood up. Now it was that Wardy and I had reason to be thankful that we had gained at least a pretty adequate smattering of the Maya tongue!

"Well, brother, did you have a hard journey this time?" asked the guard, as he extinguished his lantern.

"Yes—by the great god Icopan—it is always hard!" declared the other. "And I shall be glad of promotion to service here within. My year is up now. I have made my fourth crossing of the jungle. And I am glad that I need go no more! May the gods protect my successor as well as they have me."

Wardly's hand clutched my arm as if to call attention to the significance of these words. Plainly, communication between the Sacred City and the Mayas outside was quarterly, and conducted by one man.

"Amen!" devoutly said the guard. "You have been protected. Nine are the couriers of the gods who have been appointed in two and one-half years. Of those but thou and one other are alive, having succeeded in escaping the death that lurks forever beyond. Come. I shall make coffee and you must breakfast before we proceed. Come inside and rest."

Together they went into the guardhouse. I crept forward hoping to hear through one of the air slits their further conversation. To my disappointment I could catch but fragments, although once in a while a whole sentence spoken in a louder voice became audible. It seemed to me that the conversation was confined mainly to what may be called village gossip from the Maya city beyond the jungle. Some aged man had died and there had been a suitable funeral. There had been some marriages. The guard's brother had sent his good wishes, and had made an extraordinarily profitable sale of some lands down near Quirgua. Some American prospectors had made their way up from the lowlands, but had been treated with sufficient hostility to cause them to abandon further search for minerals and return to the coast. It had not been necessary to injure them, the courier calmly stated, although some of the younger men had favored killing them. The courier said the headmen had issued emphatic orders that all cause for friction with the white barbarians outside was to be carefully avoided, lest they provoke governmental wrath and punitive expeditions.

"But of course," he added in a voice of unconcern, "if any man or party of men were to try to cross the jungle, they would never be seen again. That is strictly necessary."

"Yes. Quite necessary," agreed the guard, and I had it thus pleasantly brought home to me how limited were our chances if ever we were discovered either inside, or while trying to escape when again outside.

A rustling movement warned me, and I slipped back to my hiding place beside Wardy and Benny not a moment too soon, for immediately thereafter the guide and the courier, both smoking, emerged from the guardhouse and walked steadily away down the long white road that wound to and fro like a huge switchback as it descended to the valley.

"Well," Wardy asked, as soon as they were well out of hearing. "Did you hear anything that sounds either good or bad for our enterprise?"

"No," I said. "Not a thing."

"That's all right, then," he said. "Because if this chap had brought any sort of alarm that our passage had been noticed, he would certainly bubble over with the news."

"Of course," I agreed; "but he had nothing to talk of worth listening to. That is, with this exception, that I gathered the Mayas will not hesitate to kill any one who attempts to pass through the big barrier."

"I can't exactly blame them for that," Wardy remarked thoughtfully, as he stared down into the great valley that was as perfect a picture of luxuriant seclusion and peace as one could imagine. "Look," he said, sweeping his hand away in a big gesture, "there you are! Great and beautiful mountains standing guard over things which

these people regard as sacred and therefore will not allow to be profaned. A holy city preserved for them through centuries. Why, if I were a Maya, I'd fight to the death rather than let any other race intrude here. I would, so help me Heaven!"

We put in the entire day with our eyes fixed through our binoculars on the view below, studying every movement, and trying to formulate some idea of the habits of the people. We saw men and women working industriously on the rehabilitated terraces, others clearing away stretches of jungle, and several times we saw boats pass to and fro from the island on which were the temples that once we had visited and explored. On the island itself there seemed an almost serene indifference to everything. As evening approached the work on the terraces stopped, and we could see groups of toilers laying down their tools and passing contentedly toward the city that bordered the lake. It was all as pastoral and quiet in its simplicity as one could possibly conceive, just as if here was a contented community removed from all the outer world and absorbed in nothing other than its own pursuits and welfare. There was a sense of unreality about it all when one stopped to consider that outside this surrounding phalanx of peaks, barren mountains, was a great world utterly foreign in its ways, ambitions, industries, religions, and ideals.

The evening guard came, lighted his lantern, and made his round. The sun slipped below the western chain of mountains, making them for a moment jagged, austere points of blackish purple thrown up against a background of warm red. The lake became a tender topaz, the temples on the island towering masses of gentle white, and the city beneath, in its heart of greenery, a mystic, illusive thing like a painter's dream of Elysium.

And then, as darkness fell and the stars began to shine, lights sprang into steadily glowing points, and after a time these went out and all was still. We thought it safe to reconnoiter, and ventured down the great roadway, to discover that since we had last traversed it, it had been repaired until it was in perfect state. We passed a roadside shrine with curious panels and then came to the first residence which, when he had last seen it, was surrounded by jungle growth and had a small tree actually growing on top of its flat roof. It was now white, cleanly, and in the midst of a beautifully kept lawn and garden, evidencing the Maya love of home and industry. We were looking at it with appreciation when the frantic barking of a watchdog warned us that we were in danger, and immediately thereafter a man's voice called to the dog to be still. Hastily we slipped back from the road and retreated to the mountains, baffled in our first attempt to learn anything of the habits of the people below. Plainly it was not going to be by any means an easy task, and, with this conviction, we retired at last to an inner-cavern recess and went to sleep. Doctor Morgano seemed as inaccessible as the moon.

CHAPTER V.

I was the first to awaken in the morning and for a few minutes rested in my blankets pondering over how little we had thus far accomplished. The illuminated face of my watch, rendered more radiant by the profound blackness of our cavern recess, informed me that it was eight o'clock and therefore daylight outside, and also the hour when it was safe to take an observation. I felt for my electric torch, turned it on, and somewhat drowsily stepped over Benny, who was sleeping like a dead man, and made my way into the main cavern entrance before I encountered something that awoke me as thoroughly as anything might in this world. A great bronze gate of whose existence we knew, but believed by inspection to be securely blocked up in the recess of the roof, was down, and we were hopelessly imprisoned!

The cavern entrance as seen through the heavy bars was brilliant with sunlight. The distant island was visible, splendidly decorated with its central pyramid and white crown where the high temple stood, and everything was unchanged. No sign of menace was discernible other than the huge gate. Not a guard was in sight.

I hastened back to our hiding place and aroused Wardy and Benny and lighted the little lantern we used for our sole illumination.

"What's up?" sleepily asked Wardy.

"Nothing except that the great gate is down and that we are hopeless prisoners!" I exclaimed in no very jubilant tone.

"Oh! Is that all? Anybody out there guarding it?" he questioned in the same

matter-of-fact voice that he might have used in inquiring what we were to have for breakfast.

"Not that I can see," I replied sourly.

"All right," he said, getting his six feet four of brawn and muscle up to a sitting position and reaching for his shoes. Then, "Benny, you rascal, get me some water to wash with. What are you standing there scowling at? The world hasn't come to an end, you know. I've got to wash my face as usual, haven't I?"

And Benny, with a grin, disappeared to return with a basin of water in which Wardy soused his face and head, then vigorously dried himself, and proceeded to brush his hair and beard as carefully as if he were about to dress for a regular day in the boulevard. Considerably dejected, I sat in the corner of that dust-dry cave and waited with what patience I could command until he had finished his toilet preparations and fully dressed himself.

"Well," he said at last, turning toward me, "let's go out and have a look at it."

I thought it was about time, and trudged after him. The gate was still down, massive and immovable with all its tons of weight. The sun was just the same outside, and still there was nothing to indicate that any one was on watch. We studied the gate with care.

"Of course," said Wardy, "it was lowered by human hands. It couldn't have fallen; because we observed that it was blocked up by slabs of stone before we took the risk of passing it; but it's most astonishing to me that it could have been lowered so noiselessly as not to awaken some of us. And you are a very light sleeper at that, Henri, while Benny sleeps just about as soundly as a cat. Now the sole question in my mind is whether it was lowered to shut us in, or was lowered in ignorance of the fact that we were there."

"I don't see that it makes much difference to us," I retorted. "We both know that the mechanism that operates it can be reached only through the upper galleries of the secret passage, and that those are hopelessly beyond our reach. Likewise we know that the cavern ends at the sheer edge of an abyss that is about three or four hundred feet deep and that even with ropes and a windlass it would be difficult to explore. What are we going to do?"

"I don't know," Wardy admitted. "However, we came here knowing the chances we took. Well, we're here, and if we can't find a way out without help, we'll wait for the guard and try to make terms of some sort. It strikes me that the first thing to do is to get something to eat. I seem to think better when I'm full of food!"

We returned to our grotto and proceeded to our meager cooking, which consisted of warming up tinned stuff and brewing coffee over a tiny spirit stove. We were outside again and on watch when the guard returned from his regular trip through the mountain passage. He did not even glance in the direction of the gate, but deliberately extinguished his lantern, disappeared in the guardhouse, returned, and plunged out toward the roadway humming a melancholy little song.

"That man's actions convince me," Wardy said, "that the gate has not been lowered because we are here, but merely because somebody thought it best and gave an order. So far it's all to the good. Don't you think so?"

"Yes. But now it's a question if we can find any possible way to get it open, or to get over it, or around it, without bringing the whole pack down on us."

"Well, we have the whole day to ourselves," Wardy remarked cheerfully, "and Benny can climb like an ape and has the nerve of a steeplejack."

Beni Hassan grinned and swore that he could climb to the top and examine it if it were higher than the mountains of the moon.

"Then go to it," I said, and he slipped his boots off, divested himself of nearly all his clothing, and, leaping upward, caught a cross bar and, with the ease of a monkey or a trained acrobat, "swarmed" upward. Now and then he paused to rest at a cross bar, then spat upon his hands and again climbed with legs and feet and palms of hands and soles all working in unison. The Arab was all sinew and steel. We watched him anxiously as he gained to the roof of the cavern that must have been fully sixty feet above the floor and then saw that he had turned on his electric torch and was moving sidewise.

"Find anything hopeful, Beni?" Wardy called in Arabic, his voice, despite its precautionary smothering, sounding loud and hollow.

"Not thus far, master. By the grace of Allah! It looks bad," came Benny's reply,

as, foot by foot, he crawled across the top, appearing like a methodical firefly near the roof, and inspecting everything as he went. Our hopes diminished as he progressed. They were extinguished when he halted for a time at the far end and then, with evident reluctance, began to descend. We had no need to inquire when, panting somewhat from his exertions, he stood besire us on the cavern floor rubbing his hands.

"The gate travels upward through a slot so perfect that there is not an inch to spare. It travels on rollers that have been well greased. Other opening than the slot in all that great roof I can not see," Benny announced.

"There remains, then, but another examination of the edge of the central pit," said Wardy, and of that I personally had no hope, for years before we had examined every inch of it when seeking treasure, and it was unlikely that anything would have been added to it by the Mayas who trusted it to preserve their security. But we put in half a day sounding, testing, studying, until it seemed to me that not a crack within reach had been overlooked. We returned to the gate which barred us from the open way to either escape or advancement, and in a tone of extreme annoyance I exclaimed, so loudly that the echoes came roaring back from within, "Well, that settles it. We are shut in, fast and hard."

Imagine our astonishment when, from out of the stillness of the cavern came a voice in very good English, "That is true, gentlemen. You are prisoners. It is well that you are now resigned to the fact that there is no possible way for you to escape."

As coolly as if holding conversation on some casual topic with a man in a hotel, Wardly slowly lifted his head upward in the direction of the voice and called back, "Yes, we are resigned all right enough; but, I say! Where are you? It's deucedly unpleasant conversing with some one out of sight."

I fancied I heard a soft chuckle and then the same voice, magnified by the immense arch of the roof which made an admirable sounding board, replied, "I am above you. I have been sent to keep watch over you until you are reconciled to surrender."

"If you will agree to——" began Wardy but was interrupted by the voice that called down, "Unconditional surrender! I am permitted to make no terms, nor have I the authority. You have arms. I shall come to talk with you only when you have thrown them through the gate. We are not in a position to run risks of violence that would on your part be entirely futile."

"And if we don't agree to this?" Wardy called back.

"Then the instructions of the guard are that you be left where you are until you do agree, or perish. The choice remains with you."

"That's pleasant, isn't it?" said Wardy, turning toward me. "Rather looks as if they had the best of us."

"Obviously so," I growled. "Let's talk it over where this chap can't hear all that we are saying."

"Your terms require a little consideration," Wardy explained politely, lifting his face toward the roof again and peering upward. "I suppose you have no objections?"

"None whatever," was the response. "Take your time. Time means nothing whatever to us."

We walked back into our little cavern chamber and squatted closely together where we could speak in the lowest whispers.

"It looks to me as if there is nothing else for us to do," Wardy said.

"If we found a way of escaping down into the pit, or out through the mountain itself and into the open, we would be watched all the time," I remarked. "We know what that means. They would wait until we were in the jungle and then calmly slaughter us.

"Another thing is that if we do our best to accept matters quite as if we had nothing but pacific intentions, it might make it easier eventually to find a way out of the predicament," said Wardy. "What do you think?"

"I agree with you," I admitted after a moment. "Our sole chance now is in taking them off their guard if an opportunity shows up. I vote to surrender."

"And you, Benny?" asked Wardy.

"By the Prophet—yes!" exclaimed Benny. "But it shall be as you decide. One's fate is written in the scrolls and must be fulfilled!"

"All right! Here goes. The sooner the better," said the big Englishman, picking up his rifle and walking out, and we followed with the other rifles as if on parade.

"We have decided to surrender," shouted Wardy to our invisible guard. "You can come down and talk to us without fear, We have nothing but peaceable ideas and have no desire either to fight or to steal anything. We may as well be sociable. Come down."

"It is well," answered the voice. "I shall join you in a few minutes."

We poked the rifles through between the bars, lighted cigarettes, and sat down to wait as comfortably as we could. We knew that it would require at least fifteen or twenty minutes for our man to make his appearance if he had actually been located in the roof above the gate.

Through the guardhouse at the side came a trim-built, high-featured Maya in a uniform similar to that worn by the guards we had seen, save that certain insignia betokened that he was an officer. He advanced without haste and before stopping to pick up the rifles said, almost unconcernedly, "Mr. Wardrop, I am ordered to exact from you a promise that you will be personally responsible for the actions of your servant, the Arab, Beni Hassan. And I am also instructed to accept both yours and Mr. Hallewell's parole of honor that you will neither offer resistance nor attempt to escape during the time that must intervene before you are brought before the high authorities of our people. If you cannot conscientiously give this parole, I am afraid I shall be compelled to hold you in confinement until then, although I hope to offer you more comfortable quarters than you have been occupying."

At his glib use of our names and his quick identifications, both Wardy and I started in surprise. It was palpable that either Ixtual or Doctor Morgano, or both, had taken a hand in this; also that if we submitted amicably we need have no immediate fears for our personal welfare.

Wardy looked at me, spoke to Benny in Arabic, and then very gravely replied: "I am willing to give my parole of honor, and accept strict responsibility for Beni Hassan, provided this meets with the approval of my friend Hallewell."

"It does," I replied with equal gravity, "and I also give my word. Is that sufficient?"

"It is," said the officer of the guards, and instantly put a silver whistle to his lips and blew three short blasts. As proof that above us were men in waiting, the huge bronze gate that had entrapped us slid upward as silently as if it were but a shadow, its tons of weight provoking no creak of machinery or mechanism. As I turned my eyes from watching its swift and steady ascent, I saw that from either guardhouse had stepped a squad of a dozen uniformed guards—trim, well-trained men of soldierly appearance who stood with arms at "present."

"I think it best," said our captor," that we remain here in one of the guardhouses until night falls so that we may avoid attracting too much uncomfortable attention on entering the city. Our people must be prepared somewhat for your presence. In the meantime we may as well dine, if you will come this way."

To tell the truth the meal he put before us, after the sort of food on which we had subsisted for many previous days, did seem to compensate somewhat for captivity. Furthermore, we were treated with a consideration and courtesy which we had no right to expect, I suppose; but just the same he declined to answer any questions whatever, and told us plainly enough that our fate rested solely in decisions to be made by the supreme authorities.

"Well, that means that we are to have some sort of fair play," Wardy said when we were alone. "Wouldn't it be funny if we were to be judged by the doctor himself?"

"What interests me most at this moment is what kind of a jail they've got ready for us," was my sole comment.

CHAPTER VI.

It was after eleven o'clock that night when we were given our marching orders. The guardsmen formed up in two squads in our advance and rear, and we marched in the center in an open space. The moon had arisen and with the brilliancy of the tropics rendered all things visible, and in a measure glamourous. Depressed as we were by our unfortunate failures, we found time to note the changes that had taken place in that secret valley since we had first entered it; but I am certain all of us were astonished at the evidences on all side of how completely the Mayas were reinhabiting and restoring it. The most surprising change of all was visible in a great street that was bordered by stone residences on one side and the lake on the other. Every house seemed to have been repaired and

occupied. Ruins had been removed, the pavement renewed, and one must admit that it was now distinctly beautiful as it lay there white and quiet beneath the moon.

"They seem to be taking us into a section beyond any we ever explored when we were here," said Wardy, after we had turned down the lake front and walked for some time.

"Yes, all this was something that didn't interest us as much then as it does now," I remarked ironically. "If I'd known we were ever due to come this way, I'd have traveled the whole length of this confounded avenue!"

The stone houses of the great street that swept in a great segment of a circle gave way to more open spaces with gardens, and then to large, isolated structures whose character we could not determine. We were discussing this in a quiet undertone when our officer, who had been walking in advance, fell back and joined us. Evidently his desire that we travel quietly so as not to disturb the slumbers of those in the houses we passed had abated; for he asked us pleasantly enough if we were tiring, at which we laughed, inasmuch as we had been pining for exercise rather than dreading it. We told him so, and I made bold enough to ask him what a huge, barrackslike building we were then passing was used for.

"Oh, that," he replied, "is one of the granaries. Those who live in this valley are communal in some respects, as our ancestors who originally built the city were. We preserve sufficient stores against the possibilities of drought, rains, or crop failures."

As if suddenly remembering that he was not to answer questions, he showed a disinclination to talk, and for another mile we trudged in silence. We passed an open space bordered by vineyards, two or three more isolated residences, and then turned from the lakeside and climbed gradually upward for at least a half mile along another narrow but well-macadamized road, and then into a great gateway with high pillars on each side.

"This is the jail, all right," I said to Wardy.

"If it is, it's a nice one," he commented a moment later when, after traversing a winding way bordered by trees, we came within sight of a huge garden and a very stately building.

We were conducted to a side entrance and halted. Two men in uniform, bearing lights, appeared in an open doorway through which other lights were visible, produced, we discovered later, by an efficient and quite modern acetylene gas plant. Our officer saluted, exchanged some words with the men at the door, and ordered his guard to fall back, and then led us inside our prison. One of the footmen preceded us down a hallway whose tiles of dark red marble gleamed dully, reflecting pools of light from above. The footman threw open a door and stood aside and we entered a lofty ceilinged room that seemed to be a modern library. We halted involuntarily in surprise, and in a single glance I took in the tiling, the excellent rugs thereon, a modern library table, and a flat-topped desk, evidently of the time of Louis XIV. Several good paintings were on the walls, and there were excellent tapestries. It seemed incongruous to find such modern luxuries in the ancient city which we had been the first white men to invade. We stood thus but a moment when a white-haired, white-bearded man entered and regarded us with eyes so singularly large, black, and piercing that they were inscrutable.

"Gentlemen," said our guide, after bowing deeply to the newcomer, "you are in the presence of the director of economics, his excellency, Doctor Manco, at whose disposal I am instructed to place you."

Both Wardy and I bowed to this dignified old gentleman, who stiffly, and without sign of warmth, acknowledged our salutations. There was a cold dignity and austerity about him that was rather chilling and not entirely lacking in suggestions that could cause us nothing other than unpleasant forebodings. For an uncomfortable full minute he regarded us with a most disconcerting directness, and then for the second time we were astonished by being addressed by our names.

"Mr. Wardrop," he said in a voice startlingly vigorous for one of his patriarchal appearance, and continuing in flawless English, "your paroles have been accepted in your own behalf and that of your servant, Beni Hassan; also, Mr. Hallewell, have we accepted your pledge of honor. You are in my care temporarily and are therefore my guests. Please reward yourselves as such, and I pray you give me no cause to regret. You will be shown to your rooms, and tomorrow I shall tell you the sole restric-

tions that for the time being are placed upon you. Your servant, Mr. Wardrop, will also be taken care of and need have no fear."

"I have your permission to tell him so?" asked Wardy, again bowing.

"Certainly, sir."

Wardy turned to Benny and in Arabic said: "Benny, you are to be given a room, and you are to stay there until I send for you, and not to interfere with anything, or do anything that you would not do if we were visiting the home of a gentleman, for such, I am certain, is the present situation."

Benny gravely promised.

"But——" he suggested, "suppose you never send for me? Maybe they will not let you."

We got a second shock from that extraordinary host of ours who said in Arabic as fluent as Benny's own: "Your master has told you that you are visiting the house of a gentleman. That is sufficient. You are not in a Cairo jail."

Benny gasped and salaamed. Wardy looked a trifle relieved, I thought, quite as if, trusting to Arabic, he had contemplated saying something to Benny that were better unsaid.

Manco gestured to the footman who bowed, made a gesture of invitation to Benny, and conducted him out of sight. Stoic that Benny was, I thought he parted with us very reluctantly, and I know that personally I would much rather we had not been separated. Manco summoned another footman, bowed to us, and wished us good night, and we were conducted through a long hallway and up a flight of stone stairs to two quite comfortable and commodious bedrooms joined together by a door which stood open as if to emphasize the fact that we were not to be shut up like malefactors. The footman moved like a well-trained *camarero* accustomed to a first-class hotel. He stepped out into the hallway and returned with two brass ewers of hot water, with towels thrown over each, took a final look at the neat beds with white linen sheets turned back for our occupancy, and then said in the language of the dons: "The señores speak Spanish?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Then," said he: "The señores will find a bell cord in the hallway if they wish service."

After which information he bowed, wished us good night, and backed out of the room leaving us standing there, and I have an idea that we shared a common impulse to rub our eyes to discover whether we were dreaming. It seemed impossible that we were there.

For a long time we conversed in an undertone, and then, gaining nothing thereby, went to sleep. When I awoke in the morning the first move I made was to the window to discover, if possible, more of our position. It was easily defined. The house in which we were held looked out over a very noble garden and across the tops of trees to the lake, and the temple island. They had not taken our binoculars from us and through them I studied the great pyramidal hill and the buildings on the summit. It was evident that we had traversed the shore of the lake for such a distance that an entirely different aspect of the great temple was offered, one that we had never theretofore seen; but I fancied, as I cudgeled my memory concerning the interior plan of the temple sheltering the gigantic image of the great god Icopan, that certain windows I could descry were those in the priests' quarters wherein our first exploration we had found the skeleton remains of the last high priests of those long-gone centuries, and where inscribed tablets had given us the first actual proof that treasure existed.

Nothing of the city facing the lake and the temple nor the wide esplanade was visible, it being cut off entirely by intervening trees and low hills. Farther away to our left could be seen isolated farm buildings or perhaps country residences, and other terraces upon which men and women, appearing like small animated figures, were already at work.

My review was interrupted by the *camarero* who entered bringing hot water, and who added to my satisfaction by announcing that he would show me the bathroom. I hadn't expected that attention. I don't know why, for I might have known that the house had a bath. And, what is more, it proved to be an exceedingly fine plunge, quite of the best. And this was not the end of the matter, for I found neatly laid out for my use an oddly fashioned suit of hand-woven linen underclothing which the man told me was for my use.

"Señor," he said cautiously, "it is well to make haste. His excellency is much an-

noyed if his household is not punctually on time. His excellency's residence is timed like a clock, and neither excuses nor apologies are ever accepted."

"Funny old cove!" I said to myself, and then decided that I might have known it by looking at him, for he was just that sort. So I warned Wardy, and we were ready for the *camarero*.

We were conducted upward to the flat roof of the house whose terraces were bordered by potted palm trees and flowers, whose tiled floor was covered with rugs, and which was shielded from the heat by a double awning. The breakfast table was inviting, and the entire situation delightful.

"By Jove! This is like living in the palace of the Caliph of Bagdad!" exclaimed Wardy, surveying everything with approval. He might have added more had we not heard movement behind us and looked round to discover our austere host, who bowed gravely and wished us good morning. He turned and glanced almost angrily round as if finding something amiss, but his face suddenly composed itself as there emerged from the stair landing a girl—and to this day I make no excuse whatever for standing there and staring at her. She was well worth staring at! I remember to have seen no other such girl, save once in Italy, and, for that matter, this girl might have stepped from a palace in Florence. Her garb was not unlike that which an ancient princess of Firenzi might have worn, with its voluminous plain sweep of silk and severely embroidered edgings. She stopped, looked at Wardy rather than at me, and then made the slightest of bows.

His excellency introduced her to us as his daughter and then added more harshly in the Maya tongue: "Marzida, whether you like it or not, these men are our guests and you will deport yourself accordingly. Do you understand?"

"It shall be as you command," she replied, dropping him an odd little curtsy; but I thought I caught a slight flash of rebellion in her fine eyes, and I wondered if there was any great amount of affection between this chilly old tryant and this peerless maid. At that very instant I began to feel sympathy for her. And time was to accentuate this first impression. Our host for a time said but little and his daughter nothing at all until after that rather strained and embarrassing meal was finished; but of the meal itself there could be no complaint, unless one was of the type who could complain of the food at Delmonico's. Our conversation, such of it as there was, was limited to the smallest of polite interchanges, until at last Manco turned in his seat, and, looking toward the island as if recalling something, said:

"I do not know how long it is the intention of our rulers to keep you here, or when you will be taken before them. You are to have the complete liberty of this house and grounds. You are permitted to travel along the lake front as far as the first building on your right, and as far to the left as the first intersecting road, save between the hours of noon and two o'clock and between the hours of six in the evening and eight o'clock. You are not to leave the grounds of this residence before nine o'clock in the morning. You are expected to retire not later than midnight. May I have your words of honor that these conditions will be observed?"

Naturally we assented. There was nothing else to do. For an instant he seemed divided between some secret antipathy and the courtly attention of a host, and then, relenting, added: "I am sorry if this proves irksome; but if you care to pass any idle time in reading, my library, while not extensive, is at your disposal. My daughter will act as hostess."

And then again, unaware that both Wardy and I had knowledge of the Maya tongue, he said to her: "Marzida, you will answer no questions, and impart no information concerning our people or our customs or our religious beliefs that might be of value to these gentlemen; but otherwise you will do your duty as a hostess. Let there be no mistake about this!"

The girl bowed her head, although giving no other sign of assent, and again I thought I caught that strange rebellious look in her eyes, and somehow I felt that she feared her father and resented her position. I glanced at Wardy and his face was as expressionless as if he had no interest in what had been said, and not by a single look did he betray any knowledge whatever of any undercurrent; but I did notice one unusual action, which was that his strong hands were gripping the arms of his chair as if to hold himself in the utmost restraint. I had observed that singular attitude of his on but

two or three occasions before, and on each of these it was when he was angry to a point that was almost deadly, for this big, reserved British gentleman was not lacking in very tempestuous fires.

Our host was still looking at the distant island, and I glanced from him toward his daughter. My eyes met hers unexpectedly, as if she had been studying me, and I suppose something of the sympathy I felt for her must have been betrayed, for she suddenly smiled ever so slightly as if she recognized in me a friend who understood. Manco arose, and when we did likewise, pleaded his official duties as an excuse for leaving us; but the significant glance he bestowed upon his daughter as he left us was not unobserved by me. It was as if he issued another command and wished her to understand that it was to be obeyed. We stood as he disappeared down the stairway descending from the roof, and there was a moment of embarrassment before I addressed her in Spanish.

"The señorita, I hope, speaks the Spanish tongue," I said, and she smiled again and in the same tongue answered, "*Si, señor.* I speak Spanish, for it is the tongue of the tropics." Then suddenly she laughed outright and said in perfect English: "But if you don't mind we shall use a language with which perhaps you are equally at home."

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "What a lot of polyglots we are. Where on earth did you learn that?"

"From my mother, who was an Englishwoman," she replied to our quick surprise. "And I speak French as fluently, learned from my father who was French."

At Wardy's and my look of mystification she added, almost recklessly as if to clear up any misunderstandings of her parentage: "These tongues were mine when I was a child. His excellency, Manco, married my widowed mother in Paris when I was but little more than a child. There is no drop of Maya blood in my veins."

She made an angry little gesture that was openly rebellious, and then, as if suddenly apprehensive lest her impulsiveness had led her into an indiscretion, looked almost furtively round, reassured herself that she had not been overheard, and added in a scarcely audible voice: "Please forget what I said. It might cause me trouble, because—because in a sense I am as much a prisoner as you are. I am as helpless as you are, save that I am in no danger. Listen! His excellency will not be here until late to-night, for he attends a meeting of the high council on the island. After dinner we can have a better opportunity to talk without fear. If I can arrange it, I must then tell you of the danger in which you now are. Ignore me when any one is present. It is for my safety that I ask this."

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE SECRET SERVICE ALWAYS WORKS

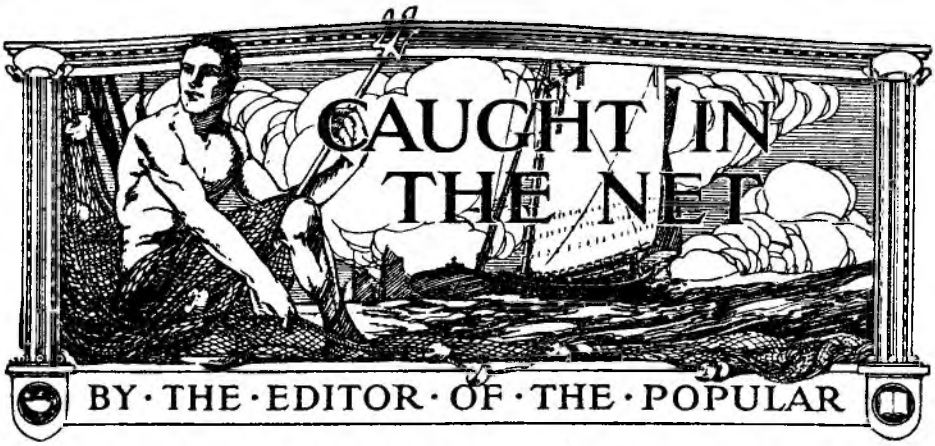
WHEN Clémenceau was shot last winter, newspapers throughout this country received many inquiries about the United States secret service: did the operatives ever have anything to do? And was it not a fact that the American people were so law-abiding as to make the employment of these presidential guards superfluous?

Hardly!

In the course of one year—neither very recently nor very long ago—the secret service had to deal with thirty-seven people who did not look "safe" when they appeared in the White House grounds or the executive offices.

From the moment a president takes the oath of office on the east portico of the Capitol building until, after one or two terms, he boards his train in the Union Station and bids farewell to Washington, he is never beyond the protecting arm of the secret-service men. When he sleeps, they guard his dreams; when he walks, rides, plays golf, or takes any exercise, they are in close touch with him. When he journeys away from Washington—to other American cities, or to Europe—they double their activities.

Secret-service operators always work in plain clothes. The public seldom recognizes them. But they are always on the job—and the job's no cinch!



MIDDLEMEN

MOST of us are of the opinion that our economic problems are new and that modern conditions bring about hardships unheard of among our ancestors, but if we search the pages of history diligently enough we will often come upon our own case.

Take the middleman and profiteering. We think them products of our particular system and times. This is far from the fact. Both Greece and Rome knew them, and our Anglo-Saxon ancestors were much troubled by similar performers and their machinations. They were of the conviction that the middleman and his practices were of the devil, and they looked upon any conspiracy or combination to control the price of an article or corner it an evil of first importance. They called such manipulators "forestallers," "regrators," and "engrossers." A forestaller bought up provisions on the way to market with the intention of selling them at advanced rates. He was what we would call a buyer of futures. A regrator would buy at the market, then resell at a higher price to customers within four miles of the market place. An engrosser would do the big thing—corner the market.

The first English statute against forestalling bears the date of 1285, and provides punishment as follows:

"That no Forestaller be suffered to dwell in any Town, which is an open Oppressor of Poor People . . . which for Greediness of his private Gain doth prevent others buying Grain, Fish, Herring, or other Thing to be sold coming by land or Water, oppressing the Poor, and deceiving the Rich, which carrieth away such Things, intending to sell them more dear."

It also provides the standard weight and price of bread, ale, and wine, and the toll of a mill. Furthermore, it provides punishment for butchers selling unwholesome meat and for the adulteration of oatmeal.

Enmity to middlemen continued through the ups and downs of English history, and in 1552 we come to a statute called the Assize of Fuel and directed at the middlemen of London who were speculating in wood and coal. It forbade any one buying fuel except to the amount he required for his own consumption, because:

"Forasmuche as by the gredye appetite and coveteousness of divers persons, Fuell Coles and Woodd runethe many times throughe foure or fyve severall handes or moe before it comethe to the handes of them that for their necessite doo burne . . . the same."

So, once more, the new stuff is old stuff. Apropos of middlemen and profiteering, Ruskin expressed our sentiments when he cried out angrily that the real prices of the world were regulated by rascals, while the fools were bleating their folly of Supply and Demand.

TOWN PLANNING AS A SCIENCE

CANADA, which showed us the best system of military insurance, and which has taken the lead in government loans to individuals to facilitate house building, now points the way in another important direction. The Federal administration at Ottawa has appointed Thomas Adams house and town-planning adviser to the Canadian government. This follows the formation by a number of professional men of the Town Planning Institute, with the object of advancing the study of the creation of towns, and the proper development of urban and rural land.

Most cities "just happened," but there is no reason why a city, from its inception, should not be as carefully planned as any building. The city of Greeley, Colorado, for instance, is a planned city, and its inhabitants are proud of the fact. Examples of partial regional planning are to be found in the United States, in the metropolitan region of Boston, in the proposals to deal with greater Pittsburgh, and in the proposed county-planning legislation in Wisconsin. But in Canada they will go at the thing systematically throughout the country.

One of the immediate objects is to promote educational courses on town planning and rural development in the universities. Every member of the Town Planning Institute must be a member of an existing architectural, engineering or surveying institution. In addition, he must also undertake a special study in town planning for a year, and submit a thesis or pass an examination on the subject at the end of the period. Lawyers of recognized standing will be admitted as a special class. Associate members will be taken from other professions, such as journalists and medical men who are interested in nontechnical aspects of the subject. One hundred architects, engineers, and surveyors have already been nominated for membership, and arrangements have been made for meetings which they will address in various parts of the country.

The main idea behind the movement is this: The real controlling factors which determine and encourage industrial growth are physical and natural to a greater degree than they are administrative and artificial. Therefore, the proper location of a city will save endless trouble and expense after its growth begins.

A NEW ARISTOCRACY IMPENDS

STUDENTS of eugenics, who care nothing for names or forms of government, have begun to foresee a new aristocracy in America, Great Britain, and perhaps elsewhere. They see the old order passing away, and power falling into the hands of a hitherto unconsidered class, who are already exercising it with utter unconcern as to whether the public or the present titular rulers like it or not. This course is truly aristocratic, say the eugenists, and they point to the labor leaders as the future aristocrats.

Parliaments are now being told in various parts of the world, particularly in the United States and England, what to do, and not being merely asked to do it, by labor leaders. Look at the pictures of some of these leaders, and compare them with the average member of Congress or of any State legislature, and be convinced that they are men of superior power and ability, and if you are not convinced, meet them personally, and you will be. Like the founders of former aristocracies, they have grappled with the most difficult, the most vital questions of their time, and, from their viewpoint, they have mastered these questions. They debate with statesmen and publicists, and they lead their followers with an easy mastery that almost stuns the old-line politicians and the financiers.

This new class of leaders, say the eugenists, being "intelligent, energetic, and intensely selfish," may retain its domination for a considerable time. It is a matter of course that, having won its privilege of exploiting the community, it will use all its efforts to preserve that privilege and to prevent others from sharing it. In other words, it will become an exclusive and strongly conservative class, on a broader basis than the land-holding and commercial classes which preceded it. And then will it go the way of other aristocracies? Probably.

It is a law that hardly admits of an exception that aristocracies do not maintain their numbers. The ruling race rules itself out. Nothing fails like success. Gibbon has called.

attention to the extreme respect paid to long descent in the Roman Empire, and to the strange fact that in the fourth century, no ingenuity of pedigree makers could conceal the fact that all of the great families of the republic were extinct, so that the second-rate plebeian family of the Anicii, whose name did not appear in the *Fasti,* enjoyed a prestige far greater than that of the Howards and Stanleys in England. Only a few families in England to-day can trace their lineage without a break to the fifteenth century. One of the members of the much-talked-about "Four Hundred" in the United States, has stated in a recent book that the old families of this country are already dwindling, and he recommends to them the study of eugenics to save themselves.

THE MOB SPIRIT

THE movement against lynching, which has been recently inaugurated, is one that will undoubtedly appeal to all self-respecting people throughout the United States. The psychology of a lynching mob is a reversion to that of the cave man, whose strongest instinct was the hunting of a victim to the death. One of the most deplorable things about lynching is the fact that sometimes an innocent man is lynched, while the man who committed the crime for which he suffered, escapes.

In the case of rioting the same reversion takes place. Men occasionally taking part in riotous proceedings have previously been law-abiding, but the influence of the mob spirit seizes and transforms them for the time being. In big labor strikes, especially twenty-five or thirty years ago, riots generally occurred when new men replaced the strikers, to force the discharge of the strike breakers. In some instances men of good character and habits; law-abiding and exemplary husbands and fathers; were among the leaders in the riots. Week after week they came home without wages, until the pinch of want came to their families. They saw others earning money in their places and an enmity arose in their minds against the strike breakers which the mob spirit stirred into a deadly, consuming hatred.

A man who ordinarily shrinks from violence will sometimes through the contagion of the mob spirit, commit acts which he had never himself dreamed he was capable of. Indignant rage will make a normal man for the time being feel as if he could commit acts of violence in reprisal for an atrocious crime or a gross injustice, but that is only a momentary impulse. When a mob is saturated with the same idea the case is different and a wave of lust for violence spreads like wildfire among those composing it.

We knew the leader of a general strike of van drivers in a large city before the days of auto vans came, who was regarded by the strikers as too mild and conservative in his methods. One day during the strike, he said, with evident sincerity, to a group of newspaper reporters near a large stable affected by the strike:

"This is going to be a dignified strike, and we will convince the public that our demands are just. Our strike committee by my orders has instructed the strikers to simply ignore the strike breakers, when they meet any of them; to treat them with silent contempt."

Just then two vans passed with a strike breaker and a policeman on each van. A crowd of strikers, cursing, reviling, and throwing missiles of all kinds at them, followed.

The strike leader broke away from the reporters, and, with a volley of foul oaths, joined the crowd, shouting as he threw a large stone:

"Down with the —— scabs! They ought all to be killed! Pull them off!"

In spite of his conservative ideas the mob spirit had gripped him and overcome his better impulses.

BARROOM PATRONS WILL MISS HIM

IN the near future, when prohibition is in force all over the United States, one man will be sadly missed by well-to-do barroom patrons with social impulses. That man is the suave, tactful bartender to be found in most club and hotel barrooms and in high-priced saloons.

In nearly every popular hotel, club, and saloon barroom in the large cities, at least, one bartender is looked on as a friend by patrons who want to talk and he can divine

the drinkers' tastes and furnish the drinks required even before they are ordered. When patrons inclined to be reminiscent begin to feel mellow, they are impelled to confide their experiences to him and always find him an ever-ready listener. As a confidant of those who are in the condition in which they simply must confide in some one, he has few, if any, equals and this quality of his stimulates business at the bar.

Thousands of men accustomed to boast of their experiences to the bartender of this type will miss him profoundly. The subtle flattery of his interest as he listens to them and his gratifying repetition of their own tales of their clever doings to others in their hearing are things never to be forgotten.

This species of United States bartender is ubiquitous and is occasionally found even in foreign barrooms. Some years ago, a well-known New York judge visited Paris, and, when strolling around one night, met by chance a friend from his own city. Going into a near-by hotel, they went to the barroom, where the sign "American bar" appeared over a screened-off section, and entering, ordered Manhattan cocktails. The barmaid signified that she understood and set before them a mixture topped with a stiff froth, which they drank, with misgivings, that proved to be well founded. They tried other barrooms with no better results, but in one hotel, the manager, who spoke English fluently, assured them they could have real Manhattan cocktails and led the way to the barroom, where a bartender behind the counter looked at them curiously.

"Can he mix a Manhattan cocktail?" asked the judge's friend, with a nod of his head indicating the bartender.

"You can bet your boots he can," said the latter, placing his hands on the counter and leaning over.

The men accustomed to confide in the sympathetic bartender of American cities feel now that when universal prohibition comes he will never be replaced by any nonalcoholic drink dispenser. He will have gone forever.

POPULAR TOPICS

TO provide the financial machinery for the extension of long-time credits to Europe is one of the vital issues of the day. Without such a medium it is impossible for Europe to buy our goods. Therefore we produce in vain our vast commodities. It means disaster for us unless a remedy is forthcoming. The principal drawback to foreign acceptance business has been the opposition of the Federal Trade Board to acceptances which carry renewal provisions. Hoover declared that the United States ought to extend credits to Europe of three or four billion dollars. Congress, at the time of writing, had been besought to act in the matter but had done nothing.

EXTREMISTS have predicted that if means to extend credits to Europe were not found there would be a complete suspension of trade, but that is unthinkable in the present state of affairs.

THE chief trouble with the world has been a breakdown in production. We have to catch up with ourselves. It is absurd to the last degree to say in the face of this condition that we must have more wages and fewer hours of work. How can we consume more by producing less? An "industrial democracy" can never be founded on such an inverted basis.

COMMERCIAL development of the airplane and the dirigible is reported as well under way in England. A fifty-passenger airplane is under construction and dirigibles have been begun which are to be three times the size of the famous R-34. The latter are planned for use in the Colonial trade.

AKIN to the foregoing news is the announcement that airplane wing linen and balloon cloth are to be put on the English market as material for clothing. One individual bought from the British government forty million yards of wing linen and another purchased twelve million yards of balloon cloth for the purpose of retailing it to the public.

WHILE on the subject of England, we were highly interested in the rumor that the proposal was made to revive the ancient tax on beards! We were not aware that there would be enough beards to make the tax worth while.

BUT talking of strange things people do, it was amazing to learn that in Japan there had been strikes among geisha girls and beggars. How the beggars managed to strike is beyond our imagination. Did they refuse to accept alms except up to certain amounts? Perhaps some Japanese reader will enlighten us.

CAMPHOR is becoming rapidly rarer. Formosa is the source of supply to the world. There are camphor trees in China, too, but most of them have been used for the market. Camphor is a genuine necessity. Growing the trees would be a blessing to the world, and some government ought to undertake the job. For an individual the business would hardly pay inasmuch as the camphor tree takes so many years to mature. We wonder if our department of forestry has contemplated the task?

FEDERAL control of the railroads has taught a lesson to the country in government ownership which it won't soon forget: Increased rates for both passengers and freight, the actual work output of railroad labor per man employed or hour worked lessened, inefficient maintenance of roadway and equipment, and, finally, the total railroad operating deficit for eighteen months ending June 30, 1919, amounted to $5.09 per capita, or $509,872,553, which must be met by taxation.

DO you realize how big our dyeing industry is? Germany, we are told, is getting ready to attack our market. Here is the American battle array: There are one million seventy thousand four hundred and sixty persons employed in industries directly dependent on dyestuffs, while there are one million seventy-three thousand one hundred and eighty-two persons employed in industries indirectly dependent on the trade. Billions of dollars are represented. The development of the American dyestuff industry was accomplished under the greatest of handicaps and it is not likely that those who blazed the difficult way will succumb to the onslaughts of German competitors.

THERE is a new form of insurance which has developed since the signing of the armistice. It is called strike, riot, and civil commotion insurance. Companies all over the country have taken out policies, especially street railway companies, which have thus insured themselves against damages done by strikers. As a general thing, the rate is twenty-five cents on a hundred dollars.

A Nine With the Upper Ten

By Raymond J. Brown

Author of "Aces and Sixes," Etc.

Proving a thing or two in the case of Billy Gray and Gene Welsh, the latter thirsting for revenge. The Red Legs get a laugh on their nifty third sacker, and so do we

ASKIN' some people to mind their own business is about like tenderin' them a polite request to stop breathin'. It can't be done; the animal ain't constructed that way! Seems funny, too; don't it? You'd think, with the shower of billy dues that come from the landlord, the butcher, the iceman, the electric-light company, the telephone people, and the other parasites that fatten on our honest and productive toil—to say nothin' of the occasional lovin' missives from the doctor, the man who cleans the rugs, and the other members of the Malevolent and Persistent Order of Please Remit—that we'd find the diversified complexities of our own little wigwams sufficient to exercise our brains on, without worryin' why the bird next door don't buy shoes for the kids instead of for the flivver.

But no; we got to waste valuable time in cogitatin' on the highly important topic of how he can live in that neighborhood and keep a car, anyhow—when all he does is run a little movin'-pitcher theayter. And how it is the board of health stands for the youths'-size chicken farm he maintains where the wash ought to hang. And why he never wears starched collars—even on Sunday.

I guess it's a fifty-fifty break on all the trouble we get ourselves involved in. Half of it is caused by us thrustin' our comely, smilin' countenances into other people's affairs; the other half comes from kind neighbors seekin' to insert their grimy thumbs into our pies. And when two people, each intent and anxious about seekin' enlightenment on matters that are germane and pertinent only to the other, tread paths that cross—then, son, is the innocent bystander's cue to grab a vantage point and watch the circus.

In this connection I might mention the case of Billy Gray and Gene Welsh. Billy is the secretary of our club—the Red Legs. A smart, clear-thinkin' young feller is Billy; a crackajack in his job. He brings in his own pay four times over every season by bookin' Sunday games in Eastern localities, where they don't schedule Sunday games.

This Sunday-game gag was Billy's own idea. Of course, league teams have always played exhibition games on Sundays—in my time, anyhow, and it's goin' on twenty-five years since I got my tryout with Chicago. But Billy got the thing down to a system. Instead of waitin' for some minor-league or semi-pro team to step forward with a kind invitation for us to give the natives a treat by showin' them how a big-league machine looks in action, Billy went after *them*. It didn't make no difference to him where the burg was—if there was enough people there interested in baseball to pay our way back and forth and drop an extra hundred or so into the club treasury, Billy seen to it that we played there. Billy often popped up about Friday afternoon with a couple of time-tables, a certified check for expense money, and the glad news that the team would pastime on the followin' Sabbath at some jerkwater village that nobody had ever heard of before.

Billy could give the automobile blue book and the publications of Rand McNally cards and spades on diggin' up places to go to. Him and Admiral Peary would have got along like twin brothers, with the admiral listenin' respectful to Billy's chance remarks on the subject of geography. He sent the team to more places off the main line than Marco Polo ever heard of, let alone visited.

It was grand business for John K. Simmons, who owns our club. I guess Billy's Sunday games must be worth twenty thousand a year to J. K. these days. It was all right for Billy, too. Once he had the team dated up, he should worry! He didn't have to make the trips himself. And myself—I always kidded some ambitious player into believin' I was givin' him a chance to get

valuable experience by subbin' for me as manager on these barnstormin' expeditions, and I stayed home, too.

But the players! The personnel of the team, from catcher to center field, has underwent a complete and entire change three times since I took hold of it twelve years ago, and I can't think of one guy who ever played for me who didn't curse Billy Gray from here to Tasmania on at least twelve Sundays every season.

You see the team has had the weirdest and strangest adventures at these Sunday games. They've been chased out of twenty towns at least by angry mobs of fans, who bombed them with soda bottles, bricks, and other movable articles as they fled. They've been stalled overnight more than once in some bush hamlet that even the postal guide don't mention. Time and time again they've had to ride home in their uniforms because they hadn't time to change to their street clothes before the only train back left Mulligan Junction, or wherever it was Billy Gray had shipped them.

Add to this their distaste at standin' reveille at seven bells on a Sunday mornin', after toyin' with the pasteboards or the bones until about four, and you have the sum total of reasons why Sunday-exhibition games was as popular with the men of the team as prohibition is with the California Wine Growers' Association.

Now, about the most chronic, persistent enemy of these Sunday matinée engagements that ever graced our roster was Gene Welsh. Gene is a fine, clean boy; as nifty a third sacker as ever juggled a bunt, and a cruel, merciless person with the willow wand, or bat. He's a boy phenom who come true. Stepped right off an amateur team into our regular line-up and riveted himself there. A long, slim, graceful lad with rosy cheeks, curly blond hair, and a fortune waitin' for him in the movies any time he wants to quit baseball. He's worth a couple of hundred bucks a day to us in lady patrons every time we're playin' on the home grounds.

It took Gene about half a season to realize that we were payin' him money as much because he was deliverin' the goods as because we liked to help him maintain his wardrobe. And when he did tumble to the fact that, in addition to bein' a nice little feller, he was a ball player, too. Holdin' his job with no thanks due to anybody but himself, he began to get notions. Swelled head? Sure; what kid of twenty wouldn't have one? Well, anyhow, Gene got particularly balky on the subject of Sunday games. He grouched and beefed about the number of dates they was makin' him miss; even claimed they interfered with his church goin', although I know for a fact he hadn't been on his knees except when recoverin' from a slide to second since he was a little kid.

I just give him the laugh when he presented his bill of specifications to me, informin' him he wasn't employed in no factory where Sunday work is regarded as overtime and is paid for at the accepted union rates. So he went to Billy Gray. That's where he made his mistake. Billy had nothin' to do with him; *I* was the court of last resort. If I couldn't fix it for him to spend his Sundays showin' off his newest suit to the home folks instead of his knack of pickin' up mean bounders to the baseball lovers of the smaller municipalities, why, Billy Gray couldn't do nothin', either.

That's what Billy told him, too; but the kid had a load on his chest that he had to get off to somebody, and he started to abuse Billy.

"These Sunday games are bunk!" he declared. "They're a waste of time. They wear out the team, make the fellers sore, and don't do anybody no good."

"They're worth several thousand dollars a year to the club," Billy told him pleasantly.

"Huh!" said Gene. "If I had as much dough as John K. Simmons——"

"Listen, youngster," Billy interrupted, "from the love of the kale I've seen you display, I'd make a guess that, if you were in Mr. Simmons' place, you'd have the team playing *night* games—if you saw a few dollars in it for yourself!"

Now, it wasn't any of Billy's business that Gene, outside of what he spent at the tailor's and the haberdasher's, held on to his earnin's with a grip that made the scissors hold seem like the pressure of a thin rubber band. It wasn't up to him to argue with a player on any subject—except, maybe, about a shortage in a pay check, or somethin' like that.

Gene got sore.

"You're a fine guy to be secretary of a ball club!" he jeered. "A grand guy to be bookin' Sunday games! You're yeller; that's what you are! If you wasn't, you'd

go on those Sunday trips yourself. But, no—you can go to the beach, or take that flivver of yours out, while us fellers that are makin' your salary for you——"

"It's a lucky thing for you that you can play a little baseball!" broke in Billy.

"Why?" asked Gene.

"If you had to make a living with your brains, you'd starve to death!"

Billy shouldn't have said that. Gene was only a kid, and a wise feller with Billy's experience ought to have knew that he was simply bringin' himself down to Gene's level when he began to bandy observations on personal characteristics with him.

"That's what you think, eh?" blazed Gene. "You've put me down for a boob, hah? Let me tell you somethin', mister—I'm educated as good as you are"—in those days Gene *did* have an idea that the high-school course he'd took in penmanship, business correspondence, and bookkeepin' embraced all topics of learnin' known to man—"I'm educated as good as you are," he said, "and playin' baseball ain't all I can do!"

"Evidently," said Billy sarcastically. "I'd say your ability to carry on a coherent conversation was a monument to your instructors. Every word you utter bespeaks the education you mention so modestly."

Bum stuff? Of course it was! And, in justice to Billy, I've got to say it wasn't like him at all. He wasn't himself that day, though. He'd had to draw in his horns—a hard thing for a high-spirited, proud feller like Billy to do—in an argument with John K. Simmons just before Gene braced him, and, while he could take water, even when right, from the man who gave him his bread and butter, he didn't feel just then like bein' rode by any fresh youngster in his first season in the league.

Billy's volley of college words had Gene gaspin'—for just a second. But he come back with:

"Aw, you bum! You think you can stall with me—like you can with them rough necks on the team? I've been on to you for a long time! You're a false alarm! Simmons ought to have you pinched for hookin' the money he pays you. You think you can buffalo me, eh? I'll show you—you—you grafter! Say! I'm goin' to *get* you! D'you hear that? I'm goin' to get you—I'll have you eatin' out of my hand!"

"Oh, get out of my office!" barked Billy, disgusted. "You young fool!" he called him.

"Put me out!" Gene dared him. "Come on; if what I say about you ain't so—put me out! Aw, you're afraid! You ain't man enough to——"

Right there young Mister Welsh got the shock of his youthful career. Billy hopped over a table, grabbed Gene by the collar and what little slack there was to his close-fittin' pants, and run him out of his little coop as pretty as ever a burly barkeep handled a noisy drunk.

To make it worse, Billy kept right on administerin' the eviction after he'd got Gene out of his own office and into the outside room of the club's suite, and several of the fellers of the team, a couple of baseball writers, and all the office help became witnesses to the astonishin' spectacle of a risin' young hero of the diamond bein' expertly sent on his way to the elevator by an office bird that nobody knew had ever wrassled anything more dangerous than a column of figgers!

Gene didn't admit defeat when Billy, with a last desperate heave, hurled him sprawlin' halfway down the hallway. He come back, and, but for the combined efforts of such persons as had served as eyewitnesses to the earlier part of the encounter, probably would have strewed Billy's mangled remains all over the office; for he was a husky kid, and, for all his pretty hair and fancy clothes, could rough and tumble it with the biggest guys on the team. Billy had caught him by surprise; that's all—got the jump on him. But, as I said, the other people in the office by the layin' on of hands dissuaded Gene from attemptin' a counter attack.

Of course, while they knew in their hearts that in a fair-and-square mix-up under Queensbury or any other rules, Billy Gray would be about a hundred-to-one shot against Gene, the players couldn't resist givin' our nifty young third sacker an awful ridin' on the subject of bein' awarded the rush out of Billy's office. The reporters, too, each grabbed a little squib out of the incident, handin' Gene all the worst of it in a kiddin' way, and the story, in the mysterious way stories have of circulatin', also reached the fans.

All of which combined to make Gene wild. He couldn't take his turn at bat without somebody in the grand stand remindin' him of his rapid exit from the club's office; he

couldn't come into the dressin' room without the bunch sailin' into him. People he passed in the street used to nudge each other and grin at him.

And, instead of givin' back kiddin' for kiddin', and waitin' for the thing to die a natural death, Gene became surly and nasty about it. Pleasant words from him became about as plentiful as base hits from the bat of the ordinary pitcher. He went to great pains to show each separate individual on the club that he hated him; became a fine little nuisance in a dozen ways.

I read the riot act to the players, orderin' them to lay off makin' comical remarks to Gene on the subject of the fracas with Billy, and the fans, of course, treated the story as a nine-days' wonder and promptly forgot about it. But, kidlike, Gene wanted revenge. He'd promised Billy Gray to his face that he'd "get" him, and on gettin' him he was determined. Why he thought he had to, I don't know, and how he was goin' to do it was a still more mysterious question. He had nothin' on Billy Gray. His wild talk in the office that day was born of a kid's grouch—callin' Billy a grafter, for instance, was absurd; but he'd made up his mind it was up to him to make good his threat—which, by the way, he had repeated to the fellers of the team so often they could sing it—so he brooded and planned and nosed around and made himself generally obnoxious—to himself as well as to everybody else around him.

And at last he got an idea. Nobody but a feather-brained kid, or one of the birds who compose those "Anguishes of Angelina" movie serials ever would have given serious consideration to any such insane, idiotic, crazy-headed notion—it was about as sensible an undertakin' as tryin' to kidnap the President of the United States would be—but Gene thought it was the maltese cat's own kittens!

This was his scheme:

Up on the Great Lakes, about a seven-hour journey from Pittsburgh, is a place called Forest Park. It's the Newport of them parts—only more so. I mean a guy who can shake up the fare can go up to Newport any time, stroll around like he was the owner of a neat half-million-dollar semibungalow, pipe off the swells, and act like he was enjoyin' himself. But Forest Park—it wasn't the Huns that invented *verboten;* it was the money kings that picked Forest Park for their playground. The only way you can get a *look* at the place is from an aëroplane, and I'll bet a dollar they've got wire nets around it now to keep the aviators away! Exclusive don't begin to describe it. Alongside of Forest Park, Potsdam Palace, in the good old days before the war, was a public bathhouse!

Well, some guy from Gene's home town was a lowly tradesman at Forest Park, bein' engaged in the business of supplyin' gasoline and repairs to engines to the purse-proud denizens of those environs. It seems in a letter to Gene this bird remarked that, while a good mechanic, who had the benzine-burglin' concession in a golden paradise like Forest Park, is liable to find the pickin's highly plentiful, he was beginnin' to kind of long for the sight of a couple of league teams in action.

Right away Gene got an inspiration—or a brain storm; somethin' of the sort. Anyhow, it occurs to him that here at last is his chance to plaster one on Billy Gray's eye and get hunk on the fellers of the team for kiddin' him. How? Don't laugh now; it's on the level—why, by chasin' the team up to Forest Park some Sunday on a fool's errand.

This is how he proposed bringin' such to pass: He was to get his friend up there to send Billy Gray a letter, signed with a phony name, informin' him that some of the millionaires at Forest Park, who used to play baseball at college, had formed a team, were beginning to think they were pretty good, and wanted to prove it by stackin' themselves up against a big-league outfit. This sounded plausible enough at that. Millionaires have been known to give banquets to monkeys and dogs and to spar with professional pugs—what's to prevent them wantin' to play a harmless little game of ball with a league team?

You may ask how Gene thought that sendin' the bunch on a wild-goose chase to Forest Park was goin' to get him anything. Well, knowin' the inaccessibility and exclusiveness of that golden neck of woods, he imagined that the appearance of a covey of rough-neck ball players there was liable to be followed by complications of a humorous and embarrassin' nature. He had visions of the Midases who made Forest Park their habitat musterin' butlers, chauffeurs, gardeners, and other menial employees into a motley but efficient army and givin' us the

celebrated bum's rush. He, bein' on the inside, could flee before the onslaught of the servin' men but at the same time chortle up his sleeve at the rest of us. He knew the only train that could get us there reached Forest Park at six o'clock in the mornin', and, from that time until eight at night, when the train for Chi took its painful leave of that hang-out of aristocracy, there would be nothin' for us to do but pick out a tree each and sit in its shelterin' shade. He knew there wasn't even a restaurant there, and, while his comrades were succumbin' to the gentle influence of starvation, he, havin' cached away a couple of hard-boiled eggs and a pickle in his suit case could live on the fat of the land so to speak.

But his ace in the hole was the way he expected John K. Simmons was goin' to take it. J. K. is a good guy on the whole, but possesses a wholesome respect for the purchasin' power of a dollar. Also, he tries to be dignified and important. Gene could imagine old J. K. goin' ninety miles up in the air as soon as he tumbled to the fact that there was nothin' doin' in the way of minglin' with the masters of millions. He could picture him continuin' his ascent when he thought of the outlay he had made for railroad fares and so forth. J. K. would demand his money back, and from who? From Billy Gray, of course—from the guy who booked the game that didn't come off!

J. K. used to run a circus and from those early days retains an assortment of about two hundred and twenty pretty descriptive names he can call a guy he happens to be sore at. Gene could hear him callin' each one of them to Billy Gray in order—and then goin' through the list again, mixin' them up slightly. Maybe he'd even fire Billy—who could tell what J. K. was liable to do when he got mad enough? At all events, if the scheme went through, Billy Gray was to be the goat and Gene would feel himself amply and sufficiently revenged on Billy for the little hand-to-hand combat in the office that day.

Gene handled the thing pretty clever at that.

We was playin' a series in Cincinnati when Billy Gray one mornin' come up to my room in the hotel and handed me a typewritten letter. I don't know who Gene got to fix it up for him, but it must have been some guy who got his ideas if business correspondence in a different school from him. It was on thick, crinkly paper, and, in an upper corner, had the letters W. C. embossed in blue. This was it:

DEAR SIR: Whether the proposal I am laying before you herein meets with your approval or not, I must ask you to treat the contents of this letter in strictest confidence.

The men of the summer colony in Forest Park, members, as you probably know, of families of social and business prominence, have organized a baseball team. The players are all former college stars, and are still able to play a fair game.

Now we are anxious to play a friendly game with your team. The contest will be purely for the amusement of the residents of Forest Park, and for that reason all publicity regarding it must be avoided.

If your league engagements permit, we should like to arrange the game for next Sunday afternoon. As an inducement for your team to consider making the trip we are willing to pay your club one thousand dollars. We also will agree to pay each player twenty-five dollars for his services, and to bear all expenses of the trip. Besides this, we invite the players and officials of your club to be the guests of various members of our colony over the week-end. A train for Forest Park leaves Pittsburgh at eleven p. m. on Saturday. This will reach the park at six o'clock Sunday morning. You may pass the morning in such amusements as the park affords, play the game in the afternoon, remain with us over Sunday night, and leave Forest Park on the special train which departs for Pittsburgh at six-thirty Monday morning. This will bring you into the city in time to play your ordinary afternoon game.

Once again let me request you to discuss this proposal with no one—not even the men of the team. You must realize that the players in Forest Park, on account of their prominence, would be unwilling to permit the use of their names for advertising or other similar purposes. If your club can make the trip we shall indeed be glad to have you come, but you must regard this game merely as a lark, and maintain absolute secrecy about it—at least until after it has been played. Very sincerely yours,

WILBUR CARRINGTON.

The letter also had a postscript, askin' Billy to address Mr. Carrington at Forest Park and givin' his private telephone number there. Of course, Gene Welsh's friend was in with the postmaster there and could cop off any letters that come to the mysterious Mr. Carrington, and the telephone number was the number of his garage. The most interestin' part of the postscript was the statement that one hundred dollars was inclosed as "advance expenses and a token of good faith."

The hundred dollars? That come from Gene, of course. The crazy young fool was so anxious to put his Arabian Night's entertainment through that he'd took the rub-

ber band off his bundle of currency and shipped a century to his friend in Forest Park to be sent to Billy to make the offer look good.

"Some class to that, eh?" grinned Billy, when I'd finished readin'. "At last the Red Legs are coming into their own—breaking into society! Say! Old J. K. will be tickled to death. He loves to forgather with the sons and daughters of wealth!"

"It ought to be a scream," I told him. "Can't you picture Rube Finn, Curly Barrow—or some of our other Chesterfields—shovelin' food off gold plates with jeweled knives and politely conversin' with the débutantes!"

Billy howled.

"Or J. K. himself talking over business conditions with some side-whiskered banker!" he suggested.

"Or myself," I chimed in, "discussin' bridge and fox trottin' with some dowager!"

"Or Al Blair springin' his idea of a funny story on a polite family gathering!"

"It's all wrong!" I decided. "There's a catch in it somewheres. By entertainin' us I guess they mean lettin' us hob-nob with their servants."

"No," said Billy. "That's not the way those people do things. They're thoroughbreds, the people in Forest Park; good sports. They wouldn't bring the team up there to make fun of them."

"Maybe not," I said doubtfully. "But who's this Carrington? Do you know him?"

"One of the Carringtons of Chicago, I imagine," said Billy. "A very wealthy family," he explained.

"He says in his letter he's sendin' a hundred bucks along," I reminded him.

"That's so, too," said Billy. "And I never looked at it. I was so anxious to show you the letter that I never pulled the check out of the envelope. Look at it," he directed, pointin' to the envelope which I held in my hand.

I drew the check out, and glanced at it. Then I turned it face down and held it on my knee, coverin' it with my hand.

"Billy," I said, haulin' out my wallet. "I've always wanted to have a bank check signed by some big, moneyed man. This may be my last chance to get one. I'll give you a hundred bucks for this."

I pulled a century out of my wallet and handed it to him.

"Paper with Uncle Sam's stamp on it always looked better than any other kind to me!" said Billy, takin' the bill I handed him. "But you had better let me have that check indorsed for you——"

"No," I said. "I ain't goin' to cash it, I want it for a souvenir."

John K. Simmons went after the idea of visitin' Forest Park the way a starved tramp goes to a handout. And it wasn't alone because of the thousand bucks clear profit which Mr. Wilbur Carrington had promised in his letter. Old J. K. fancied the idea of consortin' with the upper crust. He wondered if he oughtn't to take a trunk along—with his high-mass coat for mornin' wear and his plug hat, porcelain shirt, and array of conventional black for lollin' around the Forest Park Casino on Sunday night. Billy vetoed any such vulgar display of sartorial possessions, suggestin' that the fourteen thousand dollars' worth of diamonds which the old man had neatly arranged in a finger ring, a horseshoe tie pin, and a watch charm, showin' an eagle in full flight, would be sufficient to convince the Forest Park elite that he *could* wear the other gear if he wanted to.

J. K. had Billy call the Forest Park telephone number mentioned in Mr. Carrington's letter immediately. Billy was a bit astonished when, instead of the well-modulated, cultured voice of a society person, the gruff tones of Gene Welsh's friend answered his ring, but the machinist person, claimin' to be Mr. Carrington's chauffeur, assured Billy the game proposition was O. K. So Billy sat down and wrote Mr. Carrington, confirmin' telephone conversation of that date with employee of the party of the second part, which letter must have handed some laugh to Gene Welsh and the garage feller.

Billy was disappointed that he couldn't tell the newspapers about the trip to Forest Park. So was J. K., but both of them respected Mr. Carrington's request for secrecy, even restrainin' themselves from droppin' any hint of what was comin' off to the fellers of the team.

At last the fateful Saturday came, and, when we'd gathered in the dressin' room at the park, I grouped the team about me and informed them that they were to get their travelin' uniforms into their suit cases and be ready to hop a train at eleven-five that night.

As I spoke I caught a glimpse of Gene Welsh's face. He was grinnin' like a guy that had just stole a sixty-five-dollar pot with a pair of treys, and he was the first bird to hop forward and ask me where we was goin'.

"I can't tell you," I said. "We got a game on for to-morrow; that's all I'll let you know. We won't be back till Monday, so any of you fellers that have made dates for to-morrow night had better call up and break them."

A few of the lads began to grouch. Gene and me I guess was the only pleasant ones in the room. Gene was lookin' forward to havin' the party of his life the next day, and the trip to Forest Park struck me as bein' a highly desirable expedition.

Well, you never seen such a puzzled band of travelers as the gang Billy Gray led aboard the Forest Park train that night. For all they knew we was takin' them to Hawaii. And Gene Welsh, lookin' as though somebody had just told him the season's best joke, was eggin' them on to get more and more curious about their destination. They was runnin' around like a lot of colts, askin' everybody who wore a uniform where *they* was goin', where the train was goin', how soon they'd get there, and a lot of other justified but foolish questions.

Of course, they got no information. The train we was takin' just passes *near* Forest Park and then continues on through three or four States, so you can imagine the time-table gave those guys lots of food for guessin' and speculation.

After the train started, I assembled the bunch up at the front of our car and laid bare the plot of the piece.

"Fellers," I said, "we're goin' to Forest Park," explainin' in a few, well-chosen words just what kind of a place Forest Park was. "We're goin' to be fêted and entertained by the flower of society; we're goin' to mingle with the rich—both the idle and busy kind—on a common ground of familiarity and good-fellowship."

Gene Welsh snickered. My words, indicatin' as they did how perfect we'd been all took in, must have been sweet music to his ears!

"Families which fellers of our kind usually break into only as burglars and window washers," I continued, "are goin' to let us sit at their tables and break bread with them. Now, I want you birds to behave yourselves. The first guy I catch eatin' with his knife, I'm goin' to fine fifty bucks. They'll be penalties also attached to crimes like spillin' soup on your shirts, breakin' tea cups, and tellin' off-color stories when there's ladies around. You guys can't be gentlemen; I know that—but you can at least try not to be mere dumb animals! If the lady of the house asks you to have more chicken, be sure she means it, and ain't just doin' it to be polite. Just because you're gettin' stuff for nothin', don't make hogs of yourselves! I admit I ain't never hit the dizzy pace of the social whirl myself, but I think I can act etiquettely enough to get by. So I'm askin' the rest of you hard-shells not to make people think that, just because you're ball players, you're a lot of mugs!"

Welsh guffawed. He probably had a vision just then of a reception committee of farm laborers, scullions, caddy masters, and other vassals, armed with the implements of their callin's, biddin' us welcome to Forest Park while their feudal lords cheered the lusty strokes of the pitchforks and jack handles with which the minions dispersed the invadin' rabble.

"Do you follow me?" I asked, givin' Welsh a witherin' look. "The rough stuff don't go. Most of you guys had better make out you're deef and dumb. If you say anything, let it be just 'yes, ma'am' and 'no, sir.'"

"Chess, Matt!" said Rube Finn, our first sacker and the toughest animal I ever seen anywheres. "Is dat on de level? Is dem s'iety people goin' to let us *eat* wid dem?"

"They oughtn't to," I said, "but they are."

"What's the idea?" asked Joe Tooker, second baseman and field captain of the team. "Is somebody givin' a birthday party? Who do we play? Come on, Matt; come clean on the whole thing!"

"Oh," I said, "I've told you fish all you have to know. Who we play, why we play and the rest of it don't matter. It's goin' to be a surprise," I added.

I could see Welsh noddin' his head as though to say: "You can bet your precious gizzards it's going to be a surprise!"

A couple of the guys noticed his antics, and inquired the reason.

He give them the laugh, and told them he was just pleased at the prospect of mixin' with the swells.

So we turned in, and about five o'clock a porter routed us out of our berths so's we'd be dressed in time to hop off the train when it paused at Scammonville, which is where the Forest Parkers board their automobiles to drive to their estates.

Gene Welsh was the first guy up. I guess he didn't want to miss any of the harrowin' scenes that was to ensue when we discovered we were stung.

It was laughable to see the younger fellers of the team—those that dressed nifty and all that—prinkin' up in the little washroom in anticipation of makin' their début in the upper set. They was creasin' their pants with their forefingers and thumbs, slickin' their hair down, diggin' the accumulation of years out of their finger nails; even the rough element, which made up about four-fifths of our numbers, stood in line waitin' for a chance at the five safety razors that were in the party, meanwhile mutterin' regrets about not havin' been informed of what was comin' off in time to wear a different suit.

Welsh—the pup!—was here, there, and everywhere, kiddin' the fellers about the dirt on their collars and their low taste in neckwear. He had to talk pretty fast to a couple of them to avoid gettin' his nose punched.

And at last the train came to a stop. Off piled the team, their hearts flutterin' in anticipation of the noteworthy doin's that was to begin so soon. Welsh was the last man down the steps, and only he grabbed the rail he'd probably have fell all the way down. As it was he staggered to the platform, with his face as white as a new clay pipe and a look of astonishment in his eyes like I've never beheld in the lamps of mortal man before or since.

For, behind the station, was a long line of automobiles, with liveried chauffeurs at the wheels, and into them was troopin' the fellers of the team, each proceeded by a bird in livery who was carryin' his suit case and holdin' the door of the car open for him like he was John Q. A. Millions himself nonchalantly steppin' into his private limousine after a night at the opera!

Welsh gasped like a soldier that's just took off his gas mask. He stood there like a ninny, wavin' back and forth on his weak legs. A guy in livery grabbed his bag from him, said, "This way, sir, if you please," and started across the platform. Gene followed him with the stiff, uncertain steps of a man walkin' in his sleep. He got into the car the footman led him to and sank back into the cushions the most amazed man the world has known since the Indian that first spotted Columbus' ships on the horizon.

Off went that caravan of automobiles, through the greenest, coolest little patch of forest you ever did see, over a road that was clean, smooth, and white as a marble slab, and into Forest Park—a fairy-land among the trees; big, roomy houses, built to live in and be comfortable in instead of just for show, lawns as level and even as the top of a billiard table, flower beds, little fountains playin'—say! the picture I'd always had of Heaven underwent a total and complete change with the first glimpse I got of Forest Park.

And, as the automobiles stopped in front of a big white buildin', with colonial pillars and wide verandas—standin' on a green terrace like the capitol of a State—a gang of young fellers jumped up from the easy-chairs they was occupyin', yelled at us and ran down the terrace to meet us.

A red-headed feller, older than the rest, rushed up to me, grabbed my mitt, and began workin' my arm up and down like a pump handle.

"Matt McCoy!" he exclaimed, grinnin' like I was the only friend he ever knew.

"Hughey Jennin's!" I come back with. "I ain't seen you in——"

The Hughey, you say? Sure! Who else? And the other fellers was the rest of the Dee-troit Tigers—Ty and all. They had come all the way from Boston to meet us.

Play them? Sure, we played them! What did you think we'd do with them? We played them as neat a little nine innin's of the national pastime as ever was exhibited anywhere, and, I venture to assert, before the most fashionable, select, and appreciative group of people that ever looked at a game of anything—any place!

And the Forest Parkers treated us like kings. No high-and-mighty stuff about them folks! You can't tell me, after the day and night I spent at Forest Park, that society people are any different from the rest of us. They fed us, talked to us, and the débutantes danced with us and—well, except for Gene Welsh, who, from the moment he first saw them automobiles lined up at the station, didn't know whether he was comin' or goin', I guess the lively young

athaletes who make up the well-known Red Legs had about the slickest time of their lives!

I don't think Gene was sure he wasn't dreamin' even up to Monday mornin' when we took the train back for Smoketown and the Dee-troit fellers went off home in another direction.

Gene was sittin' all alone in the car, lookin' out a window as though hopin' to read in the landscape the answer to the jumble of questions that was risin' in his mind. I sat down beside him.

"Well, son," I said, "did you have a good time?"

"Uh-huh," he grunted.

I grinned at him.

"You was a little off your game yesterday," I began. "That Dee-troit team must have scared you!"

"Say!" he blurted out, strainin' to put the question in a most offhand, innocent way. "How was it that the Detroit team came——"

"You don't think they just *happened* to be there?" I interrupted. "*I* got them there!" I said. "I wrote to Hughey Jennin's and fixed it up with the Forest Park people as soon as I found out what you was tryin' to pull on us!"

"You—you—hah—what's th-that—you mean——"

"Say, listen, Gene!" I interrupted. "Your little scheme of losin' us in the woods might have gone through if your friend, the garage feller, wasn't a boob! The next time he wants to send us 'advance expenses as a token of good faith,'" I said, reachin' into my pocket and pullin' out my wallet, "tell him not to send us a check made out to him and *with your name signed to it!*"

And I fished out the little strip of blue paper I'd bought from Billy Gray, and dropped it in his lap!

Brown is writing good sport stories. There are others to come in early issues of the POPULAR.

MURDOCK AVERTS A PANIC

VICTOR MURDOCK, former member of Congress and now an auburn-haired ornament of the Federal trade commission, "turns himself loose" when he makes a speech. Every last, lingering, surcharged bit of him goes into his oratory. Holding a crowd's interest, he discovered long ago, is by no means an easy job. It requires pep. It demands energy. It necessitates action. Therefore, all his addresses are outbursts.

"As a platform performer," Champ Clark once remarked, "Victor is a marvel, an intellectual St. Vitus' dance."

On one occasion in his unregenerate congressional days, the eloquent Murdock was the big gun at a banquet at Willow Grove, Kansas. Just as his propellers, reaching their high-clutch speed, were about to lift him, red-headed and resonant, from the earth of prosaic things and let him sweep at will across a firmament starred with the jewels of persuasiveness—at that crucial moment, something or somebody fell against, upon, over, and through the swing door leading from the kitchen to the banquet hall.

Women's shrieks accompanied the bass note of a thump upon the floor. The banqueters, grabbing the extra cigars near their coffee cups, prepared for flight.

"Here!"—or "Hear!"—shouted Murdock. "Listen! Sit still! Everything's all right."

Obeying him, the crowd sat, listened, and heard.

Later, a newspaper reporter, desiring information concerning the disturbance, applied to the proprietor of the hotel in which the banquet had been staged.

"While Murdock was speaking," exclaimed the boniface, "a colored man had an epileptic fit. A panic was averted only because those present thought it was a joint debate."

"For Ways That Are Dark—"

By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Burglary While You Wait," Etc.

There are ethics in the crook world, strange as it seems, and Hinds gives us an inside view in this story

IT was very late in Chinatown. The contorted streets lay quiet under a pale July moon. The day had been stuffily hot, but with the night a breeze had come up from the sea, somewhat freshening the chronic effluvia of the quarter—a medley of chop suey and stale Chinaman, with beer and bologna from the Bowery, and spaghetti from Mulberry Bend.

The Chinese who conduct the shops and the picturesque Chinese paid by sightseeing companies to loiter in the streets had scooted away to their homes in the Bronx.

On a curbstone sat three Jews, waiting for the sun to come up so they could begin collecting rents from the families of southern Europeans who dwell above the shops of Chinatown. Leaning against a railing was a drunken Norwegian sailor who had wandered up from the water front. Gazing into a darkened shop window were a hardware merchant and a barber from Goshen, Indiana, and their wives, who had clung bravely to the district in the hope of seeing an opium dance on the pavements. They had come there to gaze upon the horrors of pipe dens—and the only smoke which had offended their nostrils was from the drooping cigarettes of the chauffeurs of sightseeing buses.

Into the pinched mouth of Doyers Street from the Bowery slunk the huddled figure of a man. Softly he moved, clinging to the building fronts—seeking in that region of shadows the very darkest of shadows. He hesitated at the bend which turns the sluggish current of the byway into Pell Street—hesitated but a fleeting moment, as though to assure himself that the point of his disappearance was unperceived—and, reassured, sunk from the walk down a flight of stone steps and thence through an open doorway; sunk from the street as quickly and completely as a grindstone hurled into the sea.

His coming to that doorway evidently had been expected, for an outstretched hand gripped his own once he had crossed the dingy portal. The touch of the hand sent a momentary qualm over him—but in an instant the strange fingers closed over his own in such fashion that he knew them to be the fingers of a friend. The ball of the welcomer's thumb gave a slight rolling pressure on the knuckle of his middle finger—and no one but a friend could have known that signal.

But still it was so dark he could not make out the other. There was no doubt that the man knew him—undoubtedly he had seen him in the hazy light of the street before he descended. There was no word spoken, even after the door had closed noiselessly. There was no sound as the two men glided along a passageway and into a small room at the rear. These might have been phantom shapes, so swiftly and quietly did they move—seeming to flit through the air rather than tread the floor as mortals.

The darkness clung about them even in the room, but not for long. The man who had welcomed the newcomer lighted a kerosene lamp which, after a sputtering struggle, came off victorious and slowly drove away the gloom—a gloom so heavy and thick as to lay upon the head like a blanket. In the dim light the man wheeled around from the lamp, and for a moment two pairs of eyes gazed solemnly into each other. Then two hands met again in warmer clasp.

"Dan Acres—good old Dan Acres!" breathed the newcomer in a husky whisper.

"Bill Parver!" whispered the other. "Good old Bill Parver!"

"So it's Dan Acres what got me out, eh? It's old Dan Acres what I got to thank for me bein'——"

"No, Bill," Dan hastened to disillusion him. "No, Bill, it ain't me that got you out. I didn't have nothin' to do with it, Bill—

and didn't know you was comin' till last night. I just got out yesterday myself, Bill—and made it in from Trenton last night."

"You mean," asked Bill, "that you done the rabbit act in Trenton like I done up-river?"

"That's the size of it, Bill."

"And you didn't make your parole, neither?"

"I didn't make it, Bill."

"Well, then," Parver asked, speaking very slowly, "who——"

But Dan Acres did not let him finish. He knew the question without hearing the words.

"I don't know who 'twas, Bill, that got us out. A stranger slipped me a 'rough edge' one day—a stranger that come into the joint as a visitor. He weeded me a note, too, tellin' me just where I'd find a set of clo'es, and with full directions where to come to and what to do."

"That's just what happened to me, Dan—and it's mighty cur'ous."

"Yes, 'tis, Bill; but I'm figurin' more on stayin' out than I am on who got me out."

"'Tis nice to be out, Dan—that's right; but I'd like to know who done it, and what they done it for."

Dan pulled open a drawer in a dresser which lurched forward, like a belligerent drunken man, and for a few moments the two friends forgot their puzzling situation in long-distance pulls at a vicious flask.

"Hungry, Bill?" Dan asked.

"Sorta."

Dan produced a parcel of meat and bread. "Here's a toothful I put away for you," he said. "Chew in, Bill. Have much trouble in makin' it in here?"

"I had to lay up a good bit in daylight," Bill told him, between ravenuous snaps at the food. "I hurdled all right, but there was a quicker rumble than what I looked for. They tooted the whistle less'n an hour after I hopped—something must've went wrong inside, Dan. When I heard that whistle, I planted—and moved along only in the dark." Bill sat down on the squeaking edge of a rickety bed. "And, Dan," he went on, "I footed it ev'ry step of the way—ev'ry step, Dan; and there ain't nothin' brushed my tongue till now but wind and water."

"Poor old Bill!" Dan sympathized. "I made it in here in seven hours after I left Trenton—and was in good shape."

Bill ate in silence while Dan puttered about the room. When the meat and bread had been numbered among the slain, Bill again became querulous.

"You ain't told me yet, Dan," he suggested, "who's been puttin' you up here."

"Moy Loo," Dan told him.

"Moy Loo—that chink?"

"That's him."

"And what's Moy Loo got to do with me and you?"

"I don't know, Bill—but he's been mighty good to me, and he'll be the same to you."

Bill ruminated a moment. "Well," he observed finally, "I ain't got nothin' in partic'lar against Moy Loo—but I never did just like him."

"And neither did I," agreed Dan, "but he never done nothin' to us, 'cept play tight on stuff he bought. And they all do that, Bill—they all do that. There ain't none of them fences that don't play tight. There ain't none of 'em that'll pay a poor burglar a livin' wage if they can get out of it. But you got to admit, Bill, that Moy Loo was about as safe a fence as we ever had. There never was any danger of him squawkin' if things got warm—he was as tight at shieldin' us as he was at buyin' things off'm us. There's fences and fences, Bill—but this chink is a highboard fence when it comes to coverin' a man up."

"I guess you're right," agreed Bill.

"Sure I'm right; and he'll come through with a bill of partic'lars in the mornin'. I guess he's got a lay some'eres—something he wants us to help him with—and he's waited till we was both here before he sprung it on us."

"You can bet your last ounce of dynamite," averred Bill, "that he's got a lay of some kind. Why, Dan, somebody moved ev'rything in the State but the Erie Canal tryin' to get me out of that place. When they couldn't do it by legal means, they got me out the other way. Somebody paid a high-priced lawyer to try and get me a parole, but he couldn't swing it—and I heard they done the same with you over in Jersey. There ain't nobody I know what's got money to spend on a lawyer what charges fifty dollars for just sayin', 'I'll see you at four o'clock.' I don't b'lieve Moy Loo'd spend all that money on us, even if he had it—because we ain't no more to him

than hundreds of other birds; and he certainly couldn't turn the world over tryin' to get 'em all out—less'n he was playin' a big game. I'm thankin' him for gettin' us out, if 'twas him; but first-off in the mornin', I want him to show us ev'ry spot on ev'ry card that's bein' dealt in this game."

"And that's me, too," Dan agreed. "Here's how, Bill."

"Here's how, Dan."

The bottle empty, they sank into deep slumber on the rickety bed.

Morning brought Moy Loo—as fat and sloppy as an overflowing bowl of noodles. The sun peeped through the window, set high in the wall to fetch it above the level of the alley. The shade at the window had been drawn, but so thin was it that the sunlight was hardly dimmed. It peered unmercifully into all corners and laid bare the shabbiness of the place. Despite this shabbiness, there was order and cleanliness. A rag rug lay on the floor, worn thin in spots but well swept. The bed clothing, too, was clean. The scant furniture was decrepit but fairly free of dust.

"'Lo, Bill," the Chinese greeted. "Glad you clum."

"You ain't no gladder about it than me, Moy," said Bill, clasping for an instant the celly hand of his host. "I'm sure glad to get out of that place!"

"You make him all light—you have no tlouble?"

"Oh, I made it all right, but I had to lay up a good bit."

"Nobody follow, uh?"

"That's the reason I laid up—so's nobody'd follow; and I circled a lot to make sure of it. You ought to know me, Moy," Bill added in a tone of injured pride. "You ought to know I don't pile into places when Richard is lookin'."

"I know Bill; I know Bill," the Chinese hastened to assure him. "Moy Loo not aflaid of Bill. Bill pletty smart, uh?"

"Well—maybe he is, and maybe he ain't," said Bill enigmatically.

"What d'you say we have a drink and some breakfast?" suggested Dan Acres when the fugitives had dressed.

"Sure," agreed Moy Loo, "I bling blekfus—and dlink, too." And he waddled down the passage and up an inside stairway to his little Oriental trinket and novelty shop on the street level.

Warmed by drink and food, and soothed by tobacco, Bill Parver and Dan Acres sat on the edge of the bed, while Moy Loo courted sudden collapse by disposing his flabby bulk in a debilitated chair—the only chair in the room. The host smiled naïvely, and as only an Oriental can—a smile masking with simplicity whatever intriguing design might be stirring within his soul.

"Well, bloys," began Moy Loo, "how you like to make some money; plenty money—uh?"

"Money's a lux'ry sometimes," commented Dan Acres, "and an absolute necessity all the time."

"How much money?" asked Bill Parver.

"Flive hund'ed dolla' apiece," said Moy Loo. "One thousand dolla'."

"That'd be a nice stake for us," observed Dan, "till we can get our feet squared on the ground."

"What've we got to do to win all that money?" Bill inquired. In his zeal for money, Bill never lost sight of practicalities.

"Just open a slafe," and Moy Loo smiled. His face was as guileless and innocent as a man with a "Kick Me" placard pinned to his coat tail. "Just open a slafe—I gless you do that, uh?"

"Is that all—just open a safe?" asked Bill.

"Tha's all," the Chinese assured them. "Just open a slafe."

"And we don't have to bash nobody?"

"Blash nobody?" repeated Moy Loo. "Moy Loo don't——"

"I mean," explained the old burglar, "that you don't want us to tap nobody on the nut—tip somebody over? It's a straight job of openin' a safe—with no trimmin's that're li'ble to get something besides money on our hands—is that it?"

"Tha's it," said the Celestial conspirator. "Just open a slafe."

"And who's safe is it?" Bill was driving straight ahead. He was a very wary and seldom-spoken burglar, and his favorite brand of verbal intercourse was the brass-tack variety.

"Lee Sing's slafe," was Moy Loo's answer.

"Who's Lee Sing?"

"Flend of mine. Lee Sing and Moy Loo flends in China. Lee Sing have something Moy Loo want—he keep him in slafe. You open slafe, and Moy Loo get what he want—you see, uh?"

"Sufe—that's plain enough," said Bill. "What is it—money?"

"No—no money," the Chinese declared. "No money—just a little blox—so," and with his yellow, pudgy hands he spaced off a foot in the air.

"And what's in the little box?"

"Oh, just papers—papers and blooks."

"What sort of papers?" pressed the man from Sing Sing.

"Tong papers—you see, uh? Tong papers—secrets," and Moy Loo smiled this time so that his yellow teeth gleamed below blue-red gums. There was not a quaver in his voice nor a falter in his gaze.

"Oh, I get you now," said Bill Parver confidently. "It's another one of them tong mix-ups, eh? Well, all tongs tong alike to me." He was exuberant now. Such an easy thing as robbing a Chinaman's safe dispelled whatever concern he had had as to just what was expected of him. "Lee Sing, eh?" Bill went on. "Well, I'm against him on gen'ral principles because he's got a 'Sing' in his name—and I don't mind pickin' his safe to pieces, if that's all there is to it."

"Tha's all," reiterated Moy Loo. "You open slafe—and Moy Loo get the blox."

Bill studied the Chinese closely for a moment. "And what made you think," he inquired, "that it'd take two of us to open that Chinaman's safe—what kind of a can is it?"

"Moy Loo take no chance—see, uh?" the Chinese explained. "Moy Loo make sure of blox first clack—or Lee Sing get wise and hide it. Dan, he stay outside and watch—Bill, he work on slafe; and Moy Loo watch, too. No danger then—and we get blox first clack—see, uh?"

"I guess it's safer to have the three of us on hand," Bill agreed, "but what kind of an iron wallet has Lee Sing got?"

"It's a big slafe."

"Is it a round head?"

"No—square; old slafe but big—so," and he indicated a height of about four feet.

"An old coop, eh?" and Bill's burglarious hand hunted his chin reflectively. "I guess we won't have to pop it—if it's an old one, I can yank the gizzard out of it with a set of forceps."

The silk store of Lee Sing was in Mott Street. Lee Sing was very rich, so the gossip of Chinatown said, although his establishment was housed in an old building. Bill Parver got inside with no more effort than he would have employed in getting at the yolk of an egg. He simply tapped out a pane of glass in a rear window.

He soon stood before the safe in the musty interior of Lee Sing's little office. A small alcohol lamp, screened on one side, reposed on the floor and shed its blue light on the treasure vault. Bill Parver used no explosives. He had provided himself with an apparatus to "pull" the combination—a vise operated by a lever; an apparatus known to his craft as a set of forceps. The implement was for use on ordinary safes—more modern strong boxes were beyond its capacity.

A bar of steel fitted against the safe door, and the jaws of the vise clamped over the combination knob. The lever, pressed downward, made of the safe a fulcrum as unyielding as the face of a cliff. The principle of construction was to make the lever and the steel bar stronger than the pillar which held the combination wheel in place. The leverage force of the apparatus, even in the hands of one man, was tremendous. If one man couldn't handle it, two surely could.

One man did handle it in this case—Bill Parver. It wasn't necessary for him to call in Dan Acres from his post outside. The combination wheel torn loose, Bill manipulated the tumblers with a long pair of pliers until each bolt had been drawn back. Then he simply swung open the safe door.

Moy Loo, a small satchel in hand, then came upon the scene from the darkness of the alley. By a signal from Bill, the Chinese knew the safe had been opened. He entered by the back door, which Bill had opened from the inside. Moy Loo proceeded to the safe and Bill Parver and Dan Acres stood guard, one at each entrance to the alley. Soon Moy Loo came outside.

The three men took various routes back to the dingy room beneath Moy Loo's shop in Doyers Street.

Moy Loo arrived at the room first. When Bill Parver and Dan Acres stepped within they found the Chinese in conversation with a fourth man. He was the stranger who had slipped "rough edges"—saws—to them in prison.

The stranger was clad in habiliments of fashion and advertisements of prosperity stuck on him like sand burs. A diamond glittered in his scarfpin; another shone re-

splendent on a finger, and others struck the eye from his cuff links. A fob dangled dapperly from his trousers watch pocket and the gold of it was paled by another gem of ray serene. His soft hat, a modish block of greenish hue, was pushed back over the crown of an elongated head, while his suit, even as he sat at ease in the debilitated chair, clung to his slender figure in graceful lines.

He was a youngish sort of man, although there was a sharpness to his eye which precluded any assumption that he hadn't had a post-graduate course in the University of Applied Experience. Sharpness was his unfaltering trait, if ever a man's face reflected his inner self—for the lines of that face were sharp and clear cut. The smooth jaws flared resolutely back from a blocky chin, and the nose was long and straight, a trifle thin perhaps; accentuating the sharpness of eyes set too close together for frankness—eyes that almost seemed to gaze cynically upon the world from one great socket. The mouth was a long slit—a hard line no wider than a thread between thin lips.

This man had been dressed in very ordinary clothing, and without the gem display, when he visited Bill Parver and Dan Acres in their respective prisons—but they knew him. That face wasn't easily forgotten.

Moy Loo, with his eternal smile, stood by the dresser. The satchel was nowhere in sight. Bill and Dan gazed curiously.

"Come in," invited the stranger with forced affability. "Come in and have a chair—or, rather, a bed"—and he swept his eyes about the scantily furnished room—"and we'll have a drink. You must be tired."

Bill and Dan, having cached the "forceps" under the floor of the passageway, came into the room with empty hands and sat down on the bed. The stranger obligingly served them with liquor from a flask.

After they had drunk, he handed them five hundred dollars apiece—four one-hundred-dollar bills and ten tens.

"Well, boys," the stranger inquired, "how do you like working for me?"

"For *you?*" both exclaimed in unison.

"Yes—for me," he said quietly.

"Now looka here," spoke Bill Parver. He spoke quietly, too, but there also was an iciness in his tone. "This game's went about far enough. I ain't in the habit—nor neither is Dan here—of settin' in on anything with mystery in it. We ain't workin' for you, stranger—we ain't workin' for nobody—le's all get that straight. I guess you're bettin' out of your turn, anyway. I got a sneakin' idea that me and Dan're holdin' the best hands, and the most you can do is ask what we got, instead of takin' charge of the pot."

"I'm awfully sorry," said the stranger smoothly, "if there's going to be any disagreement. You men would still be in 'stir' if it wasn't for me, you know. As it is, you're out, and have plenty of money."

"That's all right," said Bill, "and we ain't lackin' in gratitude for bein' out and havin' this money—but it grates on a man's nerves to be told he's workin' for somebody, without havin' been consulted about it. Us burglars have some rights—and Abe Lincoln prob'ly meant that we could work for who we wanted to, as much as the niggers. We're much obliged for gettin' our feet on the ground, and for this money; but we ain't goin' to punch no clock in your loot fact'ry—leastways not till we know about it."

"I'm going to be perfectly agreeable," was the stranger's assurance. "I have several jobs I want done—and you can do them. I'll pay you five hundred dollars apiece on each job. Moy Loo will put you up——"

"Moy Loo won't put us up at all," interjected Bill, surveying the Chinese angrily. "He didn't come clean with us—he lied to us; and we're through with Moy Loo tonight."

"You're going to stay here," announced the stranger calmly, "and you're going to work for me."

The burglars gazed upon him in amazement, but they found his eyes as cold as hailstones and not much larger. They felt a qualm of misgiving but were outwardly placid—thus they had been schooled.

"Who're we dealin' with, stranger?" asked Dan Acres gruffly. "You know who we be—now come on, what'll we call *you?*"

"My name is Peters," was the answer.

"You ain't Peters the Merch, are you?" inquired Bill Parver.

"I've been called that by some ungrateful fellows," he replied, "but that's not my name—and boys who wish to get along with me don't call me Peters the Merch. My name is Peters—very easy to remember—Peters."

"And what give you the idea that we was your harvest hands?"

"Would you rather work for me or for the State?"

"But we're through workin' for the State, 'less you turn us up."

"I'd hate to do that."

"And how'd you do it without turnin' yourself up—ain't you mixed up in this deal to-night?"

"Can you prove it? If I, as a citizen, turn in two escaped convicts, will they believe what those convicts say? Don't forget that I am Peters to you and your friends only. I am an influential citizen to others. You can prove nothing about to-night, or about the escape."

"You've got us, I guess, on that line," said Bill, speaking very slowly, "but you ain't got us on the other. Before we'll work for Peters the Merch, we'll go back and do our time—won't we, Dan?"

"That's what we'll do," seconded Dan.

"Very well," said Peters, rising and stretching lazily. "I'll see that you do. And, of course, add the five years you'll get for breaking out of prison. I might mention that you were seen coming out of the alley back of Lee Sing's store—the police might suspect that you had something to do with that smash-in. That might mean ten years more—but, as you say, you'd rather do that than work for Peters. I'll phone down."

"Wait a minute," said Bill.

"How's that?"

"I said, wait a minute. Now, what're them jobs you want us to do?"

"That's more like it," said Peters the Merch, smiling blandly. "And it might be well for you to know," he added, "that Peters doesn't do things in fragments. I need you boys—and I've taken all precautions to keep you here. You must follow directions—the slightest mismove will put you back where you come from. My own part is covered—don't figure on playing me against myself. On the other hand, if you'll stick with me, you'll make a nice bit of money—and remain outside. Peters treats his men well—or bad—whichever they choose themselves."

"What d'you want us to do?" asked both Bill and Dan.

Peters the Merch was that stripe of crook hated alike by honest and dishonest folk. He was a "clinger"—so called by straight crooks because he clung to the fringes of the underworld without taking part in its life. He lived by the actual thievery of others. Crooks have also another name for men of his kind—"merch," meaning merchant—a man who deals in crookedness but does not manufacture. He conceived and, by trickery, involved others in his schemes. His unwilling agents took all the chances. He paid them well, it is true, but men like Dan Acres and Bill Parver would rather starve than work for Peters the Merch.

Peters' genius did not lie in actual thieving. He had never been able to tap any but the flimsiest of safes—safes which could be almost opened with a nutcracker. Then he had devised schemes of making adept robbers work for him—and had become rich.

He had first tried to get Bill Parver and Dan Acres paroled. He didn't want them pardoned—he wanted them still under the law, for he easily could turn them back into prison for breaking their paroles if they became unruly. Failing in the paroles, he had gotten them out by stealth. He knew them to be adepts—and he wanted them to harvest his crops.

"I wonder what flag he's flyin' in public?" ruminated Bill Parver when the two burglars were alone in the basement room.

"I don't know," said Dan, "but the best thing we can do is sail with him until we see all out."

"We'll find an out," stated Bill positively. "We'll find an out for Bill Parver and Dan Acres—and an *in* for Peters the Merch. He's been milkin' us burglars long enough; it's time he was put away."

"And how about Moy Loo?"

"That Chinaman," said Bill, "is as good as *in* right now. I always did hate that yellow-hided son of a parboiled rat; and we're goin' to put him away, too. With that pair loose, it's gettin' so a burglar can't make an honest livin'—but we'll be easy about it, Danny; we'll be easy. Some day they'll want to use their hands. Then they'll find that somebody snapped a set of cuffs on 'em when they wasn't lookin'."

Came a night when Bill Parver and Dan Acres stood before the safe of a mercantile establishment. It was a huge safe—but old. It was meat for them. They had brought a large assortment of tools, including the forceps, and they chuckled inwardly at the soft snap which lay ahead.

Bill intently scrutinized the combination wheel. He looked up with a gleam of tri-

umph in his eye—a gleam that spelled more than a burglar's mere joy at imminent loot.

"She's our baby, Dan," he whispered in exultation.

"Is she big enough?"

"Just right—she's what we been waitin' for."

"And she's fixed with a set of drops, eh?"

"There ain't no doubt about it—but we can make sure when we take a squint at her ribs."

Bill then adjusted the forceps. It took the combined strength of both men to "yank the gizzard" from the old safe—but yank it they did. So huge was this strong box that an aperture six inches in diameter yawned when the wheel had been removed. Then with a pair of pliers Bill worked at the tumblers. He turned the knob which controlled the bolts, and the bolts slipped back. He could easily have opened the safe now—but he didn't.

He tiptoed to a rear window, the window through which they had entered—and by a signal brought Peters the Merch to the spot.

"It'll take all of us to handle her," he whispered. "She's too big for me and Dan."

"I'll get the Chinaman and come in," said Peters.

Thus it came about that Peters the Merch, Moy Loo, and the two burglars stood together before a safe for the first time during their operations. Bill and Dan, as behooved good burglars, steadfastly had refused to divulge any of the arts by which they opened safes. Peters came along only when big pelf was in sight, and then he always was ready to flee at first ripple of danger. His companions knew nothing of the other half of his double life—and couldn't have turned him up had they wanted.

"This is the toughest baby yet," Bill whispered. Long since he and Dan, for policy, had become friendly with Peters and Moy Loo. "Dan can get on top of her and jump when we get ready to twist the bolts back. She's got to have a jar just at the right second—or closer'n that. Here, Peters—you stick your left hand in here, so" —and Bill with his own hand showed him —"till you feel that pin stickin' out. Feel it? All right—hold your finger there. Here, Moy—you shove your right hand in and bend it the other way till you feel a pin. Feel it? All right. Now when I say 'Go,' both of you press your pin. It's got to be done at the same instant—see? All right."

Bill stationed himself at the knob on the left of the door which controlled the bolts. Dan Acres was on top of the safe, poised for a blow with his heels upon the huge strong box. Peters and Moy Loo faced the safe, each with a hand thrust into the combination aperture—Peters' hand bent at the wrist to the right and the yellow man's hand bent to the left.

"Are you ready?" hissed Bill Parver, his hand on the knob. "Are your fingers on the pins? Are you ready, Dan? All right—*go!*"

Bill turned the knob—and the bolts slid back into their sockets. He having previously drawn them out, the safe now stood locked. Simultaneously, Peters the Merch and Moy Loo had pressed their pins. Bill stepped back from the safe. In a twinkling he was at the side of Peters. At the same instant Dan Acres stood at the side of Moy Loo.

"I can't—I can't get my hand out of here," whispered Peters.

"My hand—my hand, he stuck," whispered Moy Loo.

"Righto!" gloated Bill Parver. Quickly he and Dan disarmed the captives. "Righto! And you'll get them paddies out when the police get here in the mornin'—and fetch a safe expert. Them tumblers've dropped back again, boys, and that steel shield's clamped down. It ain't goin' to hurt you none, even if it does get a bit tiresome. The tumblers're back in place now, and you can't turn your hand over without breakin' your fingers—and you can't twist your hand without snappin' it off short. You're pinned—and you can save a lot of sufferin' by standin' quiet. An expert can push a tumbler or two out of the way and raise that shield."

Perspiration rolled from the saffron face of Moy Loo and from the white face of Peter the Merch.

"Listen, Bill——"

"Shut up! you hawk-faced, buck-passin', alley-sneakin'clinger, you!" hissed the burglar fiercely. "There ain't nothin' you can say that's goin' to get you loose. You're a rat, and no decent burglar'd miss a chance to whip you over the road. You and that fat-headed, rope-haired, yellow crook is goin' to be nailed with your hands right in the safe—and I guess that'll put you over.

"We're goin' to leave all these tools here," Bill went on, "and they're goin' to pin ev'ry com-pullin' job that's been done onto you. Them forceps're goin' to send you away for a long spell. We'll take part of the forceps away, just to keep you and the police from findin' out the secret of 'em. But Dan and me ain't got no more use for this junk anyway. We got money aplenty—and it's the wide West for our'n. Since we been grubbin' for you, we've seen what a dirty bus'ness it is, and we've learned to work for somebody else. We're goin' to work for somebody else—somebody that hires straight workers. But we couldn't rest easy till we got your fingers in the pie—got 'em in so's you'd be caught with the fillin' still drippin' from 'em. And I'm thinkin', Peters, that they'll pull down all your dirty money when your pictures're printed in the papers, and they find out just who you be. They'll take you down in the mornin', boys; and me and Dan'll take that liberty you was so kind as to give us. Ta, ta!"

And that's where Peters the Merch and Moy Loo were found.

Hinds is going strong. We have another tale as good as the above. It will come along in an early number of POPULAR.

THANKS TO "OPEN DIPLOMACY!"

EVERY time I squint around," observed Litt Mallory, Virginia's champion philosopher, "I find another blessing showered on us by Woodrow's talk. I mean his advocacy of 'open diplomacy.' He's put another gang of loafers to work.

"We've been paying, with promptness and in pain, large gobs of money to guys who said they were diplomats and didn't have to work. A diplomat, according to the old rules, is a fellow who's sent abroad to keep his eyes on the course of current events or the current of coarse events.

"He gabbles, 'on state occasions,' through pomaded mustaches and brilliantined beards, to similar representatives of other heavily taxed nations. He claims he's full of shrewdness, duplicity, wit, finesse, and tact. Also, he bristles, bulges, and broadens with protocols, ententes, secret pacts, treaties, notes, and ultimatums.

"Once in a blue moon he does a chore. That's when his boss in Washington cables him a few facts to be presented to the government in the midst of which he's quartered. He has himself hoisted into his limousine, approaches the palace of the king, halts on the edge of the moat, calls out the drawbridge watchman, refers knowingly to such affairs as the portcullis and the porte-cochère, scatters largesse from his trusty porte-monnaie, crosses the bridge, and goes into 'The Presence.'

"Awkward and scared to death, he looks as full of dignity and as immune to embarrassment as he would if the king's bouncer had fired a soft-boiled egg straight into the middle of his shirt bosom, and at the time plumped into his cerebellum a query bearing on the application of paragraph three, section four, chapter five, volume six of the treaty of fifteen hundred and sixty-three, dealing with the importation of foodstuffs not intended for military use.

"Thus abashed and ignorant, our ambassador of 'the old school' then partakes of a cough drop, reads hoarsely a part of the message, stutters, and, in a fit of embarrassed monkeyism, opens his mouth with a spasmodic and uncourtly suddenness which catapults the cough drop against the gold medal on the king's chest. Thereupon, a frequenter of the court finishes the reading—and our man goes home, consoling himself with the thought that he won't have to perspire that freely again for the next six months!

"Now, however, all that's changed. These new birds, the modern diplomats, the exponents of 'shirt-sleeves diplomacy,' will have to go to work. We'll see to it that they earn every cent we pay 'em."

"Work?" inquired a loafer. "Doing what?"

"I don't know yet," replied Litt. "Maybe, they'll get down to the serious business of teaching their European servants how to make ice water."

The Double-Breasted Blues

By Caroline Lockhart
Author of "The Wolf Pack," Etc.

There are clothes for every occasion, but what occasion would these clothes fit?

AFTER the rural mail carrier had left a small, square envelope with a Denver postmark at the Padlock Ranch, "Pink" Murray rode the range for two days with his forehead looking like a corrugated iron roof. This prolonged period of thought ended in his advising the foreman that he guessed he would take in the stock show and wanted his check.

So here he was in the chair car, breaking out into what he termed a sweat every time a full realization of the thing he was on his way to do swept over him. And the nearer the train bearing him drew to Denver the more appalling his contemplated act seemed and the more profusely he perspired. His saddle was in the baggage car, sacked and checked through, as was his bed, neatly rolled in a "tarp" and roped, so there was no jumping off and going back even if he had been coward enough to weaken to that extent.

In his flannel shirt and corduroys, somewhat overripe Stetson hat, and cowboy boots with badly run-over heels, Pink, to all outward appearances, was merely one of dozens like him on his way to attend the great yearly event which drew his kind to Denver from all the surrounding States.

But, to state it baldly, the purpose of his trip was to elope with a married woman and wreck a home.

As he looked out the window with troubled eyes and watched the sagebrush racing by, he reviewed the circumstances which had culminated in this momentous adventure. It was romantic, of course; he doubted if in human history there ever was another quite so thrilling and hazardous, yet he had a secret feeling of exasperation with himself which found expression in the thought that if he had not been so dog-gone fresh——

Upon the occasions when Pink rode to Thermopolis from the Padlock Ranch he made his headquarters at the Stone Front Livery Barn where he kept his horse, and it was during one of these semiyearly pilgrimages to town that a call had come from a hotel for a gentle saddle pony and an escort to teach a lady to ride.

Having learned all the news from the barn boss and talked himself out, time was hanging heavy on his hands so he promptly volunteered to play that part. Pink looked the real thing on his top saddle horse as he clattered down the street leading the dog-gentle cayuse for the "lady dude," and he was all that he appeared. Nobody was a surer shot with a rope than Pink and, upon a time, he had ridden "Steamboat," the Cheyenne outlaw, longer than most. More than that, he was six feet, broad of shoulder and narrow at the hips, and he looked a fine specimen of his type with his kerchief flying and wearing his wide hat, white angora chaps, and silver-mounted spurs when he drew up before the hotel where Mrs. H. W. Meecham was waiting for him to appear. Small wonder that Mr. Meecham, who was there also, to boost his wife up, looked doubly insignificant beside a picturesque centaur like Pink.

Mr. Meecham was undersized, his ears stuck out, and the H in his name stood for Harold, in addition to which handicaps he had the jaundice so badly that his eyeballs looked like the yolks of hard-boiled eggs, and he resembled nothing so much as a saffron-colored Billiken. The hope of boiling out his jaundice in the Hot Springs accounted for his presence in Thermopolis.

Pink and Mrs. Meecham found themselves enormously congenial from the first. To Pink, whose daily life was about as gay and eventful as a timber wolf's, the society of a vivacious woman was a real treat, while Mrs. Meecham's infatuation for the dashing cow-puncher was shortly a matter of gossip and scandal to the rocking-chair brigade on the front porch.

Mr. Meecham was so busy with his

numerous baths, taking his temperature, inspecting his tongue, and weighing himself, that he had no time to be more than vaguely glad that his restless wife was satisfied and not pestering him to go home. Events moved so smoothly, and for so long, that it came as a shock when Mr. Meecham announced that he was ready to return to Denver and reap the benefit of his strenuous treatment in the way of boiling himself almost to death.

The parting was a fearful wrench, but had to be. Mrs. Meecham wept convulsively and doubted if she could exist. Pink said he felt the same way. Both agreed that they would write often and much, which certainly would help some. The exchange of letters between Denver and the Padlock Ranch had been fast and furious, in consequence. Then he had received the one conveying the information that if he did not come on and "save her from herself" she would die by her own hand.

She was just the sort of hysterical, high-strung person to carry out the threat; Pink realized that, so after two days of harder thinking than he ever had done in his life he wrote her that if she would lay off of her plan to commit suicide until the stock show was on so he could take advantage of the cheap rates, he would accompany her to New Mexico where he thought, perhaps, he could get a job with a cow outfit for which he had once worked.

It cost Pink a pang to write this for while, as he said to himself, he "thought the world of the lady," to give up a steady, congenial job and go ramping off to an uncertainty was a decision not to be made lightly. An ecstatic reply came at once. She had secured time-tables and planned their route. She would send her trunk to the station the day before and have her bag checked. His train would arrive in the evening, and they would leave the next morning at seven-fifteen.

It was all so definite and final that Pink's heart sank, but since it is one of the axioms of the range to finish what one starts, it did not occur to Pink to consider backing out. So now, with his hair full of cinders and with grimy paws, weary of mind and heavy-eyed, every muscle aching from inactivity and the cramped position necessary to slumber in a chair car, he sat with a gloomy face.

Ordinarily Pink's imagination was not a winged thing, but it had become active beyond belief since he left Thermopolis. For instance, Mr. Meecham, from a little yellow shrimp whom he could whip with one hand, grew to Gargantuan proportions as the wronged husband, inspiring in Pink a feeling more nearly like fear than any he had ever known. He pictured his name flaming out in red ink on the front page of the *Post* with a story underneath describing him as a snake that had wriggled himself into a happy home. He saw himself perpetually "broke" trying to support a woman on sixty dollars a month.

There were so many other harrowing things he visualized that he was too despirited to feel resentment when he learned that his bed had been opened in the baggage car and the officers had removed a full, unbroken quart at the Colorado line.

The last thing Pink resembled when he stepped off the train with the exuberant throng was an impatient lover thrilling to fly to his inammorata's arms. His faint hope that her courage might fail when she found he had really come was dispelled by her voice vibrating with eagerness as he talked to her over the telephone.

Pink traveled light. As the phrase is, he "stood in the middle of his trunk," the only preparation for his journey having been the purchase of a comb with a hinge in the middle which he could fold and carry in the pocket of his coat. Therefore, unhampered by luggage as he was, he decided he would walk up the somewhat uninviting street from the station to find a hotel.

A brilliantly lighted clothing store reminded him that he needed a new suit. The proprietor would have done so if the emporium had not, for he was out in the middle of the sidewalk quite as though he were expecting Pink. The hand he laid upon his arm seemed intended as much to prevent his escape as to evidence his friendliness. A near bridegroom or bigamist or whatever he was, had to be respectably dressed when robbing a man of his wife so, upon an invitation accompanied by a push, he stepped inside.

The proprietor looked Pink over appraisingly, and when he had finished the inventory he darted to the rear of the store as though struck by some inspiring thought. It was inspired, no doubt about that, for one might travel the world over and outside of the Whitechapel district in London,

never find a suit like the one he produced. It was something special—something he had been holding in reserve for just the right customer, he declared, as he spread it out.

The coat looked as if it had been slept in more than once and there was a wreath of cobwebs around one trouser leg suggesting that it had been some time since it had been prominently displayed. But the clothing man said the wrinkles would disappear with wear and he pulled the cobweb off himself. The coat had a double-breasted effect and there were more buttons than Pink ever had seen on one suit, and said as much. They were dark pearl buttons in two sizes, set in rows and clusters on the pockets and almost solid down the waistcoat front like a "charm-string."

The proprietor explained this easily enough. It was going to be a great season for buttons, and this was an advance style. He would make no mistake in going in strong for buttons. Pink agreed that if such was the case he surely would be there with the buttons, but declared that the armholes seemed tight and it was impossible to expand his lungs to their capacity when the coat and waistcoat were closed across his chest.

The clothing man wafted aside these slight faults as inconsequent. When he changed to his summer underwear the suit would be a perfect fit. The suit was a bargain—only forty dollars—and with material going higher all the time he had better grab it while the grabbing was good. He could search all Denver and not find that suit's counterpart. Distinction in dress—individuality—was an asset to a man anywhere.

His logic was so convincing and his tone and manner so vehement that Pink purchased the clothes and left his corduroys to be burned or buried or destroyed with quicklime as seemed advisable, and repaired to a shoe store around the corner strongly recommended by the clothing man.

Nothing was nobbier, said the shoe man, than tan shoes with dark-blue clothes. It seemed so to Pink; therefore, when he found a pair with large brown buttons which fitted, he walked out in them, glad enough to be rid of his disgracefully shabby cowboy boots. He carried with him the address of a haberdasher to whom he had been passed on by the most obliging merchant he had ever met.

The haberdasher was as cordial as if he had known Pink for years, and he said it was a real pleasure to serve a customer who knew what he wanted. The remark was called forth by the selection of a pink chambray shirt with a black stripe in it, and when he chose a four-in-hand scarf which shaded off from his sorrel hair and blended into his brick-red complexion, the haberdasher further opined that taste in dress was something a man had to be born with.

Pink changed shirts on the premises and called for a "hard" hat. It was all of that; the one he got; one of the hardest-looking hats ever seen off the vaudeville stage. It had a low crown and a broad, rolling brim and came so far down on his ears that even the haberdasher admitted in a strangely choking voice that it would be improved by a few layers of paper inside the sweatband.

"I didn't see no hat like this gittin' on at Cheyenne," Pink said doubtfully. "My old cage looks better'n this, seems like."

The haberdasher declared scornfully: "They are a year behind the times in Cheyenne! What do they know about style in that prairie-dog town? The hat looks odd because it's such a radical change. Once you get used to it you'll laugh at yourself in anything else."

"Mebby you're right. Anyhow, it'll do for a short trip. I'll buy me another 'John B.' in Albuquerque when I go to work."

So, renewed from head to foot, Pink walked out and registered in a hotel which advertised clean beds for fifty cents with no mention of the price for those that were not.

His room smelled of stale wash water and there were mounds and trails of a yellow powder sprinkled with judicious care in corners and crevices and around the four legs of the bed. But these suggestive details did not mar the satisfaction with which Pink surveyed his reflection in the glass; there was a good deal, he decided, in what the fellow said about getting used to himself.

He amused himself for a few minutes by pushing the button which switched the light on and off, then sank to slumber, in his undergarments, upon a bed the springs of which all but hit the floor with his weight. Worn out with his travels, Pink temporarily died, inert as an alligator until a thump on the door and a raucus voice informed him it was six o'clock.

He awoke with a jump and a vague, undefined feeling of terror. What was it? Oh, yes. He rallied his wits still stupid with

sleep; in a little more than an hour he would be running away with a married woman! He had a sickish feeling in his stomach even while he reproached himself for wishing he might have passed away painlessly in his sleep.

He was a hound to have such thoughts. Why, any puncher he knew would be tickled to death to think a city lady like Mis' Meecham stood ready to kill herself for love of him! He still called her "Mis' Meecham," although he had kissed her several times on the cheek, and once, at parting, on the mouth.

Pink climbed out of his bed like a soldier getting out of a shell hole, and dressed with hands that shook a little with nervousness. He had busted many a bronk without experiencing any such preliminary symptoms of cold feet. He held his fingers before him and with genuine interest watched them shake.

Having fortified himself with two cups of coffee in an all-night restaurant, he walked slowly to the station to await his soul mate. Mrs. Meecham was more than prompt. It was not yet seven when she came into the main waiting room with an air of haste. Pink saw her at once, but she looked at him several times with no expression of recognition on her face. Perhaps this was a part of her plan, he thought, but when he noted her worrried, anxious eyes as they roved searchingly from seat to seat, he arose and advanced, grinning awkwardly:

"Hullo, Mis' Meecham!"

"Why—Pink!" Her jaw dropped. She looked at him queerly from head to foot, forgetting to shake hands. "I didn't know you."

"You've never saw me dressed up," replied Pink in a pleased tone. "I bought me this outfit when I got in last night. What do you think of it?"

"I wish you had waited," she said in a constrained voice.

"Ain't it all right?" he demanded, slightly nettled.

"It—it's such a funny cut."

"It's something special—I got it reduced."

"And there are so many buttons!"

"It's goin' to be a great season for buttons," Pink answered curtly. "I'm ahead of the style."

Mrs. Meecham looked unconvinced.

"When we get to Albuquerque——"

Pink interrupted obstinately:

"These clothes suit me down to the ground, and I don't aim to buy another suit until these are wore out."

It was the little rift within the lute.

"Let us sit down," Mrs. Meecham suggested coldly, "over there by the window where we shall not be so conspicuous."

This was sense, of course, but Pink would have preferred to remain where he was that he might watch the crowd.

The conversation was forced for Mrs. Meecham was absent-minded and seemed unable to take her eyes from his hat and clothes and shoes.

"I'll go and look at the board and see if the train is on time."

She interposed with such haste and vehemence when Pink arose to accompany her that it flashed through his mind she did not care to be seen with him. Still, under the circumstances, that was natural and the glances of a couple of girl "red caps" who seemed to take more than a passing interest in him, restored his complacency.

"It's more than an hour late!" There was consternation in Mrs. Meecham's tone. "A great deal can happen in an hour."

The ambiguous remark opened up a train of thought for Pink.

Although Mrs. Meecham said she had left no word, supposing Mr. Meecham got a hunch? supposing he slipped up behind him and hit behind the ear with a pair of brass knucks or on the head with a butt of a six shooter? There was no reason to believe that because his name was Harold and he had the jaundice he was without spirit and a coward.

Pink took to looking over his shoulder like a scared wolf. As the artificial lights of the station dimmed and the daylight came stronger through the window with each tick of the clock, it occurred to him that something peculiar was happening to his clothes.

A glance at Mrs. Meecham's eyes confirmed his belief. They were round as one of the buttons on his double-breasted coat, and instead of admiration for his picturesque brawn that he was wont to see in their limpid depths, he read horror and dismay.

It was just that which Mrs. Meecham felt as she watched Pink changing like a chameleon before her eyes. From a dark blue which was almost black his clothes had turned to navy, then to a French blue, and from a French blue they were becoming an

indescribable, unnamed shade somewhere between robin's-egg and electric! Even the buttons were blue, and Mrs. Meecham had counted thirty-nine of them, while the tan shoes had grown a yellow too horrible for words, and his shirt and scarf were of a shade observed at colored barbecues.

To ignore him was as impossible as to ignore an azure elephant, or a pink horse, and to look at him was to snort.

There was panic in Pink's eyes as he surveyed himself but he laughed hollowly and remarked: "Looks like I got the double-breasted blues."

But it was no time for jest.

"Pink," said Mrs. Meecham, unable to conceal her embarrassment, "I've been thinking that the step we are about to take would be a serious mistake."

Pink's face lighted up hopefully.

"You won't let it make any difference in our friendship—you'll promise not to be angry if I change my mind?"

"I shore won't!" The tone was too hearty to be complimentary, but Mrs. Meecham did not mind that in her relief at an immediate escape from the amused crowd that was viewing Pink at a discreet distance. "I'll recheck my saddle and bed and foam to the ranch on long distance to hold open my job. Then if I can hire me a hack I'll go back to the hotel and 'hide in' until the train pulls out. When I buys clothes ag'in, it'll be by *daylight* in *Thermopolis!*"

Caroline Lockhart does not write much, but we are first on her list for what she produces.

"PASSING THE BUCK"

DOCTOR E. B. GLENN, residing in Asheville, North Carolina, and famous for his medical skill throughout the wide expanse of every fen, valley, "hollow," crag, and peak of the Blue Ridge Mountains, is also a top-notcher as a surgeon. Armed with the lore of Æsculapius, Hippocrates, Galen, and other ancient physicians, he has, in addition, the sculptor-technique of Phidias, Myron, and Praxiteles.

As a wielder of probe, knife, and snickersnee, he is the agile boy—and industrious.

Enjoying all this reputation, he appears to many patients as ready to cut at any moment—eager, so to speak, to whittle joyously on the soft and yielding human frame.

One morning a man of the mountains lay on a bed of pain in the hospital of which Glenn is the governing spirit and master cutter, trimmer, splicer, and knife man. Glenn surveyed him, put the usual and unusual questions, spotted the pain areas, and looked exceedingly wise, not to say sharp, keen, and penetrating.

"Now," he asked the sufferer, "where is this acute pain—here, where I am pressing with my thumb?—or here, where I press with my forefinger?—or there?"

"Whut you was'en time fuh, askin' me?" groaned the patient. "I don't aim to be able to tell you nothin' 'bout pain nohow. Besides," he added with resignation, "you gwine cut pretty peart into all three uv them miseries anyways."

WHY HE CHANGED HIS MIND

SOON after William Gibbs McAdoo had resigned his twenty-seven government jobs and turned to the business of making a living, a man requested his influence in the simple little matter of affixing himself to the Federal pay roll.

"Can't do it, old man," said McAdoo. "Here you are asking for a job under the Wilson administration; and the last time I saw you, you were hollering your head off against the League of Nations!"

"That's nothing," objected the job seeker.

"It's at least inconsistent."

"No; it isn't even that."

"Why isn't it?"

"I'll explain: when I saw that Wilson had to travel all over the world and make a dozen speeches a day for the league, I concluded it was a weak proposition. If it was so weak that the president had to boost it all the time, it surely was wobbly. But, when Taft joined him in the boosting, I changed my mind. I thought anything weak enough to command the constant support of our president and our only living ex-president couldn't stay weak very long!"

Fate and the Fighter

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "The Wild Bunch," Etc.

(*A Four-Part Story—Part Four*)

CHAPTER XXI.

A LOCK OF HAIR.

IT is no disgrace to flee the unknown, for Nature has made that an instinct; but the will to overcome conquers even this last of fears and steels a man's nerves to face anything. The heroes of mythology set their lances against dragons and creatures that belched forth flame and smoke—brave Perseus slew the Gorgon, and Jason the brass-hoofed bulls, and St. George and many another slew his monster. But the dragons are all dead or driven to the depths of the sea, and those who conquer now fight only their memory, passed down in our fear of the unknown. And Perseus and Jason had gods and sorceresses to protect them, but Wunpost turned back alone.

He entered Tank Cañon just as the sun sank in the west, and there at its entrance he found horse tracks, showing dimly among the rocks. His enemy had been there, a day or two before, but he, too, had feared the unknown. He had gazed into that narrow passageway and turned away, to wait at Surveyor's Well for his coming. And Wunpost had come, but the eagles had saved him to give battle once more on his own ground. Tank Cañon was his stronghold, inaccessible from behind, cut off from the sides by high walls, and the evil one who pursued him must now brave its dark depths or play an Indian game and wait.

Wunpost threw off his packs and left his mules to fret while he ran back to plant the huge traps. They were not the largest size that would break a man's leg, but yet large enough to hold their victim firm against all the force he could exert. Their jaws spread a good foot, and two powerful springs lurked beneath to give them a jump; and once the blow was struck nothing could pry those teeth apart but the clamps, which were operated by screws. A man caught in such a trap would be doomed to certain death if no one came to his aid, and Wunpost's lips curled ferociously as he rose from his knees and regarded his cunning handiwork. His traps were not set far apart, in the two holes he had dug before, and covered with the greatest care; but one was in the trail, where a man would naturally step, and the other was out in the rocks. A bush, pulled carelessly down, stuck out from the bank like a fragile but compelling hand, and Wunpost knew that the prowler would step around it by instinct, which would throw him into the trap.

The night was black in Tank Cañon and only a pathway of stars showed the edge of the boxed-in walls; it was black and very silent, for not a mouse was abroad, and yet Wunpost and his dog could not sleep. A dozen times before midnight Good Luck leaped up growling and bestrode his master's form, and at last he rushed out barking, his voice rising to a yell as he paused and listened through the silence. Wunpost lay in bed and waited, then rose cautiously and peered from the mouth of the cave. A pale moon was shining on the jagged rocks above and there was a grayness that foretold the dawn, but the bottom of Tank Cañon was still dark as a pocket and he went back to wait for the day. Good Luck came back whining, and a growl rumbled in his throat—then he leaped up again and Wunpost felt his own hair rise, for a wail had come through the night. He slapped Good Luck into silence and listened again—and it came, a wild, animallike cry. Yet it was the voice of a man and Wunpost sprang to his feet all atremble to gaze on his catch.

"I've got him!" he chuckled and drew on his boots; then tied up the dog and slipped out into the night.

The dawn had come when he rose from behind a bowlder and strained his eyes in the uncertain light, and where the trap had been there was now a rocking form which let out hoarse grunts of pain. It rose

suddenly, and as the head came in view Wunpost saw that his pursuer was an Indian. His hair was long and cut off straight above the shoulders in the old-time Indian silhouette, but this buck was no Shoshone, for they have given up the breechclout and he wore a cloth about his hips.

"H'lo!" he hailed, and Wunpost ducked back for he did not trust his guest. He was the man, beyond a doubt, who had shot him from the ridge, and such a man would shoot again. So he dropped down and lay silent, listening to the rattle of the huge chain and the vicious clash of the trap, and the Indian burst out scolding.

"Whassa mala!" he gritted, "my foot get caught in trap. You come fixum—fixum quick!"

Wunpost rose slowly and peered out through a crack and then he caught the gleam of a gun.

"You throw away that gun!" he returned from behind the bowlder, and at last he heard it clatter among the rocks. "Now your pistol!" he ordered, but the Indian burst out angrily in his guttural native tongue. What he said could only be guessed from his scolding tone of voice, but after a sullen pause he dropped back into English, this time complaining and insolently defiant.

"You shut up!" commanded Wunpost suddenly rising above his rock and covering the Indian with his gun, "and throw away that pistol or I'll kill you!"

The Indian reared up and faced him, then reached inside his waistband and threw a wicked gun into the dirt. He was grinding his teeth with pain, like a gopher in a trap, and his brows were drawn down in a fierce scowl, but Wunpost only laughed as he advanced upon him slowly, his gun held ready to shoot.

"Don't like it, eh?" he taunted. "Well, I didn't like *this* when you up and shot me through the leg."

He slapped his leg and the Indian seemed to understand—or perhaps he misunderstood; his hand leaped like a flash to a butcher knife in his moccasin leg and Wunpost jumped as it went past his ribs. Then a silence fell, in which the fate of a human life hung on the remnant of what some people call pity, and Wunpost's trigger finger relaxed. But it was not pity, it was just an age-old feeling against shooting a man in a trap. Or perhaps it was pride and the white man's instinct not to foul his clean hands with butcher's blood. Wunpost wanted to kill him, but he stepped back instead and looked him in the eye.

"You rattlesnake-eyed dastard!" he hissed between his teeth, and the Indian began to beg. Wunpost listened to him coldly, his eyes bulging with rage, and then he backed off and sat down.

"Who you working for?" he asked, and as the Indian turned glum he rolled a cigarette and waited. The jaws of the steel trap had caught him by the heel, stabbing their teeth through into the flesh, and in spite of his stoicism the Indian rocked back and forth and his little eyes glinted with the agony. Yet he would not talk, and Wunpost went off and left him, after gathering up his guns and the knife. There was something about that butcher knife and the way it was flung which roused all the evil in Wunpost's heart, and he meditated darkly whether to let the Indian go or give him his just deserts. But first he intended to wring a confession from him, and he left him to rattle his chain.

Wunpost cooked a hasty breakfast and fed and saddled his mules, and then, as the Indian began to shout for help, he walked down and glanced at him inquiringly.

"You let me go!" ordered the Indian, drawing himself up arrogantly and shaking the coarse hair from his eyes, and Wunpost laughed disdainfully.

"Who are you?" he demanded, "and what you doing over here? I know them buckskin *tewas*—you're an Apache!"

"Si—Apache!" agreed the Indian. "I come over here—hunt sheep. What for you settum trap?"

"Settum trap—ketch you," answered Wunpost succinctly. "You bad Injun—maybeso I kill you. Who hired you to come over here and kill me?"

Again the sullen silence, the stubborn turn of the head, the suffering compression of the lips, and Wunpost went back to his camp. The Indian was an Apache, he had known it from the start by his *tewas* and the cut of his hair; for no Indian in California wears high-topped buckskin moccasins with a little canoe prow on the toe. That was a mountain-Apache device, that little disk of rawhide, to protect the wearers' toes from rocks and cactus, and some one had imported this buck. Of course, it was Lynch, although it was different to make him *say* so—but Wunpost knew how an Apache would go about it. He would light a little

fire under his fellow man and see if that wouldn't help. However, there are ways which answer just as well, and Wunpost packed and mounted and rode down past the trap. Or at least he tried to, but his mules were so frightened that it took all his strength to haze them past. As for Good Luck, he flew at the Indian in a fury of barking and was nearly struck dead by a stone. The Apache was fighting mad, until Wunpost came back and tamed him, and then Wunpost spoke straight out.

"Here, you!" he said. "You savvy coyote? You want him come eat you up? Well, *talk* then, you dastard, or I'll go off and leave you. Come through now—who brought you over here?"

The Apache looked up at him from under his banged hair and his evil eyes roved fearfully about.

"Big fat man," he lied, and Wunpost smiled grimly—he would tell this later to Eells.

"Nope," he said, and shook his head warningly, at which the Indian seemed to meditate his plight.

"Big tall man," he amended, and Wunpost nodded.

"Sure," he said. "What name you callum?"

"Callum Lynchie," admitted the Apache with a sickly grin. "She come San Carlos—*busca* scout."

"Oh, *busca* scout, eh?" repeated Wunpost. "What for wantum scout? Plenty Shooshonnie scout, over here."

"Hah! Shooshonnie no good!" The Apache spat contemptuously. "Me *scout*—me work for government! Injun scout—you savvy? Follow tracks for soldier. Me Manuel Apache—big chief!"

"Yes, big chief!" scoffed Wunpost. "But you ain't no scout, Manuel, or you wouldn't be caught here in this trap. Now, listen, Mr. Injun—you want to go home? You want to go see your squaw? Well, s'pose I let you loose, what you think you're going to do—follow me up and shoot me for Lynch?"

"No! No shootum for Lynchie!" denied the Apache vigorously. "Lynchie—she say, *busca* mine! *Busca* gol' mine, savvy—but 'nother man she say, you ketchum plenty money—in pants."

"O-ho!" exclaimed Wunpost as the idea suddenly dawned on him, and once more he experienced a twinge of regret. This time it was for the occasion when he had shown scornful Blackwater that seven thousand dollars in bills. And he had with him now—"in his pants," as the Indian said—no less than thirty thousand dollars in one roll. And all because he had lost his faith in banks.

"You shoot me—get money?" he inquired, slapping his leg, and Manuel Apache grinned guiltily. He was caught now, and ashamed, but not of attempting murder—he was ashamed of having been caught.

"Trap hurt!" he complained drawing up his wrinkled face and rattling his chain impatiently, and Wunpost nodded gravely.

"All right," he said, "I'll turn you loose. A man that will flash his roll like I did in Blackwater—he *deserves* to get shot in the leg."

He took his rope from the saddle and noosed the Indian about both arms, after which he stretched him out as he would a fighting wild cat and loosened the springs with his clamps.

"What you do," he inquired, "if I let you go?"

"Go home!" snarled Manuel. "Lynchie no good—me no likum. Me your friend—no shootum—go home!"

"Well, you'd better," warned Wunpost, "because next time I'll kill you. Oh, by grab, I nearly forgot!"

He whipped out the butcher knife which the Apache had flung at him and cropped off a lock of his hair. It was something he had promised Wilhelmina.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FEAR OF THE HILLS.

Wunpost romped off down the cañon, holding the hair up like a scalp lock—which it was, except for the scalp. Manuel Apache, with the pride of his kind, had knotted it up in a purple silk handkerchief; and he had yelled louder when he found it was gone than he had when he was caught in the trap. He had, in fact, acted most unreasonably, considering all that had been done for him, and Wunpost had been obliged to throw down on him with his six-shooter and order him off up the cañon. It was taking a big chance to allow him to live at all, and, not to tempt him too far along the lines of reprisal, Wunpost left the Apache afoot. His pony was feeding, hobbled, down the cañon, and Wunpost took off the rawhide thongs

and hung them about the pony's neck, after which he drove him on with his mules. But even at that he was taking a chance, or so at least it seemed, for the look in the Apache's eye as he had limped off up the gulch reminded Wunpost of a broken-backed rattlesnake.

He was a bad Indian and a bad actor—one of these men that throw butcher knives—and yet Wunpost had tamed him and set him afoot and come off with his back hair, as promised. He was a government scout, the pick of the Apaches, and he had matched his desert craft against Wunpost's; but that craft, while it was good, was not good enough, and he had walked right into a bear trap. Not the trap in the trail—he had gone around that—but the one in the rocks, with the step-diverting bush pulled down. Wunpost had gauged it to a nicety and this big chief of the Apaches had lost out in the duel of wits. He had lost his horse and he had lost his hair, and that pain in his heel would be a warning for some time not to follow after Wunpost, the desert man.

There were others, of course, who claimed to be desert men and to know Death Valley like a book, but it was self-evident to Wunpost as he rode back with his trophies that he was the king of them all. He had taken on Lynch and his desert-bred Shoshone and led them the devil's own chase, and now he had taken on Manuel, the big chief of the Apaches, and left him afoot in the rocks. But one thing he had learned from this snaky-eyed man-killer—he would better get rid of his money. For there were others still in the hills who might pot him for it any time—and, besides, it was a useless risk. He was taking chances enough without making it an object for every miscreant in the country to shoot him. He camped that noon at Surveyors' Well, to give his mules a good feed of grass, and as he sat out in the open the two ravens came by, but now he laughed at their croaks. Even if the eagles came by he would not lose his nerve again, for he was fighting against men that he knew.

Wunpost stretched his arms and laughed, but as he was saddling up his mules he saw a smoke, rising from the mouth of Tank Cañon. It was not in the cañon but high up on a point, and he knew it was Manuel Apache. He was signaling across the valley to his boss in the Panamints that he was in distress and needed help, but no answering smoke rose from Tucki Mountain to show where Wunpost's enemies lay hid. The Panamints stood out clean in the brilliant November light, and each purple cañon seemed to invite him to its shelter, so sweetly did they lie in the sun. And yet, as that thin smoke bellied up and was smothered back again in the smoke talk that the Apaches know so well, Wunpost wondered if its message was only a call for help—it might be a warning to Lynch. Or it might be a signal to still other Apaches who were watching his coming from the heights, and as Wunpost looked again his hand sought out the Indian's scalp lock and he regarded it almost regretfully.

Why had he envenomed that ruthless savage by lifting his scalp lock, the token of his warrior's pride, when by treating him generously he might have won his good will and thus have one less enemy in the hills? Perhaps Wilhelmina had been right—it was to make good on a boast which might much better have not been uttered. He had bet her his mine and everything he had, a thing quite unnecessary to do; and then to make good he had deprived this Indian of his hair, which alone might put him back on his trail. He might get another horse and take up once more that relentless and murderous pursuit, and this time, like Lynch, he would be out for blood and not for the money there was in it.

Wunpost sighed and cinched his packs and hit out across the flats for the mouth of Emigrant Wash. But the thought that other Apaches might be in Lynch's employ quite poisoned Wunpost's flowing cup of happiness, and as he drew near the gap which led off to Emigrant Springs he stopped and looked up at the mountains. Why should Manuel Apache be making fancy smoke talk if no one but white men were there? Why not make a straight smoke, the way a white man would, and let it go at that? Wunpost shook his head sagely and turned away from the gap—he had had enough excitement for that trip.

Bone Cañon, for which he headed, was still far away and the sun was getting low, but Wunpost knew, even if others did not, that there was a water hole well up toward the summit. A cloud-burst had sluiced the cañon from top to bottom and spread out a great fan of dirt; but in the earlier days an Indian trail had wound up it, passing by the hidden spring. And if he could water

his mules there he could rim out up above and camp on a broad, level flat. Wunpost jogged along fast, for he had left the pony at Surveyors' Well, and as he rode toward the cañon mouth he kept his eyes on the ridges to guard against a possible surprise. For if Lynch and his Indians were watching from the gap they would notice his turning off to the left, and in that case a good runner might cut across to Bone Cañon before he could get through the pass. But the mountainside was empty, and as the dusk was gathering he passed through the portals of Bone Cañon.

Wunpost was riding in the lead now on his fast-walking mule, the two pack animals following wearily along behind; in his nest on the front pack Good Luck was more than half sleeping, Wunpost himself was tempted to nod—and then, from the west bluff, there was a spit of fire and Wunpost found himself on the ground.

Across his breast and under his arm there was a streak that burned like fire, his mules were milling and bashing their packs; and as they turned both ways and ran he rolled over into the channel, with his rifle still clutched in one hand. Those days of steady practice had not been in vain for, as he went off his mule he had snatched at his saddle gun and dragged it from its scabbard. And now he lay and waited, listening to the running of his mules and the frenzied barking of his dog; and it came to him vaguely that several shots had been fired, and some from the east bank of the wash. But the man who had hit him had fired from the west and Wunpost crept down the dash and looked up.

A trickle of blood was running down his left arm from the bullet wound which had just missed his heart, but his whole body was tingling with a strength which could move mountains, and he was consumed with a passion for revenge. For the second time he had been ambushed and shot by this gang of cold-blooded murderers, and he had no doubt that their motive was the same as that to which the Indian had confessed. They had dogged his steps to kill him for his money—Pisen-face Lynch, or whoever it was—but their shooting was poor and, as he rose beside a bush, Wunpost took a chance from the east. The man he was looking for had shot from the west and he ran his eyes along the bluff.

Nothing stirred for a minute, and then a round rock suddenly moved and altered its shape. He thrust out his rifle and drew down on it carefully, but the dusk put a blur on his sights. His foresight was beginning to loom, his hind sight was not clean, and he knew that would make him shoot high. He waited, all atremble, the sweat running off his face and mingling with the blood from his arm; and then the man rose, head and shoulders against the sky, and he knew his would-be murderer was Lynch. Wunpost held his gun against the light until the sights were lined up well, then swung back for a snap-shot, and as the rifle belched and kicked he caught a flash of a tumbling form and clutching hands thrown up wildly against the sky. Then he stooped down and ran helter-skelter down the wash, regardless of what might be in his way, and as he plunged around a curve he stampeded a pack mule which had run that far and stopped.

It was the smallest of his mules, and the wildest as well, Old Walker and his mate having gone off up the cañon in a panic which would take them to the ranch, but it was a mule, and, being packed, it could not run far downhill, so Wunpost walked up on it and caught it. Far out in the open, where no enemy could slip up on him, he halted and made a saddle of the pack, and, as he mounted to go, he turned to Tucki Mountain and called down a curse on Lynch. Then he rode back down the trail that led to Death Valley, for the fear of the hills had come back.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RETURN OF THE BLOWHARD.

Nothing was seen of John C. Calhoun for nearly a week, and then, late one evening, he stepped in on Judson Eells in his office at the Blackwater Bank.

"Why—why Mr. Calhoun!" he gasped, "we—we all thought you were dead!"

"Yes," returned Calhoun, whose arm was in a sling, "I thought so myself for a while. What's the good word from Mr. Lynch?"

Eells dropped back in his chair and stared at him fixedly.

"Why—we haven't been able to locate him. But you, Mr. Calhoun—we've been looking for you everywhere. Your riding mule came back with his saddle all bloody and a bullet wound across his hip, and the Campbells were terribly distressed. We've

had search parties out everywhere, but no one could find you and at last you were given up for dead."

"Yes, I saw some of those search parties," answered Wunpost grimly, "but I noticed that they all packed Winchesters. What's the idee in trying to kill me?"

"Why, we aren't trying to kill you!" burst out Judson Eells vehemently. "Quite the contrary, we've been trying to find you. But perhaps you can tell us about poor Mr. Lynch—he has disappeared completely."

"What about them Apaches?" inquired Wunpost pointedly, and Judson Eells went white.

"Why—what Apaches?" he faltered at last, and Wunpost regarded him sternly.

"All right," he said, "I don't know nothing if you don't. But I reckon they turned the trick. That Manuel Apache was a bad one." He reached back into his hip pocket and drew out a coiled-up scalp lock. "There's his hair," he stated, and smiled.

"What? Did you kill him?" cried Eells, starting up from his chair, but Wunpost only shrugged enigmatically.

"I ain't talking," he said. "Done too much of that already. What I've come to say is that I've buried all my money and I'm not going back to that mine. So you can call off your bad men and your murdering Apache Indians, because there's no use following me now. Thinking about taking a little trip for my health."

He paused expectantly, but Judson Eells was too shocked to make any proper response. His world was tumbling about him, all his plans had come to naught—and Lynch was gone. He longed to question further, to seek out some clew, but he dared not, for his hands were not clean. He had hired this Apache whose grisly scalp lock now lay before him, and the others who had been with Lynch; and if it ever became known—— He shuddered and let his lip drop.

"This is horrible!" he burst out hoarsely, "but why should they kill Lynch?"

"And why should they kill *me?*" added Wunpost. "You've got a nerve," he went on, "bringing those devils into the country—don't you know they're as treacherous as a rattlesnake? No, you've been going too far; and it's a question with me whether I won't report the whole business to the sheriff. But what's the use of making trouble? All I want is that contract—and this time I reckon I'll get it."

He nodded confidently, but Judson Eells' proud lip went up and instantly he became the bold financier.

"No," he said, "you'll never get it, Mr. Calhoun—not until you take me to the Sockdolager Mine."

"Nothing doing," replied Wunpost, "not for you nor any other man. I stay away from that mine, from now on. Why should I give up a half—ain't I got thirty thousand dollars, hid out under a stone? Live and let live, says I, and if you'll call off your bad men I'll agree not to talk to the sheriff."

"You can talk all you wish!" snapped out Eells with rising courage. "I'm not afraid of your threats. And neither am I afraid of anything you can do to test the validity of that contract. It will hold, absolutely, in any court in the land, but if you will take me to your mine and turn it over in good faith I will agree to cancel the contract."

"Oh! You don't want nothing!" hooted Wunpost sarcastically; "but I'll tell you what I will do—I'll give you thirty thousand dollars, cash."

"No! I've told you my terms, and there's no use coming back to me—it's the Sockdolager Mine or nothing."

"Suit yourself," returned Wunpost, "but I'm just beginning to wonder whether I'm shooting it out with the right men. What's the use of fighting murderers, and playing tag with Apache Indians, when the man that sent 'em out is sitting tight? In fact, why don't I come in here and get *you?*"

"Because you're wrong!" answered Eells without giving back an inch. "You're trying to evade the law. And any man that breaks the law is a coward at heart, because he knows that all society is against him."

"Sounds good," admitted Wunpost, "and I'd almost believe it if *you* didn't show such a nerve. But you know and I know that you break the law every day—and some time, Mr. Banker, you're going to get caught. No, you can guess again on why I don't shoot you—I just like to see you wiggle. I just like to see a big fat slob like you, that's got the whole world bluffed, twist around in his seat when a *man* comes along and tells him what a dastard he is. And, besides, I git a laugh, every time I come back and you make me think of the Sting-

ing Lizard—and the road! But the biggest laugh I git is when you pull this virtuous stuff, like the widow-robbing old screw you are, and then have the nerve to tell me to my face that it's the Sockdolager Mine or nothing. Well, it's nothing then, Mr. Penny Pincher; and if I ever get the chance I'll make you squeal like a pig. And don't send no more Apaches after *me!*"

He rose and slapped the desk, then picked up the scalp lock and strode majestically out the door. But Judson Eells was unimpressed, for he had seen them squirm before. He was a banker, and he knew all the signs. Nor did John C. Calhoun laugh as he rode off through the night, for his schemes had gone awry again. Every word that he had said was as true as Gospel and he could sit around and wait a lifetime—but waiting was not his long suit. In Los Angeles he seemed to attract all the bar flies in the city, who swarmed about and bummed him for the drinks, and no man could stand their company for more than a few days without getting thoroughly disgusted. And on the desert, every time he went out into the hills he was lucky to come back with his life. So what was he to do, while he was waiting around for this banker to find out he was whipped?

Wunpost cursed that pride of class which makes all capitalists so hard to head and put the whole matter from his mind. He had hoped to come back with that contract in his pocket, to show to the doubting Wilhelmina; but she had had enough of boasting, and if he was ever to win her heart he must learn to feign a virtue which he lacked. That virtue was humility, the attribute of slaves and those who are not born to rule, but with her it was a virtue second only to that Scotch honesty which made upright Cole Campbell lean backward. He was so straight he was crooked and cheated himself, so honest that he stood in his own light; and to carry out his principles he doomed his family to Jail Cañon for the rest of their natural lives.

But all the same they were good folks, and Wilhelmina was as pretty as a picture. No rouge on those cheeks, and yet they were as pink as the petals of a blushing rose, and her lips were as red as Los Angeles cherries and her eyes were as honest as the day. Nothing fly about her; she had not learned the tricks that the candy girls and waitresses knew, and yet she was as wise as many a grown man and could think circles around him when it came to an argument. She could see right through his bluffing and put her finger on the spot which convinced even him that he was wrong, but if he refrained from opposing her she was as simple as a child and her only desire was to please. She was not self-seeking, all she wanted was his company and a chance to give expression to her thoughts, and when he would listen they got on well enough. It was only when he boasted that she rebelled. For she could not endure his masculine complacency and his assumption that success made him right, and when he had gone away she had told him to his face that he was a blowhard and his money was tainted.

Wunpost mulled this over, too, as he rode on up Jail Cañon, and when he sighted the house he took Manuel Apache's scalp lock and hid it inside his pack. After risking his life to bring his love this token he thought better of it and brought only himself. He would come back a friend, one who had seen trouble as they had but was not boasting of what he had done—and if any one asked him what he had done to Lynch he would pass it off with some joke. So he talked too much, did he? All right, he would show them; he would close his trap and say nothing, and in a week Wilhelmina would be following him around everywhere, just begging to know about his arm. But no, he would tell her it was just a sad accident, which no one regretted more than he did, and rather than seem to boast he would say in a general way that it would never happen again. And that would be the truth, because from what Eells had said he was satisfied the Apaches had buried Lynch.

But how, now, was he to approach this matter of the money which he was determined to advance for the road? That would call for diplomacy, and he would have to stick around a while before Billy would listen to reason. But once she was won over the whole family would be converted; for she was the boss, after all. She wore the overalls at the Jail Cañon Ranch and, in spite of her pretty ways, she had a will of her own that would not be denied. And when she saw him come back, like a man from the dead—he paused and blinked his eyes. But what would *he* say—would he tell her what had happened? No, there he was again, right back where he had started from—the thing for him to do was to *keep*

still. Say nothing about Lynch and catching Apaches in bear traps, but just look happy and listen to her talk.

It was morning and the sun had just touched the house which hung like driftwood against the side of the hill. The mud of the cloud-burst had turned to hard pudding stone which resounded beneath his mule's feet. The orchard was half buried, the garden in ruins, the corral still smothered with muck; but as he rode up the new trail a streak of white quitted the house and came bounding down to meet him. It was Wilhelmina, still dressed in women's clothes but quite forgetful of everything but her joy, and when he dismounted she threw both arms about his neck, and cried when he gave her a kiss.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SOMETHING NEW.

There are compensations for everything, even for being given up for dead, and as he was welcomed back to life by a sweet kiss from Wilhelmina, Wunpost was actually glad he had been shot. He was glad he was hungry, for now she would feed him; glad he was wounded, for she would be his nurse; and when Cole Campbell and his wife took him in and made much of him he lost his last bitterness against Lynch. In the first place Lynch was dead, and not up on the ridge waiting to pot him for what money he had; and, in the second place, Lynch had shot right past his heart and yet had barely wounded him at all. But the sight of that crease across his breast and the punctured hole through his arm quite disarmed the Campbells and turned their former disapproval to a hovering admiration and solicitude.

If the hand of Divine Providence had loosed the waterspout down their cañon to punish him for his overweening pride, perhaps it had now saved him and turned the bullet aside to make him meet for repentance. It was something like that which lay in their minds as they installed him in their best front room, and when they found that his hardships had left him chastened and silent they even consented to accept payment for his horse feed. If they did not, he declared, he would pack up forthwith and take his whole outfit to Blackwater; and, in fact, the Campbells were so reduced by their misfortunes that they had run up a big bill at the store. Only occasional contributions from their miner sons in Nevada kept them from facing actual want, and Campbell was engaged in packing down his picked ore in order to make a small shipment. But if he figured his own time in he was not making day's wages and the future held out no hope.

Without a road the Homestake Mine was worthless, for it could never be profitably worked; but Cole Campbell was like Eells in one respect at least, and that was, he never knew when he was whipped. A guarded suggestion had come from Judson Eells that he might still be persuaded to buy his mine, but Campbell would not even name a price, and now the storekeeper had sent him notice that he had discounted his bill at the bank. That was a polite way of saying that Eells had bought in the account, which constituted a lien against the mine; and the Campbells were vaguely worried lest Eells should try his well-known tactics and suddenly deprive them of their treasure. For the Homestake Mine, in Cole Campbell's eyes, was the greatest silver property in the West; and yet even in this emergency, which threatened daily to become desperate, he refused resolutely to accept tainted money. For not only was Wunpost's money placed under the ban, but so much had been said of Eells and his sharp practices that his money was also barred.

This much Wunpost gathered on the first day of his homecoming when, still dazed by his welcome, he yet had the sense to look happy and say almost nothing. He sat back in an easy-chair with Wilhelmina at his side and the Campbells hovering benevolently in the distance, and to all attempts to draw him out he responded with a cryptic smile.

"Oh, we were so worried!" exclaimed Wilhelmina, looking up at him anxiously, "because there was blood all over the saddle; and when the trailers got to Wild Rose they found your pack mule, and Good Luck with the rope still fast about his neck. But they just couldn't find you anywhere, and the tracks all disappeared, and when it became known that Mr. Lynch was missing—oh, *do* you think they killed him?"

"Search me," and Wunpost shrugged. "I was too busy getting out of there to do any worrying about Lynch. But I'll tell you —them Apaches must've smoothed 'em out, one thing, about those tracks disappearing sure."

"Yes, but why should they kill *him?* Weren't they supposed to be working for him? That's what Mr. Eells gave us to understand. But wasn't it kind of him, when he heard you were missing, to send all those search parties out? It must have cost him several hundred dollars. And it shows that even the men we like the least are capable of generous impulses. He told father he wouldn't have it happen for anything—I mean, for you to come to any harm. All he wanted, he said, was the mine."

"Yes," said Wunpost. But he could agree to that quite readily, for he knew from his own experience that all Eells wanted was the mine. It was only a question now of what move he would make next to bring about the consummation of that wish. For it was Eells' next move since, according to Wunpost's reasoning, the magnate was already whipped. His plans for tracing Wunpost to the source of his wealth had ended in absolute disaster, and the only other move he could possibly make would be along the line of compromise. Wunpost had told him flat that he would not go near his mine, and no one else knew even its probable location; and yet, when he had gone to him and suggested some compromise, Eells had refused even to consider it. Therefore he must have other plans in view.

But all this was far away and almost academic to the lovelorn John C. Calhoun, and if Eells never approached him on the matter of the Sockdolager it would be soon enough for him. What he wanted was the privilege of helping Billy feed the chickens and throw down hay to his mules, and then to wander off up the trail to the tunnel that opened out on the sordid world below. There the restless money grabbers were rushing to and fro in their fight for what treasures they knew, but one kiss from Wilhelmina meant more to him now than all the gold in the world. But her kisses, like gold, came when least expected, and were denied when he had hoped for them most; and the spell he held over her seemed once more near to breaking, for on the third day he forgot himself and talked. No, it was not just talk—he boasted of his mine, and there for the first time they jarred.

"Well, I don't care," declared Wilhelmina, "if you *have* got a rich mine! That's no reason for saying that father's is *no good;* because it is, if it only had a road."

Now here, if ever, was the golden opportunity for remaining silent and looking intelligent, but Wunpost forgot his early resolve and gave way to an ill-timed jest.

"Yes," he said, "that's like the gag the Texas land boomer pulled off when he woke up and found himself in hell. 'If it only had a little more rain and good society here—' "

"Now you hush up!" she cried, her lips beginning to tremble. "I guess we've got enough trouble, without your making fun of it——"

"No, I'm not making fun of you!" protested Wunpost stoutly. "Haven't I offered to build you a road? Well, what's the use of fiddling around, packing silver ore down on burros, when you know from the start it won't pay? First thing you folks know Judson Eells will come down on you and grab the whole mine for nothing. Why not take some of my money that I've got buried under a rock and put in that aërial tramway?"

"Because we don't want to!" answered Wilhelmina tearfully. "My father wants a *road.* And I don't think it's very kind of you, after all we have suffered, to speak as if we were *fools.* If it wasn't for that waterspout that washed away our road we'd be richer than you are, to-day!"

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Wunpost; "you don't know how rich I am. I can take my mules and be back here in three days with ten thousand dollars' worth of ore!"

"You cannot!" she contradicted, and Wunpost's eyes began to bulge—he was not used to lovely woman and her ways.

"Well, I'll just bet you I can," he responded deliberately. "What'll you bet that I can't turn the trick?"

"I haven't got anything to bet," retorted Wilhelmina angrily, "but if I did have, and it was right, I'd bet every cent I had—you're always making big brags!"

"Yes, so you say," replied Wunpost evenly, "but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll put up a mule load of ore against another sweet kiss—like you give me when I first came in."

Wilhelmina bowed her head and blushed painfully beneath her curls and then she turned away.

"I don't sell kisses," she said, and when he saw she was offended he put aside his arrogant ways.

"No, I know, kid," he said; "you were

just glad to see me—but why can't you be glad all the time? Ain't I the same man? Well, you ought to be glad then, if you see me coming back again."

"But somebody might kill you!" she answered quickly. "And then I'd be to blame."

"They're scared to try it!" he boasted. "I've got 'em bluffed out. They ain't a man left in the hills. And, besides, I told Eells I wouldn't go near the mine until he came through and sold me that contract. They's nobody watching me now. And you can take the ore, if you should happen to win, and build your father a road."

She straightened up and gazed at him with her honest brown eyes, and at last the look in them changed.

"Well, I don't care," she burst out recklessly; "and, besides, you're not going to win."

"Yes, I am," he said, "and I want that kiss, too. Here pup!" and he whistled to his dog.

"Oh, you can't take Good Luck!" she objected quickly. "He's my dog now, and I want him!"

She pouted and tossed her pretty head to one side and Wunpost smiled at her tyranny. It was something new in their relations with each other, and it struck him as quite piquant and charming.

"Well, all right," he assented, and Billy hid her face, because treachery was new to her, too.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CHALLENGE.

If love begets love and deceit begets deceit, then Wunpost was repaid according to his merits when Wilhelmina laid claim to his dog. She did it in a way that was almost coquettish, for coquetry is a form of deceit; but in the morning, when he was gone, she put his dog on his trail and followed along behind on her mule. And this, of course, was rank treachery, no less, for her purpose was to discover his mine. If she found it, she had decided in the small hours of the night, she would locate it and claim it all; and that would teach him not to make fun of honest poverty or to try to buy kisses with gold. Because kisses, as she knew, could never be true unless they were given for love; and love itself calls for respect, first of all—and who can respect a boaster?

She reasoned in circles, as the best of us will when trying to justify doubtful acts; but she traveled in a straight line when she picked up Wunpost's trail and followed after him over the rocks. He had ridden out in the night, turning straight up the ridge where the mountain-sheep trail came down; and Good Luck bounded ahead of her, his nose to the ground, his bobbed tail working like mad. There was a dew on the ground, for the nights had turned cold, and, though he was no hound, Good Luck could follow the scent which was only a few hours old. Wunpost had slept till after midnight and then silently departed, taking only Old Walker and his mate; and the trail of their sharp-shod shoes was easily discernible except where they went over smooth rocks. It was there that Wunpost circled, to throw off possible pursuit; but busy little Good Luck was frantic to come up to him, and he smelled out the tracks and led on.

Wunpost had traveled in the night, and, after circling a few times, his trail straightened out and fell into a dim path which had been traversed by mules once before. Up and up it led, until Tellurium was exhausted and Wilhelmina had to get off and walk; and at last, when it was almost at the summit of the range, it entered a great stone patch and was lost. But the stone patch was not limitless, and Wilhelmina was determined—she rode out around it and soon Good Luck dropped his nose and set out straight to the south. To the south! That would take him into the cañon above Blackwater, where the pocket miners had their claims; but surely the great Sockdolager was not over there, for the district had been worked for years.

Wilhelmina's heart stopped as she looked out upon the country from the high ridge beyond the stone patch—could it be that his mine was close? Was it possible that his great strike was right there at their door while they had been searching for it clear across Death Valley? It was like the crafty Wunpost always to head north when his mine was hidden safely to the south; and yet how had it escaped the eyes of the prospectors who had been combing the hills for months? Where was it possible for a mine to be hidden in all that expanse of peaks? She sat down on the summit and considered.

Happy Cañon lay below her, leading off to the west toward Blackwater and the Sink, and beyond and to the south there was a

jumble of sharp-peaked hills painted with stripes of red and yellow and white. It was a rough country, and bone dry; perhaps the prospectors had avoided it and so failed to find his lost mine. Or perhaps he was throwing a circle out through this broken ground to come back by Hungry Bill's ranch. Wilhelmina sat and meditated, searching the country with the very glasses which Wunpost himself had given her; and Good Luck came back and whined. He had found his master's trail, it led on to the south, and now Wilhelmina would not come. She did not even take notice of him, and after watching her face Good Luck turned and ran resolutely on. He knew whose dog he was, even if she did not; and after calling to him perfunctorily Wilhelmina let him go, for even this defection might be used.

Wunpost was so puffed up with pride over the devotion of his dog that he would be pleased beyond measure to have him follow, and from her lookout on the ridge she could watch where Good Luck went and spy out the trail for miles. It was time to turn back if she was to reach home by dark but that white scurrying form was too good a marker and she followed him through her glasses for an hour. He would go bounding up some ridge and plunge down into the next cañon; and then, still running, he would top another summit until at last he was lost in a black cañon. It was different from the rest, its huge flank veiled in shadow until it was black as the entrance to a cavern, and the piebald point that crowned its southern rim was touched with a broad splash of white. Wilhelmina marked it well, and then she turned back with crazy schemes still chasing through her brain.

Time and again Wunpost had boasted that his mine was not staked, and that it lay there a prize for the first man who found it or trailed him to his mine. Well, she, Wilhelmina, had trailed him part way; and after he was gone she would ride to that black cañon and look for big chunks of gold. And if she ever found his mine she would locate it for herself and have her claim recorded, and then, perhaps, he would change his ways and stop calling her Billy and "kid." She was not a boy, and she was not a kid; but a grown-up woman, just as good as he was, and, it might be, just as smart. And, oh, if she could only find that hidden mine and dig out a mule load of gold! It would serve him right, when he came back from Los Angeles or from having a good time inside, to find that his mine had been jumped by a girl and that she had taken him at his word. He had challenged her to find it, and dared her to stake it—very well, she would show him what a desert girl can do, once she makes up her mind to play the game.

It was almost Machiavellian, the way she schemed and plotted, and upon her return home she burst into tears and informed her mother that Good Luck was lost. But her early training in the verities now stood her in good stead, for Good Luck *was* lost; so, of course, she was telling the truth, though it was a long way from being the whole truth. And the tears were real tears, for her conscience began to trouble her the moment she faced her mother. Yet as beginners at poker often win through their ignorance, and because nobody can tell when they will bluff, so Wilhelmina succeeded beyond measure in her first bout at "playing the game." For if her efforts lacked finesse she had a life time of truth-telling to back up the clumsiest deceit. And, besides, the Campbells had troubles of their own without picking at flaws in their daughter. She had come to an age when she was restive of all restraint and they wisely left her alone.

The second day of Wunpost's absence she went up to her father's mine and brought back the burros, packed with ore; but on the third day she stayed at home, working feverishly in her new garden and watching for Wunpost's return. His arm was not yet healed, and he might injure it by digging, or his mules might fly back and hurt him, and ever since his departure she had thought of nothing else but those Apaches who had twice tried to murder him. What if they had spied him from the heights and followed him to his mine, or waylaid him and killed him for his money? She had not thought of that when she had made their foolish bet, but it left her sick with regrets. And if anything happened to him she could never forgive herself, for she would be the cause of it all. She watched the ridge till evening, then ran up to her lookout—and there he was, riding in from the *north*. Her heart stood still, for who would look for him there? Then as he waved at her she gathered up her hindering skirts and ran down the hill to meet him.

He rode in majestically, swaying about on his big mule; and behind him followed

his pack mule, weighed down with two kyacks of ore, and Good Luck was tied on the pack. Nothing had happened to him, he was safe—and yet something must have happened, for he was riding in from the north.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she panted as he dropped down to greet her, and before she knew it she had rushed into his arms and given him the kiss and more. "I was afraid the Indians had killed you," she explained, and he patted her hands and stood dumb. Something poignant was striving within him for expression, but he could only pat her hands.

"Nope," he said and slipped his arm around her waist at which Wilhelmina looked up and smiled. She had intended to quarrel with him—so he would depart for Los Angeles and leave her free to go steal his mine—but that was æons ago, before she knew her own heart or realized how wrong it would be.

"You like me; don't you, kid?" he remarked at last and she nodded and looked away.

"Sometimes," she admitted, "and then you spoil it all. You must take your arm away now."

He took his arm away, and then it crept back again in a rapturous, bearlike hug.

"Aw, quit your fooling, kid," he murmured in her ear, "you know you like me a lot. And say, I'm going to ask you a leading question—will you promise to answer 'Yes?'"

He laughed and let her go, all but one hand that he held, and then he drew her back.

"You know what I mean," he said. "I want you to be my wife."

He waited, but there was no answer, only a swaying away from him and a reluctant striving against his grip. "Come on," he urged, "let's go in to Los Angeles and you can help me spend my money. I've got lots of it, kid, and it's yours for the asking—the whole or any part of it. But you're too pretty a girl to be shut up here in Jail Cañon, working your hands off at packing ore and slaving around like Hungry Bill's daughters——"

"What do you mean?" she demanded, striking his hands aside and turning to face him angrily, and Wunpost saw he had gone too far.

"Aw now, Wilhelmina," he pleaded, then fell into a sulky silence as she tossed back her curls and spoke.

"Don't you think," she burst out, "that I like to work for my father? Well, I do; and I ought to do more! And I'd like to know where Hungry Bill comes in——"

"He don't!" stated Wunpost, who was beginning to see red, but she rushed on, undeterred.

"Because you don't need to think I'm a *squaw*. We may be poor but you can't buy *me*—and my father doesn't need to keep *watch* of me. I guess I've been brought up to act like a lady if I did—oh, I just hate the sight of you!"

She ended a little weakly, for the memory of that kiss made her blush and hang her head, but Wunpost had been trained to match hate with hate and he reared up his mane and stepped back.

"Aw, who said you were a squaw?" he retorted arrogantly. "But you might as well be, by grab! Only Old Hungry Bill takes his girls down to town, but you never git to go nowhere."

"I don't want to go!" she cried in a passion. "I want to stay here and help all I can. But all you talk about now is how much money you've got, as if nothing else in the world ever counts."

"Well, forget it!" grumbled Wunpost, swinging up on his mule and starting off up the cañon. "I'll go off and give you a rest. And maybe them girls in Los Angeles won't treat me quite so high-headed."

"I don't care," began Wilhelmina—but she did, and so she stopped. And then the old plan, conceived æons ago, rose and took possession of her mind. She followed along behind him and already in her thoughts she was the owner of the Sockdolager Mine. She held it for herself, without recognizing his claims or any that Eells might bring; and while she dug out the gold and shoveled it into sacks they stood by and looked on enviously. But when her mules were loaded she took the gold away and gave it to her father for his road.

"I don't care!" she repeated, and she meant it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FINE PRINT.

A week passed by, and Wilhelmina rode into Blackwater and mailed a letter to the county recorder; and a week later she came back, to receive a letter in return and

to buy at the store with gold. And then the big news broke—the Sockdolager had been found—and there was a stampede that went clear to the peaks. Blackwater was abandoned, and swarming again the next day with the second wave of stampeders, and the day after that John C. Calhoun piled out of the stage and demanded to see Wilhelmina. He hardly knew her at first, for she had bought a new dress; and she sat in an office up over the bank, talking business with several important persons.

"What's this I hear?" he demanded truculently when he had cleared the room of all callers, "I hear you've located my mine."

"Yes, I have," she admitted. "But, of course, it wasn't yours—and, besides, you said I could have it."

"Where is it at?" he snapped, sweating and fighting back his hair, and when she told him he groaned.

"How'd you find it?" he asked and then he groaned again, for she had followed his own fresh trail.

"Stung!" he moaned and sank down in a chair at which she dimpled prettily.

"Yes," she said, "but it was all for your own good. And, anyway, you dared me to do it."

"Yes, I did," he assented with a weary sigh. "Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Why, nothing," she returned. "I'm going to sell out to Mr. Eells and——"

"To Eells!" he yelled. "Well, by the holy, jumping Judas—how much is he going to give you?"

"Forty thousand dollars and——"

"*Forty thousand!* Say, she's worth forty *million!* For cripes' sake—have you signed the papers?"

"No, I haven't, but——"

"Well, then, *don't!* Don't you do it—don't you dare to sign anything, not even a receipt for your money! Oh, my Lord, I just got here in time!"

"But I'm going to," ended Wilhelmina, and then for the first time he noticed the look in her eye. It was as cold and steely as a gun fighter's.

"Why—what's the matter?" he clamored. "You ain't sore at me, are you? But even if you are, don't sign any papers until I tell you about that mine. How much ore have you got in sight?"

"Why, just that one vein, where it goes under the black rock——"

"They's two others," he panted, "that I covered up on purpose! Oh, my Lord, this is simply awful."

"Two others!" echoed Wilhelmina, and then she sat dumb while a scared look crept into her eyes. "Well, I didn't know that," she went on at last, "and, of course, we lost everything, that other time. So when Mr. Eells offered me forty thousand cash and agreed to release you from that grubstake contract——"

"You throwed the whole thing away, eh?"

He had turned sullen now and petulantly discontented, and the fire flashed back into her eyes.

"Well, is that all the thanks I get? I thought you *wanted* that contract!"

"I did!" he complained, "but if you'd left me alone I'd've got it away from him for nothing. But forty thousand dollars! Say, what's your dog-goned hurry—have you got to sell out the first day?"

"No, but that time before, when he tried to buy us out, I held on until I didn't get anything. And father has been waiting for his road *so* long——"

"Oh, that road again!" snarled Wunpost. "Is that all you think about? You've thrown away millions of dollars!"

"Well, anyway, I've got the road!" she answered with spirit, "and that's more than I did before. If I'd followed my own judgment instead of taking your advice——"

"Your judgment!" he mocked. "Say, shake yourself, kid—you've pulled the biggest bonehead play of a lifetime."

"I don't care!" she answered. "I'll get forty thousand dollars. And if father builds his road our mine will be worth millions, so why shouldn't I let this one go?"

"Oh, boys!" sighed Wunpost, and slumped down in his chair, then roused up with a wild look in his eyes. "You haven't signed up, have you?" he demanded again. "Well, thank God then, I got here in time!"

"No you didn't," she said, "because I told him I'd do it and we've already drawn up the papers. At first he wouldn't hear to it, to release you from your contract; but when I told him I wouldn't sell without it, he and Lapham had a conference and they're downstairs now, having it copied. There are to be three copies, one for each of us and one for you, because, of course, you're an interested party. And I thought, if you were released, you could go out and find another mine and——"

"Another one!" raved Wunpost. "Say,

you must think it's easy! I'll never find another one in a lifetime. Another Sockdolager? I could sell that mine to-morrow for a million dollars, cash; it's got a hundred thousand in sight!"

"Well, that's what you told me when we had the Willie Meena, and now already they say it's worked out—and I know Mr. Eells isn't rich. He had to send to Los Angeles to get the money for this first payment for——"

"What, have you accepted his *money?*" shouted Wunpost accusingly, and Wilhelmina rose to her feet.

"Mr. Calhoun," she said, "I'll have you to understand that I own this mine myself. And I'm not going to sit here and be yelled at like a Mexican—not by you or anybody else."

"Oh, it's yours, is it?" he jeered. "Well, excuse me for living; but who came across it in the first place?"

"Well, you did," she conceded, "and if you hadn't been always bragging about it you might be owning it yet. But you were always showing off, and making fun of my father, and saying we were all such *fools*—so I thought I'd just *show* you, and it's no use talking now, because I've agreed to sell it to Eells."

"That's all right, kid," and he nodded after a long minute of silence. "I reckon I had it coming to me. But, by grab, I never thought that little Billy Campbell would throw the hooks into me like this."

"No, and I wouldn't," she returned, "only you just treated us like dirt. I'm glad, and I'd do it again."

"Well, I've learned one thing," he muttered. "I'll never trust a woman again."

"Now isn't that just like a man!" exclaimed Wilhelmina indignantly. "You know you never trusted anybody. I asked you one time where you got all that ore and you looked smart and said: 'That's a question. If I'd tell you, you'd know the answer.' Those were the very words you said. And now you'll never trust a woman again!"

She laughed, and Wunpost rose slowly to his feet, but he did not get out of the door.

"What's the matter?" she taunted. "Did 'them Los Angeles girls' fool you, too? Or am I the only one?"

"You're the only one," he answered ambiguously, and stood looking at her queerly.

"Well, cheer up!" and she dimpled, for her mood was gay; "you'll find another one somewhere."

"No, I won't," he said; "you're the only one, Billy. But I never looked for nothing like this."

"Well, you told me to get onto myself and learn to play the game, and finally I took you at your word."

"Yes," he agreed, "I can't say a word. But these Blackwater stiffs will sure throw it into me when they find I've been trimmed by a girl. The best thing I can do is to drift."

He put his hand on the doorknob, but she knew he would not go, and he turned back with a sheepish grin.

"What do the folks think about this?" he inquired casually, and Wilhelmina made a face.

"They think I'm just *awful!*" she confessed. "But I don't care—I'm tired of being poor."

"Don't reckon there'll be another cloudburst, do you, about the time you get your road built?"

She grew sober at that, and then her eyes gleamed.

"I don't care!" she repeated, "and, besides, I didn't steal this. You told me I could have it, you know."

"Too fine a point for me," he decided. "We'll just see, after you build your new road."

"Well, I'm going to build it, because he'll worry himself to death. And I don't care what happens to me, as long as he gets his road."

"Well, I've seen 'em that wanted all kinds of things, but you're the first one that wanted a road. And so you're going to sign this contract if it loses you a million dollars?"

"Yes, I am," she said. "We've drawn it all up, and I've given him my word, so there's nothing else to do."

"Yes, there is," he replied; "tell him you've changed your mind and want a million dollars. Tell him that I've come back and don't want that grubstake contract, and that you'll take it all in cash."

"No," and she frowned; "now there's no use arguing, because I've fully made up my mind. And if——" she paused and listened as steps came down the hall. "They're coming," she said and smiled.

There was a rapid patter of feet and

Lapham rapped and came in, bearing some papers and his notary's stamp; but when he saw Wunpost he stopped and stood aghast while his stamp fell to the floor with a bang.

"Why, why—oh, excuse me!" he broke out turning to dart through the door, but the mighty bulk of Eells had blocked his way and now it forced him back.

"Why—what's this?" demanded Eells, and then he saw Wunpost and his lip dropped down, and came up. "Oh, excuse me, Miss Campbell," he burst out hastily; "we'll come back—didn't know you were occupied." He started to back out, and Wunpost and Wilhelmina exchanged glances, for they had never seen him flustered before. But now he was stampeded, though why they could not guess, for he had never feared Wunpost before.

"Oh, don't go!" cried Wilhelmina, "we were just waiting for you to come. *Please* come back—I want to have it over with."

She flew to the door and held it open, and Eells and his lawyer filed in.

"Don't let me disturb you," said Wunpost grimly and stood with his back to the wall. There was something in the wind, he could guess that already, and he waited to see what would happen. But if Eells had been startled his nerve had returned and he proceeded with ponderous dignity.

"This won't take but a moment," he observed to Wilhelmina as he spread the papers before her. "Here are the three copies of our agreement and"—he shook out his fountain pen—"you put your name right there."

"No you don't!" spoke up Wunpost, breaking in on the spell, "don't sign nothing that you haven't read."

He fixed her with his eyes, and as Wilhelmina read his thoughts she laid down the waiting pen. Eells drew up his lips, Lapham shuffled uneasily, and Wilhelmina took up the contract. She glanced through it page by page, dipping in here and there and then turning impatiently ahead, and as she struggled with its verbiage the sweat burst from Eells face and ran unnoticed down his neck.

"All right," she smiled, and was picking up the pen when she paused and turned hurriedly back.

"Anything the matter?" croaked Lapham, clearing his throat and hovering over her, and Wilhelmina looked up helplessly.

"Yes, please show me the place where it tells about that contract—the one for Mr. Calhoun."

"Oh—yes," stammered Lapham, and then he hesitated and glanced across at Eells. "Why—er——" he began, running rapidly through the sheets, and John C. Calhoun strode forward.

"What did I tell you?" he said, nodding significantly at Wilhelmina and grabbing up the damning papers. "That'll do for you," he said to Lapham, "we'll have you in the pen for this." And when Lapham and Eells both rushed at him at once he struck them aside with one hand. For they did not come on fighting but all in a tremble, clutching wildly to get back the papers.

"I knowed it," announced Wunpost; "that clause isn't there. This is one time when we read the fine print."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A COME-BACK.

It takes an iron nerve to come back for more punishment right after a solar-plexus blow, but Judson Eells had that kind. Phillip F. Lapham went to pieces and began to beg but Eells reached out for the papers.

"Just give me that contract," he suggested amiably, "there must be some mistake."

"Yes, you bet there's a mistake," came back Wunpost triumphantly, "but we'll show these papers to the judge. This ain't the first time you've tried to put one over, but you robbed us once before."

He turned to Wilhelmina whose eyes were dark with rage, and she nodded and stood close beside him.

"Yes," she said, "and I was selling it for almost nothing, just to get that miserable grubstake. Oh, I think you just ought to be—*hung!*"

She took one of the contracts and ran through it to make sure, and Eells coughed and sent Lapham away.

"Now let's sit down," he said, "and talk this matter over. And if, through an oversight, the clause has been left out perhaps we can make other arrangements."

"Nothing doing," declared Wunpost. "You're a crook and you know it; and I don't want that grubstake contract, nohow. And there's a feller in town that I know for a certainty will give five hundred thousand dollars, cash."

"Oh, no!" protested Eells, but his glance was uneasy and he smiled when Wilhelmina spoke up.

"Well," she said, "I want that grubstake contract canceled. But forty thousand dollars——"

"I'll give you more," put in Eells, suddenly coming to life. "I'll bond your mine for a hundred thousand dollars if you'll give me a little more time."

"And will you bring out that grubstake contract and have it canceled in my presence?" demanded Wilhelmina peremptorily, and Eells bowed before the storm.

"Yes, I'll do that," he agreed, "although a hundred thousand dollars——"

"There's a hundred thousand in sight!" broke in Wunpost intolerantly. "But what do you want to trade with a crook like that for?" he demanded of Wilhelmina, "when I can get you a certified check? Is he the only man in town that can buy your mine? I'll bet you I can find you twenty. And if you don't get an offer of five hundred thousand cash——"

"I'll make it two hundred," interposed Judson Eells hastily, "and surrender the canceled grubstake!"

"I don't *want* the danged grubstake!" burst out Wunpost impatiently. "What good is it now, when my claim has been jumped and I ain't got a prospect in sight? No, it ain't worth a cent, now that the Sockdolager is located, and I don't want it counted for anything."

"But *I* want it," objected Wilhelmina, "and I'm willing to let it count. But if others will pay me more——"

"I'll bond your mine," began Judson Eells desperately, "for four hundred thousand dollars——"

"Don't you do it," came back Wunpost, "because under a bond and lease he can take possession of your property. And if he ever gots ahold of it——"

"I'm talking to Miss Campbell," blustered Eells indignantly, but his guns were spiked again. Wilhelmina knew his record too well, for he had driven her from the Willie Meena, and yet she lingered on.

"Suppose," she said at last, "I should sell my mine elsewhere, how much would you take for that grubstake?"

"I wouldn't sell it at any price!" returned Judson Eells instantly. "I'm convinced that he has other claims."

"Well, then, how much will you give me in cash for my mine, and throw the grubstake in?"

"I'll give you four hundred thousand dollars in four yearly payments——"

"Don't you do it," butted in Wunpost, but Wilhelmina turned upon him and he read the decision in her eye.

"I'll take it," she said. "But this time the papers will be drawn up by a lawyer that I will hire. And I must say, Mr. Eells, I think the way you changed those papers was——"

"It ought to put him in the pen," observed Wunpost vindictively. "You're easy—and you're compounding a felony."

"Well, I don't know what that is," answered Wilhelmina recklessly, "but, anyway, I'll get that grubstake."

"Well, I know one thing," stated Wunpost, "I'm going to keep these papers until he makes the last of those payments. Because if he don't dig that gold out inside of four years it won't be because he don't *try*."

"No, you give them to me," she demanded, pouting, and Wunpost handed them over. This was a new one on him—Wilhelmina turning pouty! But the big fight was over, and when Eells went away she dismissed John C. Calhoun and cried.

It takes time to draw up an ironclad contract that will hold a man as slippery as Eells, but two outside lawyers who had come in with the rush did their best to make it air-tight. And even after that Wunpost took it to Los Angeles to show to a lawyer who was his *friend*. When it came back from the friend there was a proviso against everything, including death and acts of God. But Judson Eells signed it and made a first payment of twenty-five thousand dollars down, after which John C. Calhoun suddenly dropped out of sight before Wilhelmina could thank him. She heard of him later as being in Los Angeles, and then he came back through Blackwater; but before she could see him he was gone again, on some mysterious errand into the hills. Then she returned to the ranch and missed him again, for he went by without making a stop.

A month had gone by before she met him on the street, and then she *knew* he was avoiding her.

"Why, good morning, Miss Campbell," he exclaimed, bowing gallantly, "how's the mine and every little thing? You're looking fine,

there's nothing to it; but say, I've got to be going!"

He started to rush on, but Wilhelmina stopped him and looked him reproachfully in the eye.

"Where have you been all the time?" she chided. "I've got something I want to give you."

"Well, keep it," he said, "and I'll drop in and get it. See you later." And he started to go.

"No, wait!" she implored, tagging resolutely after him, and Wunpost halted reluctantly. "Now I *know* you're mad at me," she charged; "that's the first time you ever called me Miss Campbell."

"Is that so? Well, it must have been the clothes. When you wore overalls you was Billy, and that white dress made it Wilhelmina, and now it's Miss Campbell, and then some."

He stopped and mopped the sweat from his perspiring brow, but he refused to meet her eye.

"Won't you come up to my office?" she asked very meekly. "I've got something important to tell you."

"Is that feller Eells trying to beat you out of your money?" he demanded with sudden heat, but she declined to discuss business on the street. In her office she sat him down and closed the door behind them, then drew out a contract from her desk.

"Here's that grubstake agreement, all canceled," she said, and he took it and grunted ungraciously.

"All right," he rumbled. "Now what's the important business? Is the bank going broke, or what?"

"Why, no," she answered, beginning to blink back the tears; "what makes you talk like that?"

"Well, I was just into Los Angeles, trying to round up that bank examiner, and I thought maybe he'd make his report."

"What—really?" she cried, "don't you think the bank is safe? Why, all my money is there!"

"How much you got?" he asked, and when she told him he snorted. "Twenty-five thousand, eh?" he said. "How'd he pay you—with a check? Well, he might not have had a cent. A man that will rob a girl will rob his depositors—you'd better draw out a few hundred."

She rose in alarm, but something in his smile made her sit down and eye him accusingly.

"I know what you're doing," she said at last; "you're trying to break his bank. You always said you would."

"Oh, that stuff? That was nothing but hot air. I'm a blowhard—everybody knows that."

She looked at him again, and her face became very grave, for she knew what was gnawing at his heart. And she was far from being convinced.

"You didn't thank me," she said, "for returning your grubstake. Does that mean you really don't care? Or are you just mad because I took away your mine? Of course I know you are."

"Sure, I'm mad," he admitted. "Wouldn't you be mad? Well, why should I thank you for this? You take away my mine, that was worth millions of dollars, and gimme back a piece of paper."

He slapped the contract against his leg and thrust it roughly into his shirt at which Wilhelmina burst into tears.

"I—I'm sorry I stole it," she confessed between sobs, "and now father and everybody is against me. But I did it for you—so you wouldn't get killed—and so father could have his road. And now he won't take it, because the money isn't ours. He says I'm to return it to you."

"Well, you tell your old man," burst out Wunpost brutally, "that he's crazy and I won't touch a cent. I guess I know how to get my rights without any help from him."

"Why, what do you mean?" she queried tremulously, but he shut his mouth down grimly.

"Never mind," he said; "you just hold your breath, and listen for something to drop. I ain't through, by no manner of means."

"Oh, you're going to fight Eells!" she cried out reproachfully. "I just know something dreadful will happen."

"You bet your life it will—but not to me. I'm after that old boy's hide."

"And won't you take the money?" she asked regretfully, and when he shook his head she wept. It was not easy weeping, for Wilhelmina was not the kind that practices before a mirror, and the agony of it touched his heart.

"Aw say, kid," he protested, "don't take on like that—the world hasn't come to an end. You ain't cut out for this rough stuff,

even if you did steal me blind, but I'm not so sore as all that. You tell your old man that I'll accept ten thousand dollars if he'll let me rebuild that road—because ever since it washed out I've felt guilty as hell over starting that cloud-burst down his cañon."

He rose gayly but she refused to be comforted until he laid his big hand on her head, and then she sprang up and threw both arms around his neck and made him give her a kiss. But she did not ask him to forgive her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WUNPOST HAS A BAD DREAM.

It is dangerous to start rumors against even the soundest of banks because our present-day finance is no more than a house of cards built precariously on public confidence. No bank can pay interest, or even do business, if it keeps all its money in the vaults; and yet in times of panic, if a run ever starts, every depositor comes clamoring for his money. Public confidence is shaken—and the house of cards falls, carrying with it the fortunes of all. The depositors lose their money, the bankers lose their money, and thousands of other people in nowise connected with it, are ruined by the failure of one bank. Hence the committee of Blackwater citizens, with blood in their eye, which called on John C. Calhoun.

Since the loss of his mine, Wunpost had turned ugly and morose, and his remarks about Eells, and especially about his bank, were nicely calculated to get under the rind. He was waiting for a committee of depositors, right in front of the bank, and the moment they began to talk he began to orate, and to denounce them and everything else in Blackwater. What was intended as a call-down of an envious and destructive agitator threatened momentarily to turn into a riot, and, hearing his own good name brought into question, Judson Eells stepped quickly out and challenged his bold traducer.

"W'y, sure, I said it!" answered Wunpost hotly, "and I don't mind saying it again. Your bank is all a fake, like your danged tin front; and you've got everything in your vault except money."

"Well, now, Mr. Calhoun," returned Judson Eells waspishly, "I'm going to challenge that statement, right now. What authority have you got for suggesting that my cash is less than the law requires?"

"Well," began Wunpost, "of course, I don't *know*, but——"

"No, of course you don't know!" replied Eells with a smile, "and everybody knows you don't know; but your remarks are actionable, and if you don't shut up and go away I'll instruct my attorney to sue you."

"Oh, 'shut up,' eh?" repeated Wunpost after the crowd had had its laugh, "you think I'm a blowhard, eh? You all do, don't you? Well, I'll tell you what I'll do." He paused impressively, reached down into several pockets, and pointed a finger at Eells. "I'll bet you," he said, "that I've got more money in my clothes than you have in your whole danged bank—and if you can prove any different I'll acknowledge I'm wrong by depositing my roll in your bank. Now—that's fair enough, ain't it?"

He nodded, and leered knowingly at the gaping crowd as Eells began to temporize and hedge.

"I'm a blowhard, am I?" he shouted uproariously. "My remarks are actionable, are they? Well, if I should go into court and tell half of what I know there'd be *two* men on their way to the pen!" He pointed two fingers at Eells and Phillip Lapham and the banker saw a change in the crowd. Public confidence was wavering, the cold fingers of doubt were clutching at the hearts of his depositors—but behind it all he sensed a trap. It was not by accident that Wunpost was on his corner when the committee of citizens came by, and this bet of his was no accident either, but part of some carefully laid scheme. The question was—how much money did Wunpost have? If, unknown to them, he had found access to large sums and had come there with the money on his person; then the acceptance of his bet would simply result in a farce and make the bank a byword and a mocking. If it could be said on the street that one disreputable prospector had more money in his clothes than the bank, then public confidence would receive a shrewd blow indeed, which might lead to disastrous results. But the murmur of doubt was growing, Wunpost was ranting like a demagogue—the time for a showdown had come.

"Very well!" shouted Eells, and as the crowd began to cheer the committee adjourned to the bank. Eells strode in behind the counter and threw the vault doors open, his cashier and Lapham made the count, and when Wunpost was permitted to see the cash

himself his face fell and he fumbled in his pockets.

"You win," he announced, and while all Blackwater whooped and capered he deposited his roll in the bank. It was a fabulously big roll—over forty thousand dollars in five-hundred and thousand-dollar bills—but he deposited it all without saying a word and went out to buy the drinks.

"That's all right," he said, "the drinks are on me. But I wanted to know that that money was *safe* before I put it in the bank."

It was a great triumph for Eells, and a great boost for his bank, and he insisted in the end upon shaking hands with Wunpost and assuring him there was no hard feeling. Wunpost took it all grimly, for he claimed to be a sport, but he saddled up soon after and departed for the hills, leaving Blackwater delirious with joy. So old Wunpost had been stung and called again by the redoubtable Judson Eells, and the bank had been proven to be perfectly sound and a credit to the community it served! It made pretty good reading for the *Blackwater Blade,* which had recently been established in their midst, and the committee of boosters ordered a thousand extra copies and sent them all over the country. That was real mining stuff, and every dollar of Wunpost's money had been dug from the Sockdolager Mine. Eells set to work immediately to build him a road and to order the supplies and machinery, and as the development work was pushed toward completion John C. Calhoun was almost forgotten. He was gone, that was all they knew, and if he never came back it would be soon enough for Eells.

But there was one who still watched for the prodigal's return and longed ardently for his coming, for Wilhelmina Campbell still remembered with regret the days when their ranch had been his goal. No matter where he had been, or what desperate errand took him once more into the hills, he had headed for their ranch like a homing pigeon that longs to join its mates. The portal of her tunnel had been their trysting place, where he had boasted and raged and denounced all his enemies and promised to return with their scalps. But that was just his way, and it was harmless after all, and wonderfully exciting and amusing; but now the ranch was dead, except for the gang of road makers who came by from their camp up the cañon.

For her father at last had consented to build the road, since Wunpost had disclaimed all title to the mine; but now it was his daughter who looked on with a heavy heart, convinced that the money was accursed. She had stolen it, she knew, from the man who had been her lover and who had trusted her as no one else; only Wunpost was too proud to make any protest or even acknowledge he had been wronged. He had accepted his loss with the grim stoicism of a gambler and gone out again into the hills, and the only thought that rose up to comfort her was that he had deposited all his money in the bank. Every dollar, so they said; and when he had bought his supplies the storekeeper had had to write out his check! But, anyway, he was safe, for now everybody knew that he had no money on his person, and when he came back he might stop at the ranch and she could tell him about the road.

It was being built by contract, and more solidly than ever, and already it was through the gorge and well up the cañon toward Panamint and the Homestake Mine. And the mud and rocks that the cloud-burst had deposited had been dug out and cleared away from their trees; the ditch had been enlarged, her garden restored, and everything left tidy and clean. But something was lacking and, try as she would, she failed to feel the least thrill of joy. Their poverty had been hard, and the waiting and disappointments; but even if the Homestake turned out to be a world beater she would always feel that somehow it was *his.* But when Wunpost came back he did not stop at the ranch—she saw him passing by on the trail.

He rode in hot haste, heading grimly for Blackwater, and when he spurred down the main street the crowd set up a yell, for they had learned to watch for him now. When Wunpost came to town there was sure to be something doing, something big that called for the drinks; and all the pocket miners and saloon bums were there, lined up to see him come in. But whether he had made a strike in his lucky way or was back for another bout with Eells was more than any man could say.

"Hello, there!" hailed a friend, or pseudo-friend, stepping out to make him stop at the saloon. "Hold on, what's biting you now?"

"Can't stop," announced Wunpost spur-

ring on toward the bank. "By grab, I've had a bad dream!"

"A dream, eh?" echoed the friend and then the crowd laughed and followed on up to the bank. Since Wunpost had lost in his bet with Eells and deposited all his money in the bank, he was looked upon almost with pride as a picturesque asset of the town. He made talk, and that was made into publicity, and publicity helped the town. And now this mad prank upon which he seemed bent gave promise of even greater renown. So he had had a bad dream? That piqued their curiosity, but they were not kept long in doubt. Dismounting at the bank, he glanced up at the front and then made a plunge through the door.

"Gimme my money!" he demanded, bringing his fist down with a bang and making a grab for a check. "Gimme all of it—every danged cent!"

He started to write and threw the pen to the floor as it sputtered and ruined his handiwork.

"Why, what's the matter, Mr. Calhoun?" cried Eells in astonishment as the crowd came piling in.

"Gimme a pen!" commanded Wunpost, and, having seized the cashier's, he began laboriously to write. "There!" he said, shoving the check through the wicket; and then he stood waiting, expectant.

The cashier glanced at the check and passed it back to Eells, who had hastened behind the grille, and then they looked at each other in alarm.

"Why—er—this check," began Eells, "calls for forty-two thousand eight hundred and fifty-two dollars. Do you want all that money now?"

"W'y sure!" shrilled Wunpost, "didn't I tell you I wanted it?"

"Well, it's rather unusual," went on Judson Eells lamely, and then he spoke in an aside to his cashier.

"No! None of that, now!" burst out Wunpost in a fury. "Don't you frame up any monkey-business on me! I want my money, see? And I want it right now! Dig up or I'll wreck the whole dump!"

He brought his hand down again, and Judson Eells retired while the cashier began to count out the bills.

"Here!" objected Wunpost, "I don't want all that small stuff—where's those thousand-dollar bills I turned in? They're *gone?* Well, for cripes' sake, did you think they were a *present?*"

The clerk started to explain, but Wunpost would not listen to him.

"You're a bunch of crooks!" he burst out indignantly. "I only deposited that money on a bet! And here you turn loose and spend the whole roll, and start to pay me back in fives and tens."

"No—but, Mr. Calhoun," broke in Judson Eells impatiently, "you don't understand how banking is done."

"Yes, I do!" yelled back Wunpost, "but, by grab, I had a dream, and I dreamt that your danged bank was *broke!* Now gimme my money and give it to me quick, or I'll come in there and git it, myself!"

He waited, grim and watchful, and they counted out the bills while he nodded and stuffed them into his shirt. And then they brought out gold in government-stamped sacks, and he dropped them between his feet. But the gold was not enough, and while Eells stood pale and silent the clerk dragged out the silver from the vault. Wunpost took them one by one, the great thousand-dollar sacks, and added them to the pile at his feet, and still his demand was unsatisfied.

"Well, I'm sorry," said Eells, "but that's all we have. And I consider this very unfair."

"Unfair!" yelled Wunpost. "W'y, you dog-goned thief, you've robbed me of two thousand dollars. But that's all right," he added, "it shows my dream was true. And now your tin bank *is* broke!"

He turned to the crowd, which looked on in stunned silence, and tucked in his money-stuffed shirt.

"So I'm a blowhard, am I?" he inquired sarcastically, and no one said a word.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN TRUST.

There was cursing and wailing and gnashing of teeth in Blackwater's saloons that night, and some were for hanging Wunpost; but in the morning, when they woke up and found Eells and Lapham gone, they transferred their rage to them. A committee composed of the dummy directors, who had allowed Eells to do what he would, discovered from the books that the bank had been looted and that Eells was a fugitive from justice. He had diverted the bank's funds

to his own private uses, leaving only his unsecured notes; and Lapham, the shrewd fox, had levied blackmail on his chief by charging huge sums for legal service. And now they were both gone, and the Blackwater depositors had been left without a cent.

It was galling to their pride to see Wunpost stalking about and exhibiting his dream-restored wealth; but no one could say that he had not warned them, and he was loser by two thousand dollars himself. But even at that they considered it poor taste when he hung a piece of crêpe on the door. As for the God-given dream which he professed to have received, there were those who questioned its authenticity; but whatever his hunch was it had saved him forty-odd thousand dollars, which he had deposited with Wells Fargo & Company. They had never gone broke yet, as far as he knew, and they had started as a pony express.

But there was one painful feature about his bank-wrecking triumph which Wunpost had failed to anticipate, and as poor people who had lost their all came and stood before the bank he hung his head and moved on. It was all right for Old Whiskers and men of his stripe, whose profession was predatory; but when the hard-rock miners and road makers came in, the heady wine of triumph lost its bead. There are no palms of victory without the dust of vain regrets to mar their gleaming leaves, and when he saw Wilhelmina riding in from Jail Cañon he retreated to a doorway and winced. This was to have been his high spot, his magnum of victory; but somehow he sensed that no great joy would come from it, although, of course, she had it coming to her. And Wilhelmina simply stared at the sign "Bank Closed," and leaned against the door and cried.

That was too much for Wunpost, who had been handing out five dollars each to all of the workingmen who were broke, and he strode across the street and approached her.

"What *you* crying about?" he asked, and when she shook her head he shuffled his feet and stood silent. "Come on up to the office," he said at last, and she followed him to the bare little room. There a short time before he had interceded to save her when she had all but signed the contract with Eells; but now at one blow he had destroyed what was built up and left her without a cent.

"What you crying about?" he repeated as she sank down by the desk and fixed him with her sad, reproachful eyes. "You ought to be tickled to death."

"Because I've lost all my money," she answered dejectedly, "and we owe the contractors for the road."

"Oh, that's all right," he said, "I'll get you some more money. But say, didn't you do what I said? Why, I told you the last thing before I went away to git that first payment money *out!*"

"You did not!" she denied, "you told me to draw a few hundred. And then you turned around and deposited all you had, so I thought the bank must be safe."

"What—safe with Judson Eells? Safe with Lapham behind the scenes? Say, you'll never do at all. Have you heard the big news? Well, they've both skipped to Mexico, and the depositors won't get a cent."

"Then what about my contract?" she burst out tearfully. "I've sold him my mine, and now he's run away, so who's going to make the next payment?"

"They ain't nobody," grinned Wunpost, "and that's just the point—I told you I'd come back with his scalp!"

"Yes, but what about *us?*" she clamored accusingly, "who's going to pay for the road and all? Oh, I knew all the time that you'd never forgive me, and now you've just ruined everything."

"Never asked me to forgive you," defended Wunpost stoutly, "but I don't mind admitting I was sore. It's all right, of course, if you think you can play the game—but I never thought you'd rob a *friend!*"

"But you dared me to!" she cried, "and didn't I offer it for almost nothing, just to keep you from getting killed? And then, after I'd done everything to get back your contract you didn't even say: Thanks!"

"No, sure not," he agreed. "What should I be thanking *you* for? Did I ask you to get back my grubstake? Not by a long shot I didn't—what I wanted was my mine, and you turned around and sold it to Eells. Well, where's your friend now, and his yeller dog, Lapham? Skally-hooting across the desert for Mexico!"

"And isn't my contract any good? Won't the bank take it, or anybody? Oh, I think you're just—just hateful!"

"You bet I am, kid!" he announced with a swagger, "that's my long suit, savvy—hate! I never forgive an enemy and I

never forget a friend, and the man don't live that can *do* me! I'll git him, if it takes a thousand years!"

"Oh, there you go," she sighed, dusting her desk off petulantly, and then she bowed her head in thought. "But I must say," she admitted, "you have done what you said. But I thought you were just bragging at the time."

"They *all* did!" he beamed, "but I've showed 'em, by grab—they ain't calling me a blowhard now. These Blackwater stiffs that wanted to run me out of town are coming around now to borrow five. They took up with a crook, just because he boosted for their town, and now they're left holding the sack. But if they'd listened to me they wouldn't be left flat, because I told 'em I was after his hide. And say, you should've seen him, when I came into his bank and shoved that big check under his nose! He knowed what I was thinking, and he never said 'Boo!' I showed him whether I knew how to write!"

He sat back and grinned broadly, and Wilhelmina smiled, though a wistful look had crept into her eyes.

"Then I suppose," she said, "you're always going to hate *me*, because, of course, I did steal your mine. But now I'm glad it's gone, because I wasn't happy a minute—do you think you can forgive me, some time?"

She glanced up appealingly, but his brows had come down and he was staring at her fiercely.

"Gone!" he roared, "your mine ain't gone! Ain't you ever read that contract we framed up? Well, the mine reverts to you the first time a payment isn't made or *if the buyer becomes a fugitive from justice!* Yeh, my friend slipped that in along with the rest of it, about death or an act of God. Say, that's what you might call headwork!"

He jerked his chin and grinned admiringly, but Wilhelmina did not respond.

"Yes," she objected, "but how do I get the money to pay the men for building the road? Because the twenty-five thousand dollars that I had in the bank——"

"Get it?" cried Wunpost. "Why you go up to your mine and dig out some big chunks of gold, and then you send it out and sell it at the mint and start a little bank of your own. But say, kid, you're all right—I like you and all that—but something tells me you ain't cut out for business. Now you'd better just turn this mine over to me——"

"Oh, *will* you take it back?" she cried out impulsively leaping up and beginning to smile. "I've just *wanted* to give it to you, but—well, of course, I did steal it. And will you take me back for a friend?"

"Well, I might," conceded Wunpost rising slowly to his feet, and then he shook his head. "But you're no business woman," he stated, "what I was trying to say was——"

"Well, let's own it together!" She dimpled impatiently and Wunpost accepted the trust.

THE END.

NOT YET INDORSED BY TAFT

AN actress had just imparted the amazing information that she had retained her slender and saplinglike form by a lifelong habit of staring for a certain length of time every day at a statue of Venus de Melos.

Thereupon, Frank Morse, the theatrical writer, alarmed by his rapid and steady increments of flabbiness, flesh, and fatness, announced in print that he would put in an hour or so every morning in serious contemplation of a plaster cast of the emaciated Don Quixote.

A few days later a young woman, introducing herself as Mildred, informed him by telephone that she had been deeply moved by his announcement of the "fat cure." She concluded:

"Avoirdupois is my pet disease. But say, old Humpty-Dumpty! why couldn't I shed a hundredweight or so by staring at a toothpick instead of a statue?"

The Touchstone

By G. B. Lancaster

Author of "The Knowledge of Two," Etc.

It is in the remote places of the earth, rather than in crowded cities, that the soul is apt to be awakened or reawakened. The Mounted Policeman who started on a three-months' journey in the Far North after an insane girl had, up to that time, been a rank materialist

BEING strong as a bull moose and insensitive as a seal, Munro had become a habit with the Mounted Police headquarters at Regina, Saskatchewan, when they wanted a stopgap. He served two years at Churchill on Hudson Bay, where a man sleeps, smokes, loses a dollar at poker, and wins it again next day. He tramped and paddled the Barrens for a year on the Lasky case, bringing in his man with a broken head—this being the method of persuasion he liked best. He did the three-year trick at Herschel in the Arctic —this is the supreme nerve test—and came out of it with a limp, having lost a toe by frostbite, and his temperamental dullness duller than ever. He was an earthy man, fond of food and sleep, drink—when he could get it—and coarse stories. He walked soft, as all moccasined men do; his eyebrows tufted a little, like a lynx's ears, and his lean shoulders were a little bowed.

Seven years of more or less continuous muckraking in the police had convinced him that woman is responsible for all the trouble and only half the fun of the world; and, therefore, when he came down from Herschel, saw Bess Flanigan at Moose Rapids, and wanted to marry her on sight, all the river was surprised. When Munro wanted a thing—which was seldom—he wanted it violently. He had the reputation of raising hell on these occasions, and he raised it now. All his encounters with women before had been no more than husks blown down a dusty wind, and he forgot them as he never forgot some of his encounters with men. But he went to this wooing with the decision of the original cave man, and little more grace. Bess, known along the river as "mighty hot stuff," accepted his kisses with alacrity, but met further demands with distaste.

"No fears! No hitchin' fur me yet," she told him. "Marryin's dry hash."

"But I want you," said Munro in his husky bass. "D'you get thet, you little devil? I *want you!*"

And then she would run from him like a prairie hen, though not so fast but that he, suddenly savage, could catch her. And then it would all begin over again.

Matters stood so, with the man growing grimmer and more insistent and the girl blowing hot and cold, when the Indians brought a bleak tale of tragedy out of the ranges, and the sergeant sent Munro up to investigate.

"The man'll have been dead three months, and the woman'll likely be dead or crazy. You'll have to do what you can, Munro. Take the Peterborough and plenty of grub, and bring her in."

"I've had my spell of the North for one while." Munro looked ugly.

"Sure. But I can't send Watson. He's sick. Sorry."

Munro loaded the long strip-cedar canoe, added a sufficiency of shooting gear and a frying pan, and went to Bess with explanations. With a mouthful of sweetmeats she sat up, frowsy and palpable as the little back parlor that smelt of last year and all the years behind that.

"A woman? How old?"

"Search me."

"Well, I ain't goin' to hev you after no woman, even if her husban' is killed. The sassy thing. Leave her be."

"Hoh!" Munro added a blistering oath. "You're jealous!"

He seized her; was told to "go plumb to blazes," took his fill of rough kisses, and parted, with his keen eyes a little hotter, his breath noisier, his whole leathery body stirred to a swifter pulse. Then he drove his canoe northward for some hundreds of miles; turned up the Porcupine, and came to the hilly country where streams are rapid and

full of portages. The last ice of spring had gone down the Mackenzie before him; the stars watched his sleep, and the winds of a continent beat his brown leather face. Great curved skies flushed to sunrise and flamed to sunset; mirage and mystery beckoned from endless horizons. And Munro went through it just as the animals do. Calling duck, rising fish made him think of food. Night suggested sleep; day, work. Murkily through all swam a vision of Bess—her coarse red cheeks; her big, strapping body; her loud voice. She was material enough to satisfy Munro, who did not believe in anything but the material, and he was thinking of her when he found at last the half-grown clearing among the Selkirk pines where Orme's cabin stood.

It was sun-mellowed and beautiful, with tall purplish asters and fireweed about it and a new-cut brush pile oozing fragrant sap. But the door was shut. Munro, soft on moccasined feet, opened it gently, found the place empty—if you except a wealth of growing flowers in tins and a red squirrel which whisked through the window—made one of those quick, complete inspections for which he was famous, and went out again to find Orme's wife. The cabin was dainty, restrained as any maid's bower, but the intimate expression of it meant nothing to Munro. The woman might be mad, but she was not helpless. That was all.

The woods here were high and open, filled with pine and balsam odors, and the deep orange glow of sunset. Something flickered among the boles—a shaft of light, an elf, a frolicksome thought—Munro could not place it any more than he could place the low gray shadow following until both whirled near and he knew the one for a barefoot bareheaded girl and the other for a great wolf dog. The dog halted suddenly, with bristling hackles and the greenish wolf light behind the eyes. The girl shook back her bright hair, listening, slim and light as a bird. Then the elfin fun was swept from her small face by utter horror, utter fear.

"*Ben!*" Her brown little hands went up to her head. "Oh, I thought you'd gone. Oh, what is it? Why have you come back?" she cried.

"So he *is* gone. I'm not Ben. Can't you see that, ma'am?"

"Ah—don't lie to me any more! Do you think that looking different can make you different? Nothing can do that. But I said you could kill me before I'd help in any of your crook games again. You can, too. I don't care."

Her hands fell. She stood, with all fire and light gone out of her. Munro took her by the arm, feeling her wince.

"Come right along till I feed you suthin' hot. That'll put sense into you," he said.

But she ate in frightened silence, giving most to the snarling wolf dog. Then she flashed past him and was gone to the forest, calling to the hoot owls as she ran. Munro did the necessary chores, and sat down to smoke and consider the case, without one quiver of sentiment or pity. He was calloused to almost every form of madness and tragedy that human nature can bear; he had lived always on the edge of those vast secrets which prompt all human passions; and yet the first dim sensation that forces intangible, mysterious, existed came with the return of this moonlight-shy thing and her dog from the shadows.

"I forgot," she whispered. "Ben—I did promise to obey. But God *couldn't* want me to do wrong, could He?"

Munro could have broken her back with one hand. But he could not pierce the gossamer texture of the brain behind those sweet, blank eyes.

"Come here," he said. "Now—you listen. We're going down river to-morrow, an' you gotter quit runnin' off like this ever' time we make camp. See? I got no time to waste waitin' on you."

"We're so happy in the woods, Shon and I. All the birds and animals talk to us. Can't you go away again and leave me here? Please! I was so happy."

Munro was quick to seize his advantage. He could bully her into obedience.

"Like hell I can't! Don't talk mush. You git to bed; we're startin' early.

"Crazy as a loon," he said, when she had shut the cabin door on him. "But maybe I can kip her busy bein' scart o' me."

Next morning he had little trouble in adjusting her to his lead. She sat passive in the long Peterborough, with her few belongings and Shon at her feet while Munro slaved at the paddle. But when he fried bacon and boiled tea at midday she could not eat.

"It's dirty," she pleaded, with tearful eyes on her plate.

"Hell! You et off of it last night, didn't you? Where you from, anyway?"

Voice more than words she seemed to take as command. She tried; put down knife and fork. Munro swore, turning her whiter. "See here, you ain't got the strength of a mouse, an' we sure got a long trail. You eat that up."

She choked over it and obeyed. But Munro felt curiously irritated as he paddled all that breathless afternoon past naked, uncaring hills. Purple and opal mists came over them at sunset, and then it seemed to him that they were making faces. This notion was as new as it was unwelcome. He had never been aware in any way of the subtleties which finer-fibered natures thrill and answer to; but already something about this girl was affecting him as the mysterious affects animals. He did not know it for a purer atmosphere than he had breathed yet.

For two days she barely spoke; obeying him in pathetic haste, clinging to the dog as to an only refuge, crooning softly to herself, or watching the march of the forest or the great arc of the sky with those soft bewildered eyes, hauntingly childish. At first this shadow girl—Munro called her Isobel when he remembered—brought up the image of Bess more poignant, more defined. The man, with his deep breaths shaking his sweating, sinewy body, felt desire with every throb of his hot blood. He wanted to see Bess' broad bosom heave, her coarse cheeks redden, her big fleshy arms reach out to him. These were the crude and obvious attractions which he could understand. And then Isobel would begin her low, sweet crooning again, and the man, kneeling Indian-wise and steadily dipping the paddle, would find himself marveling at the delicate fineness of her skin, the tapering fingers with their pretty nails, the shining hair, the fastidiousness of body which the fastidious spirit upheld, even in this life stripped to the essentials.

Munro did not know anything about spirit; did not know that she had been a thing of fire and dew before Orme quenched her. But he did know enough to see that under the rest and silence and good feeding she was slowly taking hold on life again. Her obsession regarding himself Munro could understand. The one man with her before the shock which numbed her had been her husband. It might very well seem natural that the one man with her now should be the same. On the third evening, when he came to the fire with an armful of driftwood, she looked at him with more vitality than she had shown since she saw him in the woods.

"Ben—tell me. There's something wrong with me, or with you. Isn't there? I can't remember. You were so dreadfully angry—and then the tree fell. And then God sent the birds and the animals to play with me, and Shon and I were so happy. And now—I'm so afraid—when you don't talk I always know you're going to do something to me again, Ben."

Munro stared under thick brows. Some one had once said that he had a heart as rough as Esau's hand, and it is certain that few things were sacred to him. Birth, mating, and death he knew as merely sordid parts of nature's mechanics, and he rated man little higher than the animals. His own tastes were savage enough. He liked to watch a dogfight; to follow up a kill and see the blood flow; to feel passions of love and hate and battle boil through his strong veins. But he was staring now like one who tries to grasp something elusive, baffling.

"You kip right on bein' happy. An' eat. That's what I want you to do."

"And you won't want to make me do anything wrong, Ben?"

There was an intimate wistfulness and innocence about her which suddenly shook him. He came a swift step nearer, laying a hot hand on her shoulder.

"What you scared of me doing, eh?"

"Please, oh, please!" She slipped away. "I'll be good, but please don't touch me. I can't bear it yet." And then she was gone again to the forest which seemed the healer for all her wounds.

Through the next days life put Munro to learning strange and subtle things. This woman child was nebulous, irritating, and yet, to his acute discomfort, she made herself felt. It was not easy to have her dainty ways, her fine reserves, her wild, pure rushes of thought tripping him every moment. But still less was it easy to see the shocked color dye her face, or the long, heavy silences after he had treated her with the brutish directness natural to him. At the portages he carried his load sullenly, as a man does, but she hers with the gayety of a child. One evening she turned aside to gather strawberries, and came dancing to where he made the cooking fire, the fruit less lovely than the color in her face, and

Shon leaping against her like a long gray wave.

"Ben!" she cried. "Where are we going to? I never thought of that before."

"Goin' to?"

"When we're through with the trail? What are you doing with me?"

She was life incarnate, with the wind in her bright hair. Not mere animated flesh like Bess. Munro could not have analyzed the difference, but he knew it with a stab that left him gasping. And he knew, as though for the first time, what he was going to do with her. High white walls and iron bars, a gibbering, loathly assemblage, warders—cells that lock—— He thrust the thought from him with a horror such as he had never felt for the reality, and continued shoveling pork and beans down his throat in silence. She asked no more, but presently came the shy, protesting laugh he was beginning to know.

"Ben, couldn't you wash before you eat? It doesn't seem sort of respecting you or me when you come like that."

Munro started. Stripped to shirt and trousers, his hairy limbs matted with sweat and mud, and with blood from the bites of swarming blackflies, he looked more of the brute than Shon did. "What'd I want with respectin' myself, eh?"

"Because, perhaps because I once respected you. I'd like to do it again."

"How'd you know you respected me when you don't remember what I was like?"

"I don't know." The slight figure was a child's, but the strange, soft eyes were all a woman's. "I just know that you're my man, Ben. I think when things got ugly maybe you changed then. And when—if—we love each other again you'll look as you used to. I keep hoping that."

"You're welcome. Hopes are cheap," said the man, and forced a laugh.

But a chord had been struck which vibrated louder and louder as he went to the portaging of the packs over the trail where animal spore crossed and recrossed in a thin network of threads on the dulling ground. It was a long portage, and at the far end he had pitched the skin tent for her, and she slept there while the moon trod the dreaming hours and the man trod the rocky trail, with night creatures calling in the woods round, and wild storms calling in himself. Sure-footed he went, with eyes on the ground, like one who has lost something a short while since and fears that he may never find it again. The moon was low in the west when he came for the last time with the canoe—balanced on his shoulders by cross strapping of the paddles—flung before him, and the corded muscles of neck and throat twitching with weariness. But he did not rest. He stood long by the door of the tent, with head bent like an animal's, listening to her breath. Then, with a low growling cry like an animal's, he turned and ran into the woods.

Now began for Munro an intolerable torment. Wild dreams crashed about him, strange passions, cravings for things unknown, unrealized, and yet most cruelly poignant. The power of sex, the unconscious alchemy of a crystal-pure soul were breaking up the clods in him, hewing out the gold. And he suffered the work with foul cursings, with water weakness of spirit, with vague despair, with utter horror when he thought of Bess. Summer was young about them yet. Mating birds twittered round their breakfast fires; the bull moose called the shy cow in the woods; every thicket throbbed with the busy rustles of homemakers, just as the tall skies rang from the wide horizons to the cry of wild geese and swan driving north to the breeding grounds. Munro brought Isobel a baby bear cub one day, and saw her clasp it close, crooning.

"It's only pretense," she said, with one of her sweet flushes. "I'm very good at pretending, you know, Ben."

It was just a black bear pup. She was just a half-crazed woman. He was just a tool of the law with a hideous duty to do. Yet to Munro the tall pines seemed lit tapers, her bright head held a halo, the wind drumming across empty leagues of earth was the triumphant thanksgiving for some great and holy deed achieved. The vision was gone in an instant. But for that instant Munro had seen behind the veil.

"God!" he said. "God! God!" His great horny hands came over his face. An almost physical agony caught him. And then her arms were round his head, soft and light as feathers, and the sweet, warm fragrance of her seemed drowning his brain out.

"I love you. Ben, I love you," she whispered. "All this long time—you've been kind. Ben, I love you again."

She was stooped over him, cradling his rough head against her breast. And sud-

denly Munro slid to his knees, groaning like a wounded bull; clutching her about the waist; abasing himself in savage intensity.

"Don't touch me! Kick me! Spit on me! I'm a brute. I ought to be dead."

"Ben, my dear old boy. What is it?"

Her voice was anxious, strong, the tender concern of a woman for distress. Recognizing it with his trained ear, Munro rose to the great moment of his life. Sense might now be shocked into her as it had been shocked out. He would lose her in the doing of it, but he would save her from those whitewashed walls and iron bars. A moment more he kept his face against her, not knowing that his every pulse beat was a prayer. Then he stood up. She had given him a soul, and already he was obeying that which the soul requires of the flesh.

"I'm not Ben. I'm not your husband. I'm a stranger to you, and that's God's truth," he said.

"You're not——" She shrank back, with the big eyes widening below the sensitive dark brows. "I don't understand."

"Sure you do. Your husband's dead. Dead as Sam Hill. I'm Corporal Munro, an' you've been crazy for a spell."

"Crazy?"

"Yep. So long's you thought I was your husband you was crazy. Now you know I'm Corporal Munro you're sane. See?"

"Oh, what are you saying?" She pushed her hair back from the white forehead, staring still. "You're *Ben*. You must be Ben."

"I'm Corporal Munro, an' you gotter git that into your head before we make Moose Rapids. You gotter. When the tree fell that killed Ben you got hit or got scart crazy. I dunno which. But you're sane now, and you know I'm Corporal Munro. See?"

Behind them the furry bear pup lay on the ground, whimpering. The wolf dog watched, red-eyed and alert. All the primal fires of life were flickering round the woman and the man. Munro felt them scorch him, and for one instant which seemed to wrench body and soul apart, he was on the brink of gripping her to him; telling her that he was Ben—any one she chose, so long as she would kiss him again. But she had led him too far up the heights for that. He stood still. Slowly she put her hands up, over her quivering lips, her strained eyes.

"Please go away," she said unsteadily. "I must think. I want to think."

And Munro went.

Her eyes would not meet his next day. They not speak more than the words of common talk. With a barrier between them, wide as the Barren Lands, tall as the ranges, they came past glowing stretches of firewood and crimson sumac and scented balm of gilead into the little backwater of Moose Rapids on the second afternoon. Munro, giving her his hand to help her from the canoe, looked down with burning eyes into a brown pair, clear and cold as deep water.

"You know I'm not your husband, ma'am?"

"I know," she said, and walked to meet the sergeant with the poise of a great lady, despite her tattered skirts and moccasined feet. The sergeant received her with respectful interest, learning nothing from Munro's brief report. And then he took her away to the house of the Hudson's Bay factor, and Munro went to Bess.

Something—the man in him, apart from the god—was hoping that she would find favor in his sight again. He believed almost in his desolation, that he could take from this woman what the other would never give. But at first sight of the musty little back parlor and the coarse-faced, untidy figure in it he knew that the lesser could not comfort him any more. Munro had touched the heights, and, like any other man, he had to pay for it.

"Well, you got back," she said, but her voice was uneasy, her eyes doubtful. He was washed and shaven, neat in his barrack dress again, but he was not the Munro who had gone to the lone patrol three months ago. Finer-drawn of body, thinner of jaw, deeper and more steadfast of eye, he was uncomfortably changed, with an air of something remote, indefinably strong.

Briefly he went to the matter in hand, and against the burst of her vindictive fury he brought neither curses nor fury in return.

"I've treated you badly. I'm willing to pay you—in reason," he said, and presently she shrugged her thick shoulders, snapped her fingers, and laughed.

"So you shall, then. I'll take it fur a weddin' present, an' I'll marry Lon Thompson. He's allers pesterin' me. You're goin' to marry that there widder, I s'pose."

"Do you?' said Munro.

He went out, drawing in the day's clean breath with relief, and watched the duck

splashing in the brown seeded sedge and the blue sky beyond, cut by a few swan flying north. Never again would he go north without the turning of a knife in his wound. His heart felt dead in him, for these long days of stress had shaken even his iron nerve. The Hudson's Bay factor came slowly down the bank.

"Fine woman that Mrs. Orme is," he said. "And so clever. You must have had the time of your life bringing her down, Munro."

"Sure," said Munro.

"She wants to see you. Told me to send you along."

"To see me?"

Munro went. But his heart failed him on the sill of the cool rose-scented room where the white figure of a woman showed by the window.

"You sent for me, ma'am?" he said.

And then she turned and ran to him—the elf of the woodland as he had seen her first, with all the happiness of the world in her radiant face.

Munro gave her no time for speech. Nor had he any himself. For he swept her up in his great arms and met her lips with his.

AN INDUSTRIAL MELTING POT

WHEN immigration to the United States began to reach its zenith, the difference in standards of living in the Old World—where wages were much lower than here—and the New, made competition for work with the immigrants a menace to American workers. People living under hard conditions for generations, as many European workers had done, accept these conditions as normal. So the immigrants could live in what to them was comparative comfort on half the wages American workers regarded as necessary to existence, and in many cases they supplanted American workers.

The Russian and Polish Jews, driven here by persecution or necessity, in this way obtained almost a monopoly of the clothing and allied industries in the principal cities. The Italians were satisfied with so little that they practically monopolized the work of excavating and similar unskilled labor, which the Irish workers had hitherto done. In Italy they lived in a way that the poorest native-American worker would find almost impossible, and the grand aim of many of them was to save money for several years and go back to Italy to spend it, returning to the United States later. The American labor unions then denounced the "dagoes" as the worst enemies of the workers at their meetings, and a bitter hatred of Italians developed among them.

But within the last twenty or twenty-five years a complete change has taken place in the relations between foreign-born and American workers. Russian and Polish Jews began to adopt the American standards of living. They organized trade unions and demanded and obtained higher remuneration through strikes and other means. When the war with Germany began their wages were three or four times as high or more, as those they were willing to work for a generation ago, their working hours being also reduced. A new generation had arisen which had assimilated American ideas and standards.

This applies even in a more marked degree to the Italians. They have now, nearly as a rule, the same standards of wages and living as the native-born American workers. The younger generation insists on as high wages as American-born workers demand in the building trades and other industries.

The assimilation of American workers' ideas and standards is going on here also among workers of other nationalities and the United States is becoming an industrial melting pot for the workers in the different European races who are here. And this assimilation will go on when the normal tide of immigration, which was restricted during the late war, is resumed.

Setting Them Up

By Shepard Morgan

"From now on he can keep the devil to himself," was Alderman O'Day's way of announcing his retirement from the dispensation of liquid joy in favor of a rival up the street

DOWN on Center Street, not so far from the Tombs, used to be O'Day's saloon. For distinction there were few places in town like it—not because of its looks, which were like ten thousand other places in New York, but because behind its swinging doors ruled the picturesque morality of Alderman O'Day. You entered on O'Day's terms or not at all. As for O'Day himself, he was a great man in the old second assembly district, and regarded his saloon with solemnity, as the visible sign of his hold on the public mind.

It helped him into the board of aldermen; no one would doubt it, and when you consider the length of O'Day's service there, and the lofty nature of his performances, you understand how his saloon came to be regarded as a forum—the market place where the people came to discuss city affairs, who should get this job and who should get that. The greater, therefore, was the wonder when the news came out that O'Day had shut his place up, in the very moment of its prosperity.

There were many versions of the affair. Some said—and these were the Republican minority—that O'Day could not stand the competition of the Dutchman, whose place a block up the street was taking hold of those who like alcohol without stint or limit. Others put it down to the shock O'Day got the night he saw blood in Julius' kitchen. Dan, the bartender, who knew O'Day the best of all, and was appointed inspector in the department of licenses the morning after O'Day closed up, was certain the cause lay deeper than either of these. He had a notion the alderman's hasty action was off the same piece of cloth as his fixed principle of drinking mineral water clear.

Dan, with the same gift for accuracy that fixed the number of drinks taken from a back-room bottle, set apart a certain Tuesday in December as the time when O'Day took his sudden decision. It was on that night that Julius came in a little sulky from his work on the cars and young Mickey Lucca was on his good behavior because O'Day had bailed him out of the Tombs. It was also on that night that Julius' wife —but Dan never talked much about that; he had not seen it himself anyway.

"Julius," Dan heard the alderman saying, as he stood before the bar early that evening, "Julius, I'm all shot to pieces. No, it ain't my work on the board. The duties of office ain't so bad, but my constituents is something fierce."

"Yuh; you said sumping, boss," Julius agreed, talking from the bottom of a glass of dark. "This beer is all right."

"Now, f'rinstance," the alderman went on, pointing to the back room. "There's young Mickey in there. Last night he mixes it up at the Dutchman's. You heard about it, Julius?"

Julius had, to his regret.

"Well, I'm telling you. Does Mickey go running to the Dutchman to get him off? He does not. It's me he shouts for, and it's me that puts up the bail. Dan, see what the boys in the back room will have."

The fact was that Mickey had gone O'Day's limit the night before, and then adjourned to the Dutchman's to finish off. O'Day made it his business to see that his people left cheerful but composed. He used to say his motto was, "Enough's enough." As for the Dutchman, he had no principles of that sort; he sold as long as a man could stand and pay. O'Day did not like the Dutchman.

"Julius," said O'Day at last, "you'd better be going home to the missus."

Julius shook his head. He was a little man, dark, with uncertain features that indicated an equally uncertain parentage. He was of the district—Jew, Italian, Irish, Greek, Slav; nobody knew and he did not care.

"I ain't for going home. The old woman

rang up some fares on my face this morning," he said.

Julius ran a surface car and got his language from the same source as his pay envelope. He pointed to a row of bruises on his nose and cheek bones.

"Bumped you on the beezer, hey?" said the alderman. "What was it you done to deserve it?"

Julius did not want to tell. If the affair had got into the police records, it would have gone down on the station-house blotter as an "altercation, resulting in contusions and lacerations." Fortunately, it had not got so far. Plainly here was a case for O'Day's mediation. He used to say, nodding toward the Criminal Courts Building, "Maybe you think they do a big business over there. But the Tombs court ain't got anything on me. I clean up rows before they happen."

To Julius, O'Day went on, smiling: "Your wife should have nicked your bean with a stove lid; then you'd have something to talk about." In a moment he added keenly: "Julius, did you beat it straight home from here last night?"

"What's it to you?" replied the other, looking a little ugly.

Then O'Day called for Mickey, who was in the back room. He had a theory about Julius, and his feeling for the Dutchman prompted him to pursue it. Mickey came.

"Did you and Julius have a good time last night?" O'Day inquired politely, "and why did you muss him up?"

"S'help me, I didn't land on him once, not even once, boss. S'help me, I didn't," said Mickey. Then adding with the pride of his professional ring record: "If I did, should he look as good as he does now? We was together at the Dutchman's——"

O'Day's face sobered. His suspicion about the Dutchman's was confirmed.

"How did it happen you weren't pinched, too, Julius?" he asked.

Julius did not answer. He knew what O'Day would say if he learned all the truth. He did not know how ably the alderman would feel him out, whether he replied directly or not. It developed, therefore, under the alderman's combing, that Julius had kept clear of the police only because he was one step nearer than Mickey to the Dutchman's side door. He reached home congratulating himself. But the morning found him unsteady, so that when his wife said, "Get up, you lazy do-nothing, and go to work," he threw a milk bottle at his little daughter who was singing a song to herself. As luck would have it, Julius missed his aim, but his wife punished him, nevertheless, with the results so plainly marked on his face.

"You done all that, did you?" said O'Day. "And all you got was a swipe on the map. You should 'a' got all what was coming to you, making a bum out of yourself at the Dutchman's. What have I been telling you?"

Julius' early morning sense of wrong revived. Bound to O'Day by every tie of code and personal interest, nevertheless he was in no mood to listen to counsel or reproof.

"Aw, can it, tie it up, give yerself two bells, you make me tired," said Julius in a breath.

"Mickey," said O'Day, turning to the Italian, "this guy is getting soused. Last night I send him home like a gentleman, rosy and happy. Is that enough? It is not. He goes down to the Dutchman's and gets full, and the next I hear he's been trying to knock the block off his kid."

"Is that so?" observed Julius, "and what's it to you? Go chase yerself. That's what I say—go chase yerself."

In dignity he turned his back on O'Day and invited Mickey to step up and have a drink. Then things began to happen. The doors of O'Day's saloon opened and shut, leaving Julius to pick himself up from the pavement. The fallen angels, turned out of Paradise, cannot have had a swifter judgment.

"Well," remarked Mr. O'Day when it was over, "when a guy gets rough there's only one side of my place for him and that's the outside. Too bad." he added reflectively. "Julius is a nice little fella, but he don't know when enough's enough. And you can't teach him. Dan, see what the boys inside will have."

The evening passed as usual. A few of O'Day's political adjutants, known as captains, dropped in to talk off-season politics. Two or three boys came by the side door to ask for a couple of buckets of coal. A woman sent word that she needed medicine for the baby. She got it. The line at the bar grew and thinned and grew again. The pinochle game in the back room, the casual sitters at the marble-topped tables, the cash

register with its bell and flashing lights, the rattle and slam of the swinging doors—all these were as usual, signs of good business and good politics.

Yet O'Day was uneasy. Julius was on his mind.

"A nice little fella," he repeated. "A nice little fella, but he don't know enough's enough."

Presently he called for Mickey.

"Mickey," he said, "go down to the Dutchman's and see if Julius is there. And mind you," he added, "if you're not back here in five minutes by the clock, bail or no bail, back to the jug you go."

With this security for Mickey's return, he settled himself for a five minutes' wait. Mickey was punctual.

"He ain't there," he reported. Assuming that his business was over he started back to the pinochle game.

"Not so fast there, Mickey," said the alderman suspiciously. "You say he ain't there."

"I did."

"Has he been there?"

Mickey hesitated.

"Julius ain't a wrong guy," he parried.

"Mickey, I says to you now, has he been there?"

"Well, he was there. Just dropped in, you might say."

O'Day wanted to know more. He asked Mickey how he found it out.

"I was chinning with a guy, and he says to me, a fella got gay with the Dutchman just now, and I says, who was it, and he says it was Julius, and then they tossed him out."

O'Day looked at the clock. Figures which required no cash register to compute showed that Julius had been at the Dutchman's all of three hours.

"Julius can do a lot in three hours," he reflected.

Maybe it was half an hour later, maybe less, when O'Day was startled by an untoward commotion in the back room. It was not the rapid opening and shutting of a door, not the quick steps, not the sound of a woman's voice calling him by name, but the scramble of a dozen men to their feet that brought him with a spring to his own. No common petitioner for alms would so far shatter the calm of a group of pinochle players.

O'Day strode into the back room to see what was the matter. There, in the half light of the side entrance, stood Julius' wife; it took no second glance to see why the pinochle players had deserted their game. Her hair hung over her shawl in disarray, and the one hand that was free was trying womanlike to put it back in place. The garment clung loosely to her shoulders and did not hide a damp and bloody stain that spread left and right across her waist. It was on this that the eyes of the watchers were fixed.

"My God, you're hurt," said O'Day, stepping forward and forcing her into a chair beside one of the tables.

"I ain't hurt," she denied. "It ain't me. It's Freda."

She shed no tears. She sat there, face in hands, and panting after her headlong progress through the streets, like an animal taking breath before making another run. O'Day would have liked it better if she had made an outcry. He was used to hysterics and knew how to treat them. But this dry turmoil made him restless. It was like a storm without rain.

"Well——" he said after a moment, trying to break the suspense.

She made no response. Behind him O'Day heard the murmurs of his guests, speculating in whispers on this and that. He turned to Mickey and said: "Go and get a drink of rye from Dan—no water. She's all shot to pieces."

Mickey, famous for his footwork, was back in an instant. He offered her the drink. She looked up, and, seeing what it was, asked: "You mean that for me?"

Her tone was one of incredulity, almost of shrinking.

"Because if you do," she went on, "I won't have nothing to do with it. Do you know what that and others like it did in my house to-night? You don't? Well, then, look!"

She jumped to her feet and threw back the shawl that hung from her shoulders, disclosing to the full glare of the light the sodden stain that dyed her waist.

"See that," she cried, a sudden flame leaping into her eyes. "Look at it, it's blood. Touch it, and your hands will be red like mine. It's blood, Freda's blood, every bit. And she nothing but a baby still."

Julius' wife reached out her hand as though she could not help it and struck.

Mickey's arm. The glass fell to the floor and broke.

"There, there," interposed O'Day, with a confidence he did not feel. "It will come out all right. One of the boys will go along with you and see you're fixed straight."

"You'll forgive me for taking on so, alderman," she said, gathering hold of herself out of respect for his high place. "But it's you that must come. Julius said so. He won't stand for anybody else. Freda's pretty bad. Julius sent me after you."

She opened the door and was half outside when she turned back.

"Here," she called to the gaping pinochle players, "one of you ring up the doctor."

O'Day was at her side without hat or coat. Through the empty streets they hurried, beneath the unblinking gaze of street lamps, past closed stores, around the corner where the Dutchman's was still going full blast. A mechanical piano was turning out its raucous melody.

The alderman shivered. It was here Julius stopped last night on his way home —"rosy and happy"—and it was from here that he went home to a savage awakening in the morning. And it was here Julius stopped to-night, before going home to what the alderman dared not think.

They passed in at an ancient door which closed behind them with a slam, leaving them in a littered hallway lighted by a dim and odorous gas jet. Up three flights they climbed breathlessly. O'Day stepped aside while the woman rapped and then fumbled with the lock. She opened it and they went into Julius' home.

A lamp was burning on the table. Its close-fitting red globe reduced its influence to the last degree, leaving it to the imagination to fill the picture frames with crude prints, to furnish the room with chairs and stands of raw imitation mahogany.

"She's in here," said Julius' wife, going to a bedroom door.

O'Day's quick ear caught the sound of a sigh, almost a moan. He heard such a sound once when his own child turned in an uneasy dream.

The woman felt in her pocket for another key. Finding it she rattled it anxiously in the lock.

"I locked her in," she explained. "I was afraid Julius might get rough again."

The child lay crosswise on the bed, face up and dark eyes open. She showed no sign when her mother leaned over her. O'Day stepped up and felt her hands. His eyes fell upon her black hair, very heavy and thick for so little a girl, and he wondered for an instant why it clung so closely just behind the temple. His sight, grown accustomed to the dim light, defined a stain on the coverlet like that which he had seen on the mother's waist.

"That's where it hit her," she said, pointing.

"Let her be," said the alderman. "Where's Julius?"

Before she could answer the outer door opened to admit a youngster from St. Gregory's, his white surgeon's uniform shining through the folds of his ulster.

"In here," said O'Day, leading him to the child.

The doctor's work was quickly done. He tenderly closed the long gash in the child's head and poured something between her lips. A few minutes more and her eyelids flickered: A light of recognition came into her eyes as her gaze turned upon her mother's face, but they clouded as she saw the two strangers—the man in white and the alderman.

"Where's my daddy?" she asked.

Up to that moment no tears had come to Julius' wife. But as the realization penetrated that the child was safe, the floods came. She dropped to her knees and kissed the surgeon's hand, wetting it with her tears. O'Day turned his back to look, as it should appear, at the red-and-yellow prints on the wall. He edged into the narrow hallway that led to the kitchen. As he did so, he heard the child say again: "Where's my daddy?"

"Her father thinks a lot of Freda," said Julius' wife, getting to her feet. "He wouldn't do nothing to her for the world—not when he's right. He sits there in that chair when he gets home from his day on the cars and lets her climb all over him. That's the way it is when he's not so—so bad."

The child, lying in bed with a broad bandage hiding the wound, was listening to the mother's words.

"My daddy calls me 'Boots,'" she said.

"Yes, that's just him," said Julius' wife. "It's Boots this and Boots that, and it'll be a bad morning for him when he sees the child's head."

"My head has a bump on it," said the little girl with interest. "What made that bump?"

Julius' wife choked; she looked to the young doctor to help her out. She could say nothing herself.

"Oh, it was just a tumble you took, and it scratched a hole in your head," he said, "but I made you all right again."

"Why a hole?" Freda asked. Then after a little—"You must tell my daddy. He'll be sorry for me—very, very sorry. And all my hair gone, too. He won't like me any more."

She looked at the mass of dark ringlets that lay on the table top. They were cut away when the surgeon dressed the deep tear in the little girl's head, a sacrifice, he said, to the good job he had to do. They were still wet with blood.

"There now is her hair," said the mother. "Julius strokes it—so—and says sometimes it is just like his own."

"Daddy," called the child, "where's daddy? Tell him I'm all better again."

"He'll be back in a minute, dearie," said her mother.

The alderman disappeared into the kitchen hall. It was not the first time he had gone to look for Julius. On many a late night and in many a dark hallway he had found him.

"By now he must have come to his senses," he said to himself.

Julius had. O'Day entered the kitchen casually, but as he stepped over the threshold he drew in his breath with a catch. Nerves were not in his line; life and death, Center Street and the Potter's Field, were equally matters of fact to him. But in that kitchen anything might happen. In the dim light from the airshaft he discerned what appeared to be a bundle thrown on the floor. He touched a match to the kitchen gas, and that flame leaping into brightness threw into relief the shape of a man prostrate on the floor, grotesquely twisted. Beside him lay a little heap of childish things —a pink ribbon, a mouth organ, fragments of a doll with vivid yellow hair, and even the little red coat that O'Day remembered trotting along by Julius' side. The alderman bent over the mass, man and things alike inert and smeared with blood. Crumpled in one hand was a photograph of a black-haired baby. An arm's length off lay a knife.

O'Day drew back, shaking his head.

"And the good Lord saved the kid after all," he said. "Think of that, Julius—the kid's alive. And you couldn't wait to see. Wasn't I always telling you when to stop?"

On the way back to his own place Alderman O'Day perforce passed by the Dutchman's. The lights were as bright as before, as bright as they were yesterday. The mechanical piano ground out its same harsh harmony. He heard a man singing a tipsy song. O'Day shivered.

Behind his own bar he found Dan in his white coat setting them up as usual—to the boys, his people, who were waiting around to hear the news from Julius'. When they saw O'Day they turned, with glasses poised in the air, not drinking until they learned his story.

"Boys," he said, "are you ready? Are you ready for what I've got to tell you? Ye' are? Julius is dead—by his own right hand."

Mickey's glass dropped to the tile floor and broke with a shattering smash.

"Mickey, I see you've lost your drink," O'Day went on. "That makes two you've dropped this night. It's gone, and the other is gone, and you'll not get more. Not from me.

"Dan, take these guys' drinks one by one and pour them down the pipe. And I say, Dan, when you've done that wipe up the bar. Wipe it up for good. I'm through.

"Boys, in all these years, no guy ever got carried out of my place. No guy ever went away to bust up his stuff. No guy ever went away to bust up his home. But I'm tired of keeping a halfway house for the Dutchman.

"From now on he can keep the devil to himself."

HOW WILSON KEEPS UP

PRESIDENT WILSON keeps himself informed on current events by reading four daily newspapers—and the reports of Colonel House. When he desires detailed information on a special subject, he calls for all the newspaper clippings the White House clerical force has collected concerning it.

Three-Thirteen

By Arthur Train

Author of "A Man of Business," Etc.

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."—*Paradise Lost*

THE lawyer is, *par excellence,* the skeptic; and—I am a lawyer. For over a quarter of a century I have been waiting for some first-hand experience evidencing a life beyond the grave, and never found any except, perhaps, the one which I am going to relate; nevertheless one, if it were properly established, would be enough.

William James, with whom I sometimes discussed these things, once attended a séance where the medium had suspended a playing card from the ceiling by a thread, and where a spirit thumb and finger could apparently be heard snapping at the edge of the card which swayed gently to and fro. Afterward, in relating the experience to me, he said doubtfully, "One genuine *tick* on the side of that card and all the established laws of physical science would be swept away."

Those were his exact words, yet I hardly think that he meant literally what he said, but rather that any positively proven spiritualistic interference in our own physical world would revolutionize our ideas, our philosophy and our attitude toward the whole of life. I do not think that William James believed the tick that he had seemed to hear was a genuine tick. There is always room for a large variety of doubts in these matters and, although my own experience was, observed by as many as forty or fifty other persons so that there is no doubt whatever as to what occurred, there will always remain the other and vastly more important doubt as to whether the cause of what happened was supernatural or mundane. And so, because I am a lawyer, perhaps, I am still a skeptic, although others may have been satisfied by what they heard and saw, which, I cannot deny, was dramatic and sensational enough.

Now, as this is the story of a murder case, I must be pardoned for a certain dryness of narrative and matter-of-fact method of exposition, for if the circumstance is to be regarded as having any probative value at all the facts must be thoroughly understood. These facts, which happened eleven years ago this April, are as follows:

A Western Union telegraph operator named Tracy who was employed as a night shift between nine p. m. and six a. m., was murdered in his office in an outlying district of the Bronx some time prior to midnight. The day operator, Brownell, was his friend, and they often arranged their hours to suit each other's convenience. They also boarded together in the same house. Both were excellent operators, industrious, sober, and ambitious and neither was known to have any bad habits or evil associates.

At fifteen minutes after midnight on the night of the murder the central operator had called the Bronx office where Tracy should have been on duty and failed to receive an answer. After making several vain attempts to get Tracy to reply, the central operator notified the nearest police station and an officer was sent around to find out what was the matter. He found the door locked, the lights out, and the curtains drawn; and after breaking in the door he discovered Tracy lying dead beside the receiver, his head having been crushed in with a hammer. The officer searched the body and found that apparently robbery had not been the motive for the crime, as Tracy's watch and money had not been taken, and neither had the cash drawer been disturbed.

It was then twelve-twenty-one; and the instrument kept on ticking—what, of course, the policeman did not know. Just at that moment the officer noticed that some one was tapping upon the window, and going outside he encountered Brownell covered with blood and seemingly dazed or drunk. He immediately arrested him, rapped for assistance, left another policeman in charge

of the body, and took the suspect to the station house, where he was held for the murder. As he seemed in a bad way physically a police surgeon was sent for, who bandaged him up and stated that he had a slight fracture of the skull, but that he gave no signs of being under the influence of liquor. A search of his person produced only some small change and a girl's photograph.

He seemed very nervous, would burst into tears from time to time, and kept muttering that Tracy was his friend and that he "had to go to him if he was in trouble." He was in the same condition the next morning at seven o'clock when he was sent to police headquarters, and here a couple of hours later a lawyer named Burnett appeared to look after his interests, sent, as he said, by the Telegraphers' Union. By that time Brownell was in better shape and seemed ready to talk, but the lawyer would not consent to have him examined, so that the officers in charge had to content themselves with searching him again and taking his photograph.

This time they discovered two things which had been overlooked at the station house: the key to the telegraph office—no key had been found on the body of Tracy—and a bloodstained envelope addressed to the murdered man, which bore a postmark dated two days before. On the back of the girl's photograph was a name in the same handwriting as the envelope. In addition, several witnesses testified that the two men had been heard quarreling at their boarding house the day before.

That was the evidence, and a very bad-looking case it was; and so thought the grand jury, for they returned an indictment against Brownell inside of twenty-four hours, charging him with the deliberate and premeditated murder of Tracy by means of a hammer. The only thing that didn't seem quite clear was why Brownell should have been hanging around the place after he had killed his man. This was explained by the jury on the theory that Brownell was so pounded up in the mêlée himself that he did not have sense enough to attempt to escape.

Their general hypothesis was that both men were probably attentive to the same girl—the one in the photograph, of course—and had probably quarreled over her the day before when Tracy had received a letter from her inclosing her picture; that this quarrel was renewed on the night of the murder when Tracy came to relieve his friend at nine o'clock, and that a fight had followed for possession of the hammer, in which Brownell had been badly beaten up, but in which he had finally succeeded in killing Tracy. That at some time during the quarrel, or even probably after the homicide, Brownell had secured possession of the photograph and the envelope which were subsequently discovered upon his person. The letter which had come in the envelope, however, was not found either upon Brownell or upon the body. To sum up, then, this "dead open and shut case" was all one way, the points pro and con resolving themselves as follows:

Against Brownell.

(1) His opportunity—practically exclusive
(2) His motive—jealousy
(3) Arrested upon the scene of the murder, with
(4) Marks of violence upon him, and with both
(5) Key to closed office and certain
(6) Property of Tracy's—key, picture, and envelope—in his possession.

For Brownell.

The absurdity of his remaining in the neighborhood, if he had had sense enough to put out the lights, pull down the shades, and lock the door of the office.

The fact that he was the most intimate friend of the deceased.

I had read casually at breakfast the newspaper account of the murder and should in all likelihood have dismissed it from my mind forever as in no way my affair, since the names of the dramatis personæ meant nothing to me, had not the evening editions carrying the story featured the picture of the girl who was suspected of being the innocent cause of the homicide. It was an unflattering reproduction of an atrocious photograph taken by a local town "artist," but it suggested the original sufficiently to cause me to realize that I knew her.

I was riding uptown in the subway that evening during the rush hour when I caught a glimpse of her face over the shoulder of the man jammed against me who was trying to maintain his equilibrium with one hand and hold his paper before his eyes with the other. For a moment it piqued my recollection, and then the swaying, rattling, stuffy, congested car faded away and in its place I saw myself wading downstream in a rushing

forest brook, whose mossy rocks, frothy currents, and whirling eddies were checkered with spring sunshine. Casting ahead of me a double leader on which were tied a Brown hackle and a Montreal, and whipping the swirls beneath the fern-grown banks, I heard suddenly the uproar of a little fall which I knew emptied into a deep, dark pool where there were always loitering a couple of big fellows.

Reeling in my line, I waded ashore, and, parting the bushes, stole quietly to an overhanging rock whence I could drop a fly silently over the right spot and discovered there before me a rosy-cheeked girl—a sort of "nut-brown maid"—in a blue calico dress holding a short fly rod stiffly in her left hand while with her right she was keeping a taut line upon a big trout—my trout—which was making terrific rushes for freedom in the black waters of the pool below. She did not see me, for her whole attention was being given to her task, her small head bent slightly forward, while her slender figure and small round neck were thrown sharply back to resist the strain upon the rod.

Her hair had loosened and fallen a little over one of her temples, and the occasional ray of sunlight that fell upon it as she swayed to the bending of her rod gave it a bronze gleam that matched the sparkle in her eyes and rivaled the flush about her rather high cheek bones. Yes, she was a picture—of health, vitality, and, doubtless, of innocence, and my fifty-year-old lawyer's heart stopped beating and I experienced one of those poignant spasms of emotion which, while popular under various names, are nothing in effect but a man's yearning after his lost youth. I did not exactly want to do anything more than I was doing with her, but I wanted to do that forever.

And then I saw a quick look of anxiety come into her face, and I realized that my trout had suddenly made up his mind to go away from there downstream and was making determinedly for a brush pile against a water-soaked log, that barred his exit, as fast as he could.

"Keep him mid-stream!" I cried excitedly without the realization that I was speaking.

My Diana started, half turned, and, perceiving me almost beside her, shrank back and partially lost her balance. For an instant she hung on the ledge just over the pool—then thrust out her hand. It was only just in time. I grabbed the hand and pulled her toward me until—Oh, rapture! —I got my arm firmly around her waist and restored her to her original position. I did not let go immediately, and I am not sure that she was conscious of my contact, for the rumpus had had the effect of inducing the trout to change his mind and she was now engaged in attempting to reel up several yards of slack that drooped from the rod's end. Was he still on? Slowly the line straightened—then grew rigid, the pole bent again, then lifted, and with a mighty rush the three-pounder leaped high in the air, amid a shower of drops, a living reddish-yellow, silver flash hung for a moment in the sunlight and then dropped back with a splash that set the pool rocking.

"What a whale!" I gasped.

"I'll never land him without a net," she panted despairingly.

"I have one—right here!" I answered eagerly. "Shall I help you?"

Fifteen minutes later, after a series of desperate encounters in which it seemed as if all the piscatorial ingenuity in the world could never get my net beneath that darting speckled streak, I lifted the veteran of the pool heavily from the water and cast him flopping amid the meshes of the net upon the bank. It was the biggest brook trout I had ever seen, caught by the prettiest girl. Oh, I was mightily pleased with myself!

"He's a beauty!" I called up to her.

"Isn't he!" she answered radiantly. "I had him on once before, last week!"

Then laying down her rod upon the rocks beside her, my goddess put up her hands hollowed like a conch to her pretty lips and shouted:

"Jim! Oh, Jim!"

And down the brook, several hundred yards, a man's voice answered her.

So, you see, this isn't my romance, and the part I played in it was only avuncular, that of a sort of good-natured, protecting, and, I must confess it, rather patronizing fairy godfather. For I didn't think Jim one-tenth good enough for her, although he doubtless was, as much as any fellow ever is for a girl like that. She was the daughter of the Methodist clergyman and rather above the man according to the social standards of the valley, though not particularly so; and, of course, I knew I could have made an appeal to her mind had I chose—but she was only twenty and her Jim was

twenty-six. No, without sentimentalizing over myself, I had let her go, wished them both Godspeed, and tried to forget her. That was three years ago. And now, gazing out of that front page, the central figure in a New York murder mystery was my girl of the trout stream!

"Fourteenth Street!"

I caught my breath. Then they hadn't married yet! Either her intended husband was a bad egg that she ought not to marry, and couldn't ever hope to marry, or—she needed help the worst way! I don't know which thought moved me most at that particular instant. I had carefully pushed the young lady out of the vestibule of my heart and closed the door, and now—hang it all! —I found the door swinging wide open again of its own accord.

But this is a court story and not a love story. Whatever my motives may have been, I resolved to get in touch with my trout-stream girl and offer myself for whatever service I could be to her. That evening I read over again the newspaper accounts of the case, and the more I studied them the less there seemed to be said in behalf of her lover. I began to feel a professional interest in the problem. Of course, Brownell had a lawyer, but I had never heard of the man and I had a hearty contempt for most of the criminal practitioners that I knew. Moreover, it appeared that he was the merest tyro of a lawyer, and an ex-telegrapher. Before I went to bed I dispatched a night telegram to Miss Ruth Temple, care of the Reverend Amosa Temple, Spring Forest, New York.

It was five days later before I received any reply, and then Ruth herself came to my office in answer. Her changed appearance wrung my heart. The tragedy of the murder had played havoc with her beauty. She was still graceful, slender, piquant, but her face was ravaged with grief and anxiety. The flash was absent from her eyes, which were fringed with dark shadows, her color was gone, and she had the desperate, hunted air of those who are engaged in battle with the criminal law. Poor, poor child! All my philandering foolishness departed from me, leaving in its place the loyalty of friendship, the resolution to save a girl's life from the wreck of fate.

She sat rigid holding the arms of her chair and, gazing at me pathetically, almost beseechingly.

"I didn't intend to bother you!" she half apologized. "Although, of course, I thought of you. I only know two or three persons in New York. It was so kind of you to telegraph! I was here in the city, and they mailed it to me."

"You ought to have called upon me at once!" I protested severely.

She hesitated. Then looking away, she answered.

"I never thought you liked Jim very much."

"Why, of course, I do," I stammered. "I thought he was a fine fellow. Even if I hadn't that wouldn't be any reason for your not coming to me. You know I'd do anything in the world to help you."

"I know," she agreed simply. Then: "Oh, what a tangle life is! To think of your meeting Jim and me in that brook and now —— Oh, it's all false! Every word of it! Frank Tracy was Jim's best friend. How could he have killed him? Frank wasn't interested in me—not nearly as much as a lot of others. Jim wouldn't hurt a fly."

"The evidence looks pretty bad," I hazarded. "I hope you've got a good lawyer."

"Oh, yes!" she answered with conviction. "He's been coming up to Spring Forest now for his vacations for quite a long time. He's an old friend of Jim's—and mine."

"Of *yours?*" I inquired, slightly raising my eyebrows.

"Why—yes," she admitted with a pretty confusion.

"Oh, Ruth, Ruth!" I sighed. "You were born with the box of Pandora in your hand!"

"Dolph is a splendid fellow!" she retorted. "And a fine lawyer, they all say. He's been right on the job from the very start. Of course, I'd rather have had *you*, but I shouldn't have dared ask such a big attorney, and, anyhow, Dolph was in the case when I got here."

"'Dolph?'" I queried.

"I know him awfully well," she admitted. "He and Jim and Frank and I have been around a lot together."

"Perhaps he won't want me to help him," I suggested.

"Dolph? Of course he will. He'll jump at the chance."

I shrugged my shoulders, knowing how most lawyers feel about "associate counsel." Anyhow, I got her then and there to tell

me Brownell's side of the affair—as a friend, and that was the first glimpse I had of the strange, shadowy light in which the whole case was bathed, that took it out of the class of all other cases with which I was familiar then or have heard of since.

Both Brownell and Tracy it seemed had become ardent converts to spiritualism and spent most of their spare time at séances. Ruth was opposed to it, for Jim was an impressionable, sensitive sort of chap, and she believed that it made him moody, introspective, credulous, and affected him nervously. So far as she was concerned, she was an utter skeptic. Knowing that nothing she could say to him directly would induce him to give it up, she had written to Frank Tracy and asked him so far as possible to use his influence to get Jim to take up something else for a while. As luck would have it, the letter had been delivered one evening just as the two friends were going in to dinner at their boarding house.

Jim had observed that the envelope was addressed to Tracy in Ruth's handwriting and had asked Alec what she was writing to him about, a question which Tracy naturally tried to avoid answering. This precipitated an argument which had been magnified into a quarrel by the boarders, who were filled with self-importance at being summoned as witnesses by the district attorney. There was not the slightest actual basis for the suggestion that Brownell had killed Tracy out of jealousy, but the unfortunate fact was that Tracy had received a letter from his friend's fiancée and that the envelope had been found, minus the letter, upon the accused telegrapher after the murder.

Brownell's account of what had happened on the fatal night was that Frank had come to the office to relieve him about nine o'clock as usual, that he had first returned to his boarding house and then attended a séance given by a medium whose house he and Tracy both frequented. Here fate apparently played him another trick, for it was very late when he arrived and the room being almost dark no one had seen him come in. He was at the séance at the moment when the murder occurred, only his alibi could not be established.

As he sat there, Ruth said, half asleep in the semidarkness, he suddenly became conscious of a curious oppression, immediately followed by the perception that Tracy was summoning him, giving him the telegraphers' call for assistance—"three-thirteen." Without a moment's hesitation, for he knew that the summons was imperative and that Alec needed him, he groped his way out of the room only to fall headlong down the stairs. When he came to his senses his face and hands were covered with blood, but his friend's call for help was still ringing in his ears. As best he could he staggered to the telegraph office.

The nearer he approached the louder the calls. He tried the door but it was locked, so he stood outside the window and tapped his answer—and then the officer arrested him. He could neither account for the key nor the envelope being found upon his person when he was searched at headquarters, nor assign any motive for the murder, for so far as he knew Tracy had not an enemy in the world.

My heart sank as I listened. Not only was I entirely skeptical, but I realized what effect that kind of yarn would have upon a jury. They'd put it all down as simple-minded bunk and begin to yawn and look out of the window. Falling downstairs at a séance! I am afraid that Ruth saw in my face the impression that the story had made upon me.

"Don't make up your mind too quickly," she begged. "But come over to the Tombs and see Jim for yourself."

It was the noon hour when we got there, and there was a considerable delay before Brownell was brought into the counsel room. I did not recognize him. His face had sunk away until his eyes seemed to be staring out of great shadowy caverns, and his hands and lips trembled like those of an old man. Moreover, he moved and talked as if in a dream, and from time to time seemed to be listening. I did not know whom I pitied most, him or Ruth.

"Bugs!" whispered the turnkey. "Insanity's the best defense for *him!*"

I had no time to reply before the door was unlocked again and a stranger was admitted.

"Ah!" said Mr. Burnett, for it was none other than he. "What's going on here? I thought *I* was Jim's lawyer."

"You are, sir," I answered, suddenly appreciating the fact that I had put myself in an ambiguous position by signing my name in the book at the entrance office as "attorney-at-law." "I came here only as a friend."

"Oh!" he leered. "Well, I guess we can get along by ourselves."

He was a confident, stagy sort of young man with pomatum on his black hair, and he had a noticeable attitude of suspicion, as if he thought I was going to try to get the case away from him.

"I don't wish to intrude," I protested as politely as I could, for he had me in the wrong. "I only came over because Miss Temple asked me to."

"Oh!" Mr. Burnett indulged in an oily grin. "If Miss Temple asked you—then it's all right, of course. Anything Ruth wants to do is all right with me."

"After what has occurred," I answered, filled with disgust, "I have no intention of remaining or of interfering with your conduct of the case in any way."

With which pronunciamento I picked up my hat and walked out as soon as the turnkey could unlock the door. Ruth and Jim were clearly distressed, but after all there was nothing else for me to do. So for the time being my connection with the matter of The People against Brownell ended.

It was resumed, however, sooner than could have reasonably been expected, by the reappearance of Ruth at my office, this time in a really desperate state of mind. Burnett had proposed something so extraordinary that, although she assumed that it would be all right, she wanted to be sure—to have an older man's advice. It appeared that, while Brownell absolutely and consistently denied having raised a finger against Tracy or having had anything whatever to do with his death, Burnett, nevertheless, had advised him that in view of all the circumstances in the case it would be better to *admit the killing* and claim that it had been done in self-defense. This would be largely strengthened by the fact that he had been found on the spot bruised and bloody.

"What?" I exclaimed, genuinely startled. "Does Burnett advise his client to *admit that he killed* his friend!"

"Yes," said she, "because, as he says, the jury will reach that conclusion anyway. He argues that to deny it would create prejudice, whereas, if Jim admits it, the jury will be inclined to leniency in view of all the circumstances."

"But," I retorted, "I don't understand how any lawyer can reconcile it with his conscience to allow a client to confess to an act of which he is innocent."

"Mr. Burnett says it's often done in criminal cases—and he ought to know," answered Ruth rather doubtfully. "Of course, ordinarily I would agree with you, but our only thought is how to save Jim, and that is all Dolph is after. It's a terrible situation for a man to be in, not to be able to deny an act which he never committed."

"I personally don't concede," I said firmly, "that such a situation can ever arise. It is too great a risk to take, in the first place. Why, on the facts, if the jury didn't accept his plea of self-defense—they'd have to find him guilty of murder. In any event it's not true. Suppose some evidence should be discovered later which would prove that Jim was elsewhere at the time of the homicide—he would be forever precluded from establishing an alibi. It's burning all his bridges. One can never tell what unexpected witnesses will appear."

"Well," she sighed, "I'll do what I can, but Jim relies absolutely on what Dolph tells him and I'm afraid it will be no use."

After that two weeks passed before I saw Ruth again. At length she turned up in a state of collapse. I made out that the trial was coming off on the following day, that Jim had become a physical and nervous wreck, that it was definitely decided that they were going to admit the killing and try for an acquittal on the ground of self-defense, and that she believed he surely was going to be convicted. The worst feature, apparently, was that Jim Ketcham, the assistant district attorney assigned to try the case, was a sworn enemy of Burnett's and likely to resort to any and all means to secure a conviction.

I knew Ketcham of old and heartily detested him. Every speck of dust floating in the sunlight, every feather aslant the wind, every shadow, was to his eye an indisputable and convincing argument of guilt. He was the great expositor of *fact*. For him the world was only so many cubic yards of earth and water, and every man just so many pounds of flesh and bones. He read no poetry and knew only six verses of Scripture, which, however, as they dealt with the shedding of blood, he used with telling effect. In short this human hound was the terror of the guilty and innocent alike.

The morning dawned cold and brilliant. A light snow had fallen during the night and frosted over the roofs and window sills. The judge had not yet arrived when I

reached the building, but Ketcham, the assistant district attorney, was already on hand, his lips set in a fixed, gorillalike grimace, as with outthrust jaw he bellowed his orders and bullied the messengers and clerks who surrounded him. For Ketcham in those days was a power in the Criminal Courts Building. Indefatigable in his industry, adroit in his intellectual processes, egotistical to the degree of monomania, he would crush down an adversary and destroy his defense by sheer physical insistence.

From the opening of court it was Ketcham and Ketcham only who could be seen strutting up and down before the bench, his voice alone that could be heard shouting, screaming out the law, and insisting—ever insisting and insisting—upon the prisoner's guilt. If during the course of the trial some particular damning bit of evidence went in, he would turn with a mad light in his eye and glare with a fiendish grin at the prisoner and his lawyer. If the judge sustained an objection to the testimony he desired to offer, he would advance upon his honor and, refusing to be denied, would hammer, hammer, hammer at the point until, out of sheer fatigue, the court would allow him to proceed in his own way. This was the gentle brute who was to assist in dispensing justice to James Brownell.

This bulldog of the law, whose bite was as fatal as his growl was terrifying, could be heard barking through the deserted corridors of this old building during the otherwise silent watches of the night, while he and his slaves long after all others had departed, prepared his cases for trial. They said he was a descendant of Simon Legree. At one or two o'clock in the morning, perhaps, Ketcham would knock off work and sally forth to some all-night restaurant where he would consume large quantities of meat and drink, and harangue all who cared to listen concerning the conclusive character of the evidence he intended to present, the skillful way in which he proposed to "get it all in"—competent and incompetent alike—and the double-dyed character of the defendant's guilt.

Some of the tricks that he resorted to were extraordinarily ingenious—such as his suggestion that the jury be permitted to examine a witness in a distant State by means of the telephone. His theatrical effects were carefully calculated. It was Ketcham who devised the scheme of producing in open court a human skeleton, by articulating which the doctors could indicate the course of a fatal bullet from bone to bone, and it was he also who caused to be prepared and exhibited to the jury a waxen effigy of a murdered man, with the result that the defendant collapsed in a dead faint. He invariably spent hundreds of dollars from the county treasury in having photographs and diagrams prepared of the *locus in quo*, and supported throngs of witnesses in idleness in order that they might surely be on hand when he wanted them. The people's money was nothing to him. His chief fault was that he overtried his cases to an absurd degree, for he would begin by calling witnesses to prove the width of the street and the character of the pavement in front of a house in which a crime had been committed in a rear bedroom.

If possible, Ketcham always endeavored to have the courtroom "rigged" to represent the scene of the homicide, and so I was not surprised to find that he had arranged the space in front of the clerk's desk as a telegraph office—the office in which both Brownell and Tracy had worked and where the latter had met his death. There were the tables and chairs, the clock, and the very instruments which they both had used, brought down and arranged in the courtroom that the jury might see with their own eyes just how it had all occurred. I felt sure that, somewhere about, he had concealed a lay figure which at the proper time he could produce and throw upon the floor to represent the victim of the tragedy. And now he stood there rubbing his hands in confident self-satisfaction, impatient for the time when he could hear his own voice demanding the life of Jim Brownell.

But one sight of the prisoner was enough to show that it was little he cared who prosecuted or who defended him, for his face was the face of one who neither sees nor hears. His hair had grown long and hung stringily upon his collar; a stubby beard darkened his neck and chin; and his face was haggard and hopeless.

Promptly at half after ten, the roll of the jury having been called, Ketcham moved for trial the indictment charging James Brownell with the premeditated murder of Frank Tracy, and the clerk warned the defense that if they desired to present any challenges they should do so when each juror was called and before he was sworn.

The selection of the talesmen by the *voire dire* was then begun, and Ketcham took occasion to impress upon the minds of each the hideous character of the crime charged and the merciful nature of death by electrocution.

Burnett made little effort, it seemed to me, to make him conform to the acknowledged rules of procedure. He acted as though he knew himself to be outmatched and was prepared to let his adversary go his own gait. One by one the jurymen took the witness chair, expressed their approval of capital punishment, stated that they had no objection to circumstantial evidence, and vowed that they were ready to do a fellow creature to death without hesitation or sympathy. Extraordinary, what human icicles jurymen are willing to make themselves out to be. They were of various ages and of all occupations, from tailors and plumbers to lecturers and artists. At last, a sufficiently heterogeneous bunch having been assembled in the box to satisfy the requirements of the law, but one place remained empty—the twelfth.

Jim had listened apathetically as his lawyer had examined the different talesmen, his eyes hardly ever raised from the table where he sat nervously tapping with his fingers. The courtroom was silent save for the scratching of the reporters' pencils and the voices of the attorneys putting their questions. The talesman under examination happened to be a rosy-cheeked, sympathetic-looking old man, and Burnett was on the point of announcing that the defense would accept him and thus fill the box, when I saw a curious thing.

Brownell's body suddenly became rigid and with half-closed eyes he seemed to be listening to something. Even his hands stopped their playing. Pale before, his color now was deathlike.

Burnett turned to him for his assent to the juryman's selection—then shrank back.

"I—do—not—want—that—man," said the prisoner in a toneless voice.

"You are excused," exclaimed the judge to the discomfited juryman. "You are peremptorily challenged by the defense."

Another juryman was called—seemingly as impeccable as his predecessor—but again Brownell in answer to some unseen warning muttered: "I—do—not—want—that—man."

The judge became impatient.

"You are doing your case no good by these arbitrary challenges," he said severely. But the defendant heard him not.

Two other talesmen were excused in similar fashion, until at last a young man with a high forehead and deep, luminous eyes, took the stand.

Brownell was still in his trance, staring over the head of the judge toward a distant cornice in the recesses of the ceiling. Apparently he did not see the juryman, but the latter had no sooner stated that he was by profession a telegrapher than the prisoner announced in the same tone as before:

"I—will—take—him."

Ketcham meanwhile was grinning toward the jury at this mysterious behavior, and Burnett himself smiled half apologetically and shrugged his shoulders.

And now, the jury having been collectively sworn, the courtroom was cleared of idlers and the trial began. Jim's nervous attack, or whatever it was, had passed, and he sat with head hanging listlessly and shoulders drooped forward. On the front row of benches I sat with Ruth.

Ketcham with a grotesquely exaggerated obeisance to the court began his opening address.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he cried, pointing at the defendant with a denunciatory finger, "I shall prove to you that this is one of the most atrocious murders ever committed in this country!"

The jury, impressed, listened with marked attention as the prosecutor, bit by bit, constructed a mosaic of the scene of the homicide. One juryman looked toward the defendant and shook his head. Assuredly that was how they all *felt*, and Ketcham, to lose none of the dramatic effect, at once began to call his witnesses. Successively they described the telegraph office, the hours of duty of the two men, and identified the furniture and instruments. Nothing was forgotten. Yet one thing impressed me strangely; whereas the prisoner became more and more indifferent as the trial proceeded, Burnett, his lawyer, became more and more nervous and excited—without apparent cause. The man's face, to me always sinister, took on a haunted look of apprehension.

Then Ketcham called his star witness—the policeman. This officer patently honest, described going to the office, finding the door locked and the lights burning within,

breaking open the door and discovering the body of Tracy upon the floor.

At this juncture Ketcham stooped and, fumbling beneath the table, dragged forth a stuffed mannikin with a wooden face and flapping arms and legs.

"Arrange this on the floor," he ordered, "in the exact position in which you found the body."

Ruth shuddered and clung closely to me, while the jury turned away their heads.

"I object!" stammered Burnett, his jaw trembling. "It is unnecessary and improper!" His voice died away though his lips went on moving mechanically.

"No, Mr. Ketcham," remarked the judge reprovingly, "I do not think it is necessary. Kindly put your figure out of sight of the jury."

"But, your honor," roared Ketcham, springing up and waving his arms. "It is entirely proper."

"I have ruled, Mr. Ketcham," the recorder interrupted admonishingly.

"Well, go on and tell us what happened next," ordered the prosecutor, kicking the mannikin under the table.

"Just then," continued the officer in tones that indicated to the jury his own recollection of the ghastliness of what he had seen, "while the instrument kept calling—'tick-a-tick—tick-tick-a-tick'—calling all the time. I heard a tapping at the window, and I bent up from where the dead man was lying and saw a face peering through the window. A man—this man"—pointing at Brownell—"was tapping on the window. He kept on tapping—tapping—just as if he was answering the instrument inside. It was the middle of the night—twelve-thirteen o'clock—I went to the door. He didn't seem to see me. His face was all bruised and bloody, and there was blood on his clothes and hands. He kept right on peering in and tapping on the glass. 'What do you want?' says I, but he did not answer. Then I placed him under arrest."

"Yes!" cried Ketcham eagerly, his eyes on the jury. "What then?"

"I summoned another officer and left him in charge of the body and took my prisoner to the station house, where I searched him. From there I took him to headquarters!"

Ketcham, still smarting from his rebuke by the recorder and anxious to vent his spleen on somebody, remarked sarcastically:

"I don't suppose you half looked over your man in the station house?"

The officer reddened under his bronzed skin.

"I beg pardon, sir, but I thought I did and think so still. If I did not, he's the first prisoner I have failed to search thoroughly since I came on the force fifteen years ago."

"Then how do you explain the finding of an envelope and a key when he was searched next morning?" sneered Ketcham.

"I know nothing about that," answered the witness, shaking his head.

Ketcham turned to some other line of inquiry, but the officer's answer had set me thinking. If Jim had had a key in his pocket and wished to revisit the scene of his crime, why had he remained outside the window where he had been discovered? Why had he not unlocked the door and gone in? The more I thought of it the more inexplicable it seemed.

Burnett showed increased signs of nervousness as the morning wore on. He hardly appeared to be cross-examining at all. Certainly his questions weakened the testimony of none of the witnesses and in most cases strengthened it, and Ketcham realizing that he had his man "against the ropes," so to speak, pummelled him unmercifully. There was an exultant tone in his raucous voice as he repeated after each witness the latter's most significant bit of testimony.

"So you found blood on his hands, eh?"

"He trembled, did he?"

"Couldn't explain why he was there, you say?"

Such was his method. He called this "rubbing it in," and Burnett made no effort to interfere in that most damaging process. Jim remained indifferent, apparently, to what was going on about him, and did not even seem to be listening to the testimony, a hopeless figure of a man. As I sat there throughout the morning I struggled vainly to harmonize the facts brought out in the evidence with some theory consistent with the prisoner's innocence, which at all events seemed more than his counsel was doing. One o'clock came and with it an hour's recess. At the door leading to the prison pen Ruth kissed Jim before he was led away.

"Listen!" I cried as the door slammed behind him. "There is something here that neither you nor I fully understand. One of the witnesses swore that Jim had been

working at the office all day. I notice that he has on a suit of black serge. Are these his everyday clothes?"

"Why, no," answered Ruth, a puzzled look on her face. "Those are what he wears in the evenings."

"Then," I exclaimed, "if he had on this suit when he was arrested, it *proves* that he went home after leaving the office. Has anybody looked for the clothes he had on during the day?"

"Not that I know of," she answered.

"Didn't Burnett suggest doing so?"

"No," she replied. "The question of his clothes never came up at all."

"If you want to save Jim," I cried, "go up to his rooms, find his working suit if you can and search it thoroughly—no matter if it takes you all the afternoon."

She hurried off, while I continued sitting alone in a corner of the courtroom, still studying over the evidence. One other odd fact recurred to me: The central operator had testified positively that he had had Tracy on the wire as late as half after eleven. Up to that time the line had been in constant use and the operator had answered his call unfailingly. Now, if Jim had killed the night shift when he came on at nine o'clock—who had taken these messages?—who had answered Tracy's call as he lay there dead? Obviously the murder could not have been committed until nearly midnight, at or about the time the body had been found and Jim arrested. Yet, why should a man go home and change his clothes in order to commit a murder? And if he did, how could that be reconciled with any theory of self-defense? If Burnett seriously intended to put in any such plea, certainly it would have to be based on a claim that the two men had become involved in a quarrel when Tracy came on duty and Jim was on the point of going away. Yet there was the evidence that some one had answered Tracy's call nearly as late as midnight and there was the additional fact that Jim had returned to the spot at about the same hour. How did he propose to explain *that?* How would he explain anything?

Across the courtroom I could see Burnett sitting at the counsel table, his head on his hands. I had begun to loathe the man, but now a life was at stake. I could endure being humiliated again for the sake of justice.

"Mr, Burnett," I said, crossing over to where he was seated, "I beg your pardon, but I have the fate of your client very much on my mind. Miss Temple has told me that you expect to put in a plea of self-defense. Now, may I ask, what effect will this testimony as to the hour at which the operator failed to respond to the signal from the central office have on that? Are you going to claim that Brownell, after leaving the office, came back to it in the middle of the night and killed Tracy in *self-defense?"*

Burnett raised his head and gave me a look of mingled hatred and apprehension. It was as though he had gone through some bodily and mental disintegration since the morning.

"I cannot discuss the case with you," he answered. "You will know in due time. I am quite competent to attend to my client's interests."

I shrugged my shoulders and turned away. Something told me that there was a mystery behind all this, a mystery that might never be solved until the day that all secrets should be revealed. Why was this man so overwrought? Why did he appear to be making only a formal attempt to defend his client? Why should he decline all proffers of assistance? Why should he neglect to run down the simplest clews—such as the clothing worn by the accused on the night of the homicide? Why should he introduce a defense which was at the same time a confession? Could this man know more than the rest of us?

Court reconvened. The afternoon wore on, filled with technical medical testimony as to the cause of death. The shadows gathered along the cornices and in the corners, and one by one the lamps were lighted. The recorder had announced his intention of holding an evening session in order to conclude the trial as expeditiously as possible. At five o'clock the People rested their case, and an adjournment of half an hour was taken. At the same moment Ruth returned.

"I found the clothes," she said nervously. "But there was nothing in any of the pockets except a key."

"A key!"

"Yes—this." She fumbled in her pocket and drew forth the counterpart of the key produced by the officer, which he had found upon the accused at headquarters.

It is strange how a little inconsequential thing like a latchkey will sometimes piece out a whole picture, yet it is even stranger

how the obvious significance of some vital circumstance will often be overlooked.

The moment I saw the key in Ruth's hand the whole thing had come over me like a flash, for it was already in evidence that no key had been found upon the body of the night shift. And what would Brownell have been doing with *two* keys?

The recess came to an end. The jury came straggling in and took their places—miniature men in a little box. The judge ascended the bench and seated himself high among the shadows. The clerk called the roll, his voice echoing flatly through the room. The door in the rear opened and Jim, led by an officer, slowly stalked to his seat beside his counsel. Save for these, Ruth and myself, the room was empty—empty and silent as a church at evening service with a handful of worshipers. There was something deathly about the silence of it, something that suited well the grimness of the task in which this little group of mannikins were engaged, that of dooming a fellow mortal to his death. We all felt it somehow, the creepiness of it. You could hear nothing but the rustle of papers as the clerk worked at his desk, and the occasional whine of a distant electric car on Broadway. Throughout the vast room, with its grotesque frescoes, its awkward furniture, and its stained walls, hung something of the atmosphere of a mortuary chapel, and in the uncertain yellow light of the lamps you could see the face of Ketcham, grinning like a hyena waiting for its evening meal.

"Are you ready to proceed with the defense?" asked the judge.

Burnett arose slowly to his feet and stood swaying slightly forward and back, without making any reply. It was as though he were trying to gain confidence. Then without looking at the judge he said in the same thick stammer in which he had addressed me during the recess.

"We—have decided to offer—no defense. We will go to the jury."

"No defense!" I half rose from my chair. Even the judge was taken aback.

"Do I understand you aright, Mr. Burnett?" he inquired with knit brows. "That you propose to introduce no evidence in behalf of your client?"

Ketcham swept the jury with a sardonic grin. "I told you so! They have no defense!" it seemed to say.

"That is our intention," muttered Burnett below his breath.

A cry of protest rose to my lips. It could not be possible! With the key in my hand I was on the point of breaking silence and demanding that an adjournment be taken, when through the haze of the lamps I saw Jim slowly rise to his feet. His eyes were fixed on vacancy and he moved like a man in his sleep. His half-drooped jaw was that of the listener who faintly hears some distant echo. Burnett shrank from him as if he were a leper.

"I—wish—to—testify," he said, taking a few stumbling steps in the direction of the witness chair.

Ketcham's leer had faded to a frown of disappointment. The jury with one accord leaned forward intently. Burnett's furtive eyes followed every movement of his client.

"It is—against—my express advice!" he said huskily, shaking his head.

"It is the defendant's constitutional right," commented the recorder reprovingly.

Jim groped his way to the chair and seated himself in it mechanically. From where I sat I could hardly distinguish his features, only the white mask of his face looming through the dusk.

"I am not guilty," he said in a listless monotone. "I didn't kill Frank Tracy. He was my best friend. He and I had studied together—telegraphy—and—other things. I do not know who killed him. That night Frank came to the office ahead of time and I went home—went home and changed my clothes. I put on these. I took Ruth's letter and walked over to Davenport's where they were having a séance. I didn't get there until after ten. I went upstairs to the parlor. The lights were all turned down low, but I joined the circle and waited for the materializations. I must have been there an hour or more when suddenly I knew that some one was in great peril. Then Frank called me—just as he always said he would if he needed me—he rapped on the parlor table and gave my signal—'Three-thirteen—Three-thirteen. Help! Come! Come!' I knew that something terrible was happening to him. I got up and felt my way to the door. My head was swimming. Somehow I couldn't see. I reached for the bannister but could not find it. And all the while Frank kept calling. I tried to hurry and my foot slipped and I fell—fell—the

length of the stairs and for a while I lost myself. Then I heard Frank calling again. 'Three-thirteen—Three-thirteen. Help! Come!'

"I got up and stumbled out on the street. How I reached the office I don't know. I tried the door but it was locked, and when I felt in my pocket for my key I found that I had left it in my other suit. Inside the instrument was calling to me—I could hear it plainly—'Three-thirteen—Three-thirteen. Come—come!' But I couldn't get in. So I stood there and answered on the window: 'Yes—Frank—I hear you. Where are you?'

"I tapped it out on the window. He kept on calling me and I kept on answering. Then some one came and took me away."

He paused and the jury looked at one another.

"I didn't kill Frank. I don't know who killed him. Dolph Burnett came in the morning like a good friend. Then they found a key on me. It wasn't my key. I didn't have any. I don't know where it came from. They found the envelope of Ruth's letter in my pocket, too. I don't know where that came from, either. That's all there is to it."

The rest of the trial is only a blur in my recollection. I recall vaguely Burnett's feeble speech for the defense and the vindictive excoriation of the prisoner by the prosecutor. But the whole thing was more like a nightmare than actuality. Before I knew it the judge was delivering his charge to the jury. Under the merest pretense of impartiality he weighed the evidence and practically directed a verdict of murder in the first. Every accused person had to make some sort of a defense, he said, and they must use their common sense and take this explanation for what it was worth and no more. The prisoner had been found upon the scene of the crime.

They filed out. The judge retired to his chambers. Brownell, with a long handclasp from Ruth, was led away through the little door in the back that led to the prison pen. The courtroom was stuffy as a zoo, and in its emptiness seemed like an amphitheater without the gladiators and wild beasts. Here and there the fast-gathering dusk was besmirched by the yellow streaks of the gas jets. The air was heavy, oppressive, for a thunderstorm had been brewing all the afternoon and faint rumblings were audible. Ruth clung to my arm, staring with dry eyes straight before her to where Jim had been sitting. Between us and the witness chair, upon a plain deal table, stood the telegraph instruments, their wires running down behind the clerk's desk to some contrivance of Ketcham's or possibly—I never knew—to nowhere. We must have sat there for over an hour, for it had grown quite dark when an officer whispered that the jury had found a verdict of guilty and were coming in. The storm was now directly over the courthouse and the atmosphere was like lead. The judge took his seat upon the bench, the jury with averted faces took their seats, and Jim was brought to the bar, where Burnett took his stand beside him. The white-haired clerk slowly arose and faced the foreman.

"Gentlemen," he inquired in a voice that sounded curiously hollow, "have you agreed upon a verdict?"

"We have," answered the foreman.

"How say you? Do you find the defendant guilty or not guilty?"

A deathlike silence held the room in its embrace. Out of the dusk the whites of the foreman's eyes glinted queerly. I noticed that Burnett was trembling. Even Ketcham's grinning face had lost its color. Above the courthouse the thunder grumbled and snarled like animals held in leash. The tension of that silence was something that could be physically felt. There was a curious pressure in the air. An unseen struggle seemed to be going on—a struggle to break through something. Brownell trembled and then stiffened. It seemed as though the lights suddenly dimmed all around the room, and a faint draft of air—the slightest lowering of the temperature—a mere breath, perhaps of some unseen electrical disturbance—came from overhead, and out of the silence leaped a sudden sound: "Tat-a-tat-a-tat-tat-tat-a-tat-tat-a-tat!"

The twelfth juror was staring at the telegraph instrument on the table as if he saw a ghost. By the living God, it moved!

A cry of terror came from Burnett's lips.

"I confess—I confess!" he gasped, swaying forward against the rail. "I did it. I put the key in Brownell's pocket. I killed Tracy. But it was in self-defense—I swear it was in self-defense!"

And he fell dead at the bar beside the man he would have made the victim of his jealousy.

A Chat With You

WE suppose that the reason for all the world loving a lover, as the poet says, is that every one either has, is, or hopes to be in love at some time. No man is too old, no maid too ripe or autumnal in her beauty for the little blind god. While there is life, there is distinctly hope.

There are other characters on the stage of life almost or quite as universal in their appeal. Surely every one likes a detective when he is good at all. And was there ever a man or woman who had not a feeling at some time or other that he or she might have made a good detective?

The detective in his essence is the man who uses his brain to solve the apparently insoluble mystery. He started in business long ago.

THE cave men were detectives. Back in the Pleistocene river drifts the arch villains were saber-tooth tigers and woolly mammoths who came like criminals into the caves of the Dordogne or Old Heidelberg to break the law of man. The cave-man detective learned to track this villain, to know his habits, to outwit him. And in those days, when they caught the crook, and the story had a happy ending, it became happier still for the fact that the villain furnished the feast in his own person. They knew more about solving the problem of the cost of living than we do.

YOU can find detective stories in the Bible. Also in the Norse and classical legends, also in the Arabian Nights. The first modern author of the detective tale, as we recall it, was Voltaire, with his "Zadig." And after him came Edgar Allan Poe with his Dupin and a host of French and English spinners of the spider's web of fiction. If all fictional literature were to be classified, we suppose that we would discover more love stories than anything else. Next to that would come the detective story—for while comparatively few of them have been remembered, a great many of them have been written. The last unfinished book of Dickens was a tale of mystery that has never been satisfactorily solved. Wilkie Collins, the friend of Dickens, did perhaps his best work in "The Moonstone," which is decidedly one of the big books of his generation. Robert Louis Stevenson, who did so much to change the fashions in writing, tried his hand at the tale of mystery. It is called "The Wrecker," and you will find it well worth reading, although Robert Louis himself did not regard it as a great success. So it is not every one, even with the literary gift, who can write the mystery tale.

WHEN a good writer, one who has the ability to depict character and give dramatic action and thrill to the narrative, succeeds with the detective

story, the appeal is irresistible. Such a story is the book-length novel which appears complete in the next issue of THE POPULAR. The author is Francis Lynde, who is already well and favorably known to any one who reads fiction anywhere in America. The story is called "The Perfect Crime." The scene is one of the smaller American towns, the characters are everyday, interesting, lively young men. The whole setting is so familiar, so realistic, so vivid, that the stirring drama and surprising climax have exceptional force. There's a love story in it as well as a mystery story. The perfect crime, from which the tale takes its title, is so well thought out, so careful in its planning, so intellectually conceived, that the wonder is it is ever discovered. Francis Lynde has written us a lot of good stories, but never a better one than this.

DO you, after looking over the first page of your morning newspaper, turn to the editorial page, the financial page, or the sporting page? A study of a man's habits with his daily paper ought to help something in determining his character and tastes. There is a belief to the effect that the editorial page is neglected by a majority of Americans. It is certainly true that the financial page has been claiming more than its usual share of interest for the past six months or so. If no one has recently given you a private tip on some oil stock that is bound to go up, you are exceptional, and probably just as well off. People have been making money in the market recently, but they have been losing it as well. Don't bite at every bunch of oil or mining stock that is offered you. And if you are tempted, read, before you buy, the story called "Angel Face," which appears in the next issue of this magazine. It is a story of the stock market written by a man who knows—Charles Somerville. There are a hundred enterprises at least built on the same basis as the one in which the girl called Angel Face is engaged. Generally they end a little less happily for the honest man and more comfortably for the crook than does Somerville's yarn. Somerville is a regular contributor to THE POPULAR, one of the ablest writers in America, whose stories you can find nowhere else.

YOU will also find Stacpoole in the next issue of the magazine. "A Story of the Amazon" is one of his tales of the tropics and the wilderness. Also there is a story of the moving pictures in the United States, "That Big Word 'Indispensable,'" by Clarence L. Cullen, full of the humor, the charm, the strong human interest that has made Cullen famous. What we want is variety as well as interest. "The world is so full of a number of things," so why not tell about them in the best stories money can buy? Here is Knibbs in the next number with a new Western story, one of the best yet. And here is Raymond Brown with a story of the race track. Also, there is W. R. Hoefer, who tells us a rattling tale of the prize ring. Then there is Carl Clausen with a thrilling sea story, "The Hurricane." In addition, Roy Hinds presents one of his true and vivid studies of the underworld. This is not all, but surely it ought to be enough for any magazine. The best value for twenty cents in the world. And if you are wise you will order your copy now.

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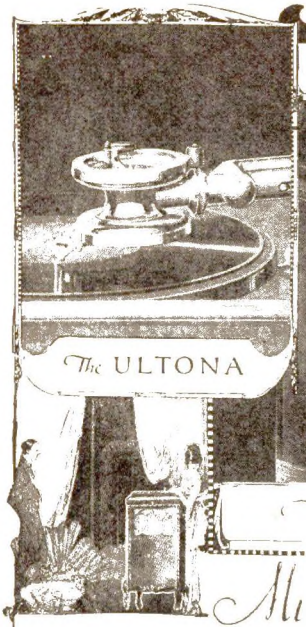

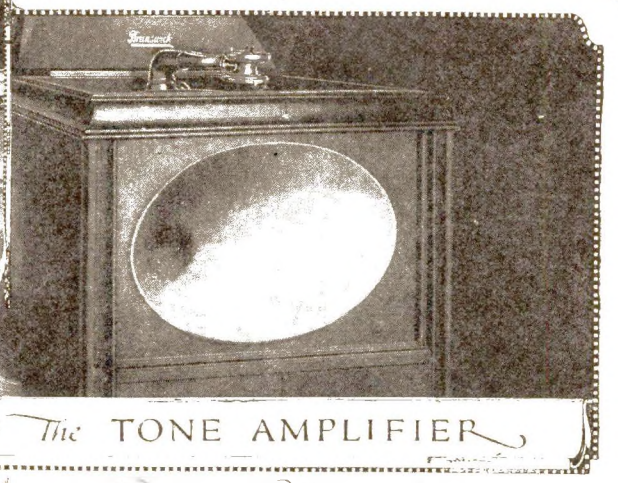

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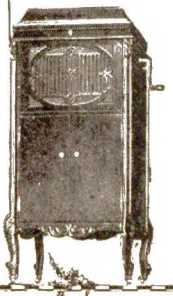

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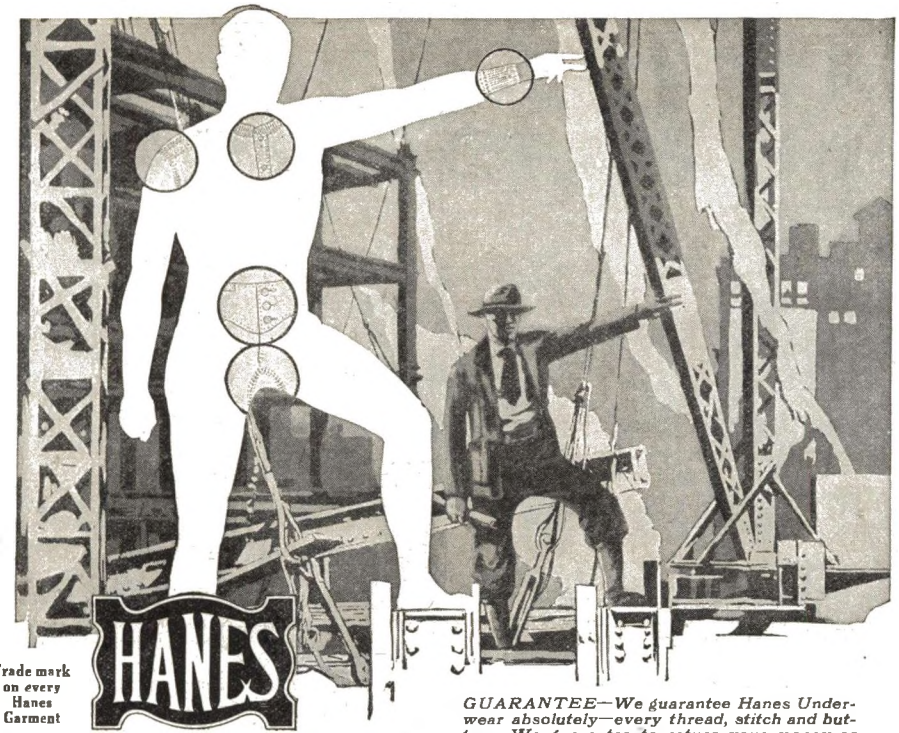

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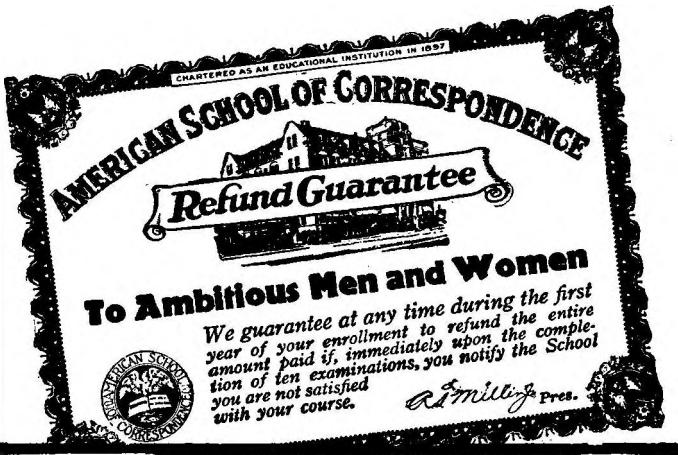

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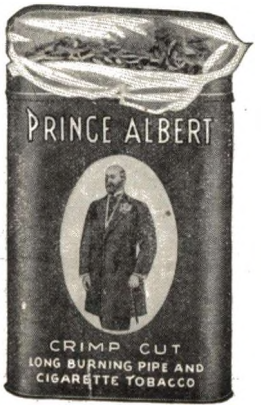

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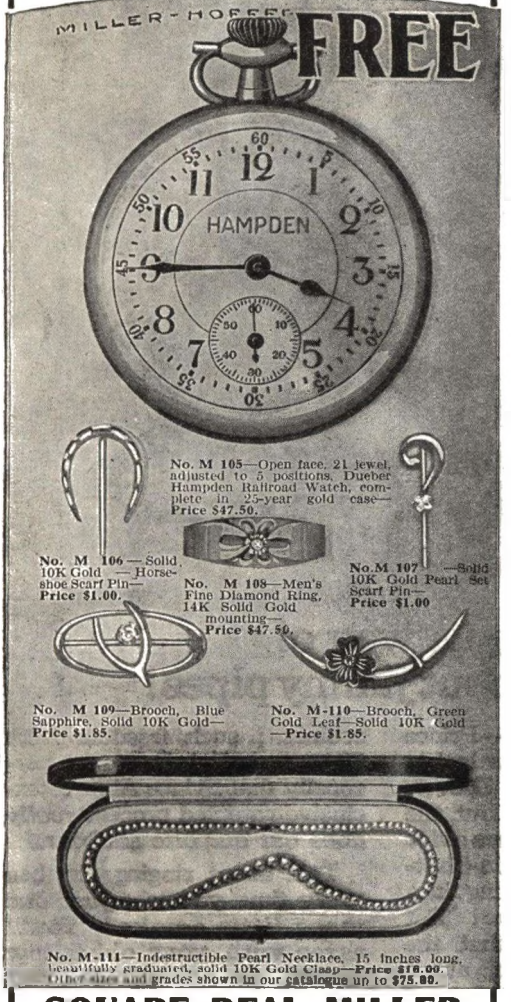

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Harold Lachman Co. 12 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. 1708 Chicago

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CAMELS supply in a lavish way everything you ever hoped to find in cigarettes! Camels are so unique in quality, in flavor, in full-bodied-mildness, in refreshing satisfaction that you should not delay your pleasure an instant! *Try Camels out to the limit* —then compare them with any cigarette in the world at any price!

Quality alone would make Camels distinctive. But, behind quality is Camels expert blend of choice Turkish and choice Domestic tobaccos. *This blend is a revelation to cigarette smokers!* You'll prefer it to either kind of tobacco smoked straight, it is so mellow, so delightful.

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Camels are sold everywhere in scientifically sealed packages of 20 cigarettes; or ten packages (200 cigarettes) in a glassine-paper-covered carton. We strongly recommend this carton for the home or office supply or when you travel.

R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO.
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Inside back cover

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