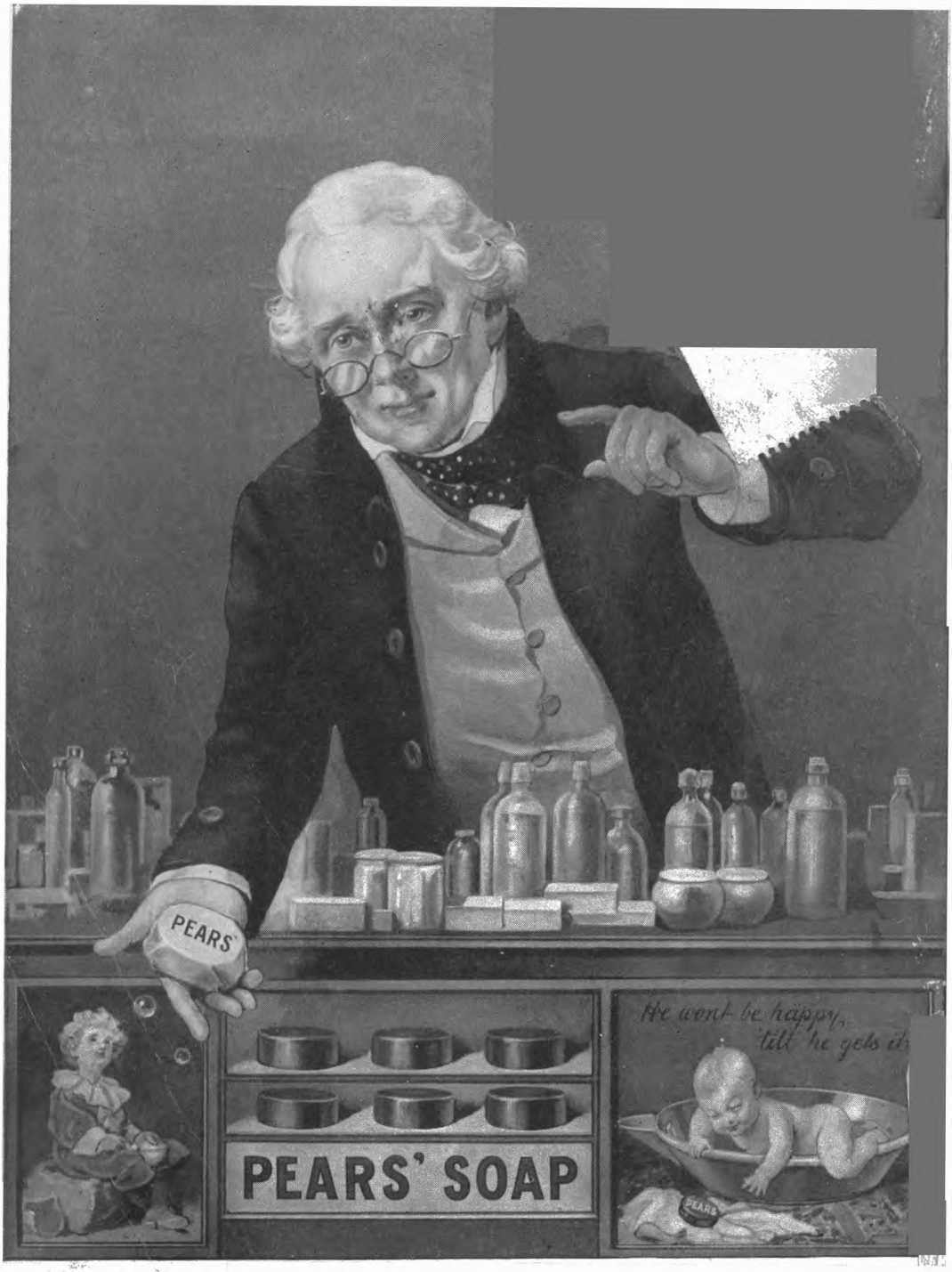
DEC., 1907

224 PAGES READING MATTER

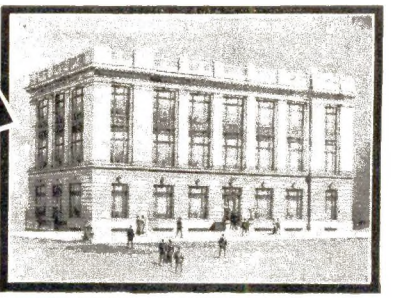
15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine



Pears' Annual for 1907 with 22 illustrations and four large Presentation Plates. The best Annual published—without any doubt. However, judge for yourself.
Agents: The International News Company.

Ink Bottle to This DOUBLING SALARIES



The new Powell Building, 1908, will be the greatest salary-doubling

Salaries and incomes from $1200.00 to $6,000.00 a year, and a greater demand for the higher places than ever before since the money making power of advertising was discovered.

George H Powell

Are you anxious to earn more—to get on in the business world, and do better and better as the years roll on?

Do you want to be trained during your leisure hours at home by the most practical and thorough course of correspondence instruction in existence—the Powell System, the only one ever heartily endorsed by leading advertising authorities of America?

Just what I am doing in raising both salaries and the standard of advertising may partly be realized after noting some of the conspicuous successes made by my graduates.

First, I wish to cite the experience of Mr Byron Edward Beal, whose portrait appears in the ink bottle above, and who was on Oct. 14, of this year appointed to the advertising department of the great New York house of A. A. Vantine & Co. After completing my System of Instruction he became advertising manager of the Hickman Mfg. Co., and in going to something better he further illustrates the practical thoroughness of my instruction. He writes me:

DEAR MR. POWELL:—

"I know you will be pleased to hear that a former student has succeeded in securing a position with such a house as A. A. Vantine & Co., Importers, 877-879 Broadway, New York. My entire testimonial can be embodied in one word—"Thanks." No one could appreciate your candid criticisms and helpful suggestions more than I do. From each lesson I received new ideas, many of which are stored away in my memory for future use. I have repeatedly spoken of the value of your course to inquiring young men, and trust that they have taken my advice."

This is the sort of genuine testimony that has made the Powell System the greatest success in business history, and it can be duplicated all over America.

A year or two ago the editor of *Printer's Ink*, the greatest advertising authority, advised Mr. L. M. Schwartz to take my system of Instruction, and after completing it he became advertising manager of Buegeleisen & Jacobson, New York. Shows how I stand as the leader, and explains why no other ad school has the endorsement of the authorities.

And here is a bit of financial gain worth knowing about. My former student, Mr. C. Milton Mosher, Boston, wrote me Oct. 16, 1907: "Under my management, promotion of undeveloped properties, during a period of twenty weeks aggregated over $205,000.00!"

Do you wonder that the Powell System has stood at the head from the very start, and that the new Powell Building, the greatest testimony to the benefits of better advertising, is needed?

If you want to become a worker in the great advertising field, let me mail you my two free books—beautiful Prospectus and "Net Results."

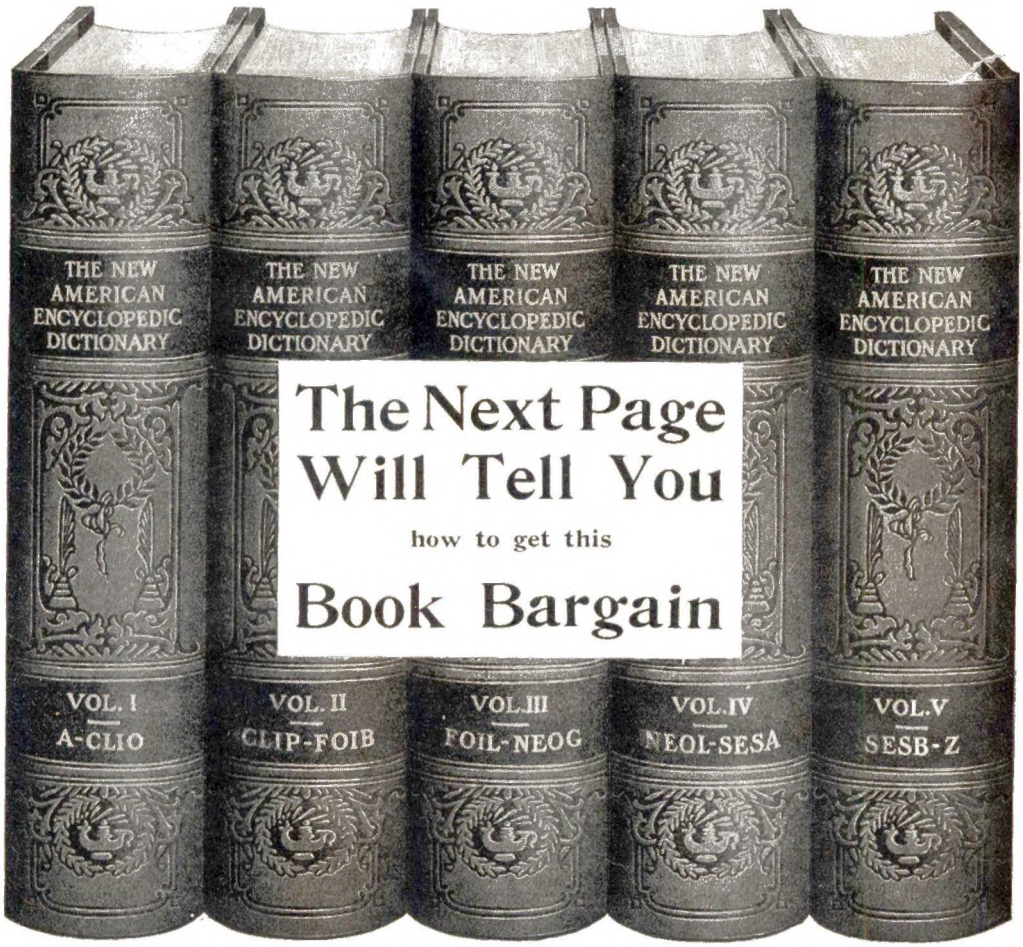
Simply address me

GEORGE H. POWELL,

652 Metropolitan Annex, New York

SLIGHTLY DAMAGED SETS

A Great Reference Work at the Price of the Sheets



5 Big Volumes, each one foot tall

5,000 Pages—250,000 Words—50,000 Encyclopedic Articles

On going over our stock, we find on hand a few sets of the New American Encyclopedic Dictionary, that are slightly damaged. Rather than have these books rebound, we have decided to cut the price away down and dispose of them to those who first apply.

These books would hardly be considered damaged by the general reader. Every one of the 5,000 pages in the set is perfect. But the covers are a little rubbed, and therefore, we do not want to sell them at their full price.

And with each set we will give ***Free*** the Modern Atlas of the World—itself worth $5.00.

Cut Off The Coupon and Mail It Today

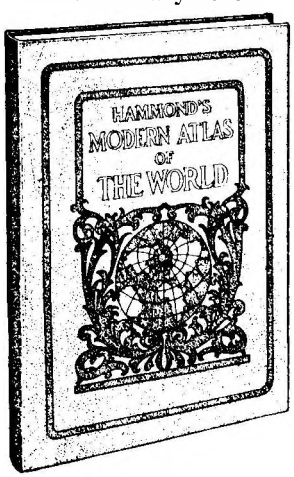
Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

The Newest and Best Reference Work

is the only one you want. You need it in your office and your home. The **New American Encyclopedic Dictionary** will fill your needs. It is up-to-date it was printed in July, 1907. It is absolutely reliable—three-quarters of a million dollars were spent in its preparation. Its editorial staff contains the greatest names in every field of knowledge.

It is not merely an encyclopedia or merely a dictionary. It combines the functions of both and does the work of either perfectly. It covers every subject, defines every word you could possibly want to know about, contains all the information you want. And it is brief, to the point.

The **New American Encyclopedic Dictionary** contains 250,000 words,—more than any other dictionary. Its 50,000 complete articles cover every conceivable subject.



THIS $5.00 ATLAS IS FREE

WITH 250 SETS

The Modern Atlas of the World sells regularly for $5.00. It contains more than 100 maps in colors. There is a map of each state, territory and country. It gives the population of all cities of importance. This invaluable Atlas is bound in red cloth and is 10 x 13 inches in size. We will send it to you, absolutely free, if your order for the **Encyclopedic Dictionary** is received at once.

JUSTICE GOFF, of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, says: "To the student and man of busy life, the advantage of finding, embraced in one work, the best features of an encyclopedia and dictionary is incalculable."

REV. CHARLES H. PARKHURST, New York, says: "The Encyclopedic Dictionary is a library condensed into a few volumes; as delicate in detail as it is comprehensive in contents."

The Complete Set FREE on Approval

You can have no idea of the value of this superb reference library unless you see the books themselves. That is why we want to send you a complete set for examination, *express charges prepaid*, for your leisurely examination.

We Guarantee Your Satisfaction

by agreeing to take the books back if they are not better than you expected.

Fill out and mail the coupon to-day. It will bring you a complete set, express charges prepaid. You take no risk. Simply keep the books a week and look them over. If you want us to take them back, we will do so *at our expense*. If you keep them, you pay the cut price in small monthly payments.

Bear in mind that the prices in the coupon are far below the regular prices. They are good only on a few sets. You can have one if you are prompt. Sit right down and mail the coupon. That is the only sure way to save half the price of the books and get the Atlas *Free*.

J. A. Hill & Company

44-60 EAST 23rd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

.....**Mail the Coupon To-day**.....

J. A. HILL & COMPANY, New York: Pop. 12-07

You may send me for inspection one set of the AMERICAN ENCYCLOPEDIC DICTIONARY, bound in the style indicated by having the "X" beside it.

Full Sheep Binding. Regular price $60.00 for the set. I will pay for the same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: $1.00 after I examine them, and $2.00 a month for twelve months. (**$25.00.**)

Half Leather Binding. Regular price $50.00 for the set. I will pay for the same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: 50 cents after I examine them, and $1.50 a month until your special price (**$19.50** is paid.

Library Cloth Binding. Regular price $42.00 for the set. I will pay for the same, if I decide to keep the books, as follows: 50 cents after I examine them, and $1.00 a month for fifteen months. (**$15.50.**)

It is understood that if this is one of the last 250 orders received, you will send me with the set, free, an Atlas of the World. You prepay delivery charges. If I decide not to keep the books, I am to return them to you, charges collect, together with the Atlas.

Name.....

City.....

State.....

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

BOOKS AND BUILDING LOTS

Books are the record of all knowledge. Land is the Source of all wealth

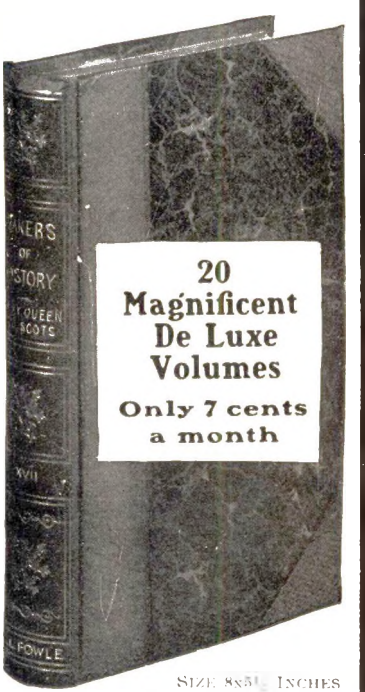
We are going to give you as a premium for promptness, if you accept this offer at once, a splendid building lot—size 25 feet by 100 feet. This is a remarkable opportunity—read carefully—it will interest you—it is really the opportunity of a lifetime. In taking stock we find on hand a few sets of the

Makers of History

20 beautiful De Luxe volumes, of which the bindings are slightly rubbed—not enough to impair their real value, but sufficient to prevent their shipment as perfect stock—at the regular price of $60.00 per set. There being so few of these sets, we shall not rebind, but have decided to let them go for third-price, upon easy monthly payments, and to present you with a desirable building lot located within easy walking distance of **Port Jervis Railroad Station, N. Y.,** which is one of the most important upon the **ERIE Railroad.**

The "Makers of History" are the most entertaining and instructive friends you could possibly have in your home. Each volume is a complete narrative of a man or woman who in their time made things happen. There is not a dull page in the entire 20 volumes. No set of books published can compare in interest or instruction with the "Makers of History." They are as absorbing as anything you can imagine. They are the kind of books that keep people up late reading. Once you start to read any of these volumes you dislike to stop until the book is finished. Hundreds of thousands know and own these books. Their sale is ever increasing, because they are real books to be read and enjoyed—not to be put away and never looked at.

Read Coupon carefully; price is cut in thirds. You take no risk. After examination, if books are not found to be satisfactory, return them at our expense. Remember, these sets are as good as new for all practical purposes. We guarantee the interiors are not injured.



SIZE 8x5½ INCHES

Description of the Premium Building Lots

This land is a natural park and is known as Lincoln Park. Lincoln Park overlooks the city of Port Jervis and the beautiful valley of the Delaware River.

It is free from all swamps or damp wet land of any character.

In a year's time the Erie Railroad should have completed their four track system to Port Jervis, and with the completion of this work the passenger service will be doubled and ideal.

Mr. E. H. Harriman has bought a great deal of property between Port Jervis and New York City. This should be a good guarantee that all property will continue to advance.

Lincoln Park has been surveyed and plotted and is recorded in the public records of Pike County, Penn. These lots are all twenty-five (25) feet front and one hundred (100) feet deep and title is free and clear of all encumbrances whatsoever.

Real Estate is the Basis of All Wealth

"Every person who invests in well-selected real estate in a growing section of a prosperous community, adopts the surest and safest method of becoming independent, for real estate is the basis of all wealth."—PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT.

Titles of the Makers of History:

ALEXANDER THE GREAT
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR
ALFRED THE GREAT
MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
CLEOPATRA
HERNANDO CORTEZ
JOSEPHINE
QUEEN ELIZABETH
HENRY IV
MARIE ANTOINETTE
JULIUS CAESAR
PETER THE GREAT
HANNIBAL PYRRHUS
NERO ROMULUS
GENGHIS KHAN
DARIUS THE GREAT
XERXES
CYRUS THE GREAT

PREMIUM OF A BUILDING LOT. SIGN AND MAIL NOW

A. L. Fowle Co.
333 4th Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

You may send me upon approval all delivery charges prepaid, one set of the **De Luxe Edition of The Makers of History,** 20 Entertaining and Instructive volumes, illustrated. If I am satisfied with the books I will pay you 50c., after examination and $1.28 a month for 15 months. It is understood that if I do not care to keep the books after seeing them, I am to return them to you all charges collect, and it is also understood that if I decide to keep the books that you are, after I have paid for them, to present me with a warranty deed to a building lot at **Lincoln Park,** free of all encumbrances.

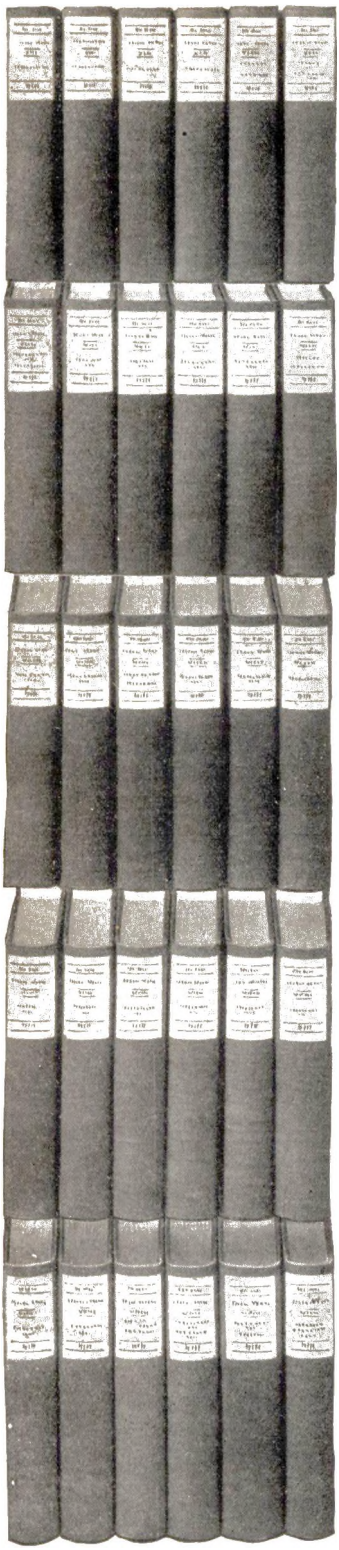
Name .....

State .....

P.M. 12

A. L. FOWLE CO., New York, N. Y.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



DE LUXE DICKENS

AT LOOSE SHEET PRICES

A publisher of high class books recently found himself with 275 sets of Dickens sheets, belonging to a famous edition, which he could not use. He offered them to us at about one quarter of their cost. This is the edition of Dickens we offer you here. And that is the reason why we can offer it at such a phenomenally low price.

Mail the coupon at once, and you will get one of these superb sets for examination to be returned at our expense if it is not satisfactory. You will also get *free* a $10.00 portfolio of Dickens prints.

30 Superb Volumes

We want to send you this magnificent 30-volume set free for your examination. We know you will find it the most satisfactory edition of Dickens' works for the general reader ever produced. It contains everything Dickens wrote,—novels, sketches, essays, short stories and travels.

The books are large and handsome, measuring 5¾ x 8½ inches and are bound in rich green art cloth with gold tops and title pages in two colors. The books are printed from new plates on a fine quality of white paper. The set contains **150 superb illustrations**—all reproductions on exquisite Japan paper—of drawings made under Dickens' own supervision by Cruikshank, Seymour, Browne, Maclise, etc.

$10.00 Portfolio Free

This is the best gallery of Dickens' characters ever gathered into a portfolio. It will carry you through Dickens' land, showing you his characters as portrayed by the famous Dickens illustrators,—besides portraits of Dickens and places connected with his life. It is almost priceless to a lover of Dickens.

There are eighty-one pictures, all on Japan-vellum, 11½x7½ inches in size, suitable for framing if desired. The portfolio is contained in a rich dark green case. This collection, known as the "De Luxe" Portfolio, is issued in a limited edition and sold for $10.00.

Free for Examination

Only a few sets of this beautiful edition are left. Fill out the coupon and mail it to-day. It will bring you a complete set and the portfolio, express charges prepaid, for examination, to be returned at our expense if it is not satisfactory. This is the same set that has been sold previously for $56.00, but you can have it for little more than half if you are prompt.

You take no risk. You pay nothing until you have examined the books. But you must mail the coupon *to-day*. To-morrow may be too late.

J. A. HILL & COMPANY

44-60 East 23rd Street, New York

Pop. 10-07

J. A. HILL & COMPANY, 44-60 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y.

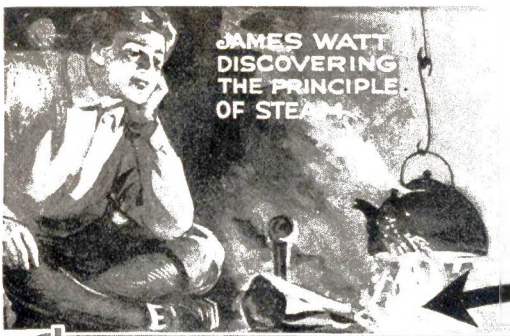
Send me, express charges prepaid, **One Set of Dickens' Works,** in **30** volumes. If the books are not satisfactory, I will return them at your expense. Otherwise I agree to keep them and will pay you $1.00 after examination and $2.00 a month thereafter for 14 months. You are to give me free the Dickens Portfolio. If I return the books I will also return the Portfolio.

Name.....

Address.....

There are a few sets in rich three-quarter morocco binding with leather corners and gold backs. For one of these change the coupon to read $1.00 after examination and $3.00 a month for 14 months.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Home Study

THEN

The bobbing up and down of a cover on an ordinary tea-kettle suggested to James Watt, the idea for the modern steam engine and locomotive. Millions of people had witnessed the same little trick of the kettle, but ***nobody studied the "how and why"*** of the force that made the cover move. James Watt reasoned it out and the results of his study gave him immortal success and fame.

You have opportunities that in Watt's time or even in your own father's time were not dreamed of. James Watt had to go to the very root of things to get the knowledge which made it possible to invent the steam engine. You can secure in compact, easily accessible form, all the knowledge that Watt acquired from hard, tedious study and the knowledge that hundreds of other scientists have given to the world before and after his time. You can get all this information in the modern

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the most practical, comprehensive and understandable treatise yet published on steam Engineering and allied subjects. It is just as much an authority in the Engineering field as the Century dictionary is in the class-room, as Blackstone is in the lawyer's office. The greatest authorities, the most practical experts, the best known engineers, have helped to make this great work the very embodiment of perfection for ***home study.***

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to get men who are interested in Engineering, started in home study work. This Cyclopedia will conclusively prove the superiority of the method of instruction of the American School of Correspondence. We believe it will eventually lead to enrollments in our regular courses, otherwise, we could not make this bargain offer. ***We employ no agents.***

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SENT EXPRESS PREPAID FOR FIVE DAYS' FREE EXAMINATION—If it meets your needs, send $2.00 cash and $2.00 a month thereafter, until you have paid $14.80, the special price. Return at our expense, if you do not care to keep the books.

Just the right kind of help for the man who wishes to become a stationary engineer, or fireman—the man who has secured his license; the electrician who works in a power plant or any mechanic or engineer ambitious to better himself

Invaluable to the ambitious janitor who has the care of a heating system—the chauffeur or **automobile owner** who would save wear and tear on engines and machinery—and men in general who come in contact with steam, gas, gasoline, or oil engines

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE, CHICAGO

Editor-in-Chief Dugald Duane, A. M. S. E., Associate Prof., Massachusetts Institute of Technology

It contains half red morocco, 3,000 pages, over 2,000 full page tables, diagrams, sections, tables, forms, formulas, etc., complete sets of test questions in every volume, —these are among the best features of a text-book and reference work.

CHAPTER HEADS

Boilers, Calorimeters, Pumps, Elevators, Indicators, Valve Gears, Turbines, Compression and Absorption Refrigeration, Steam, Gas and Oil Engines, Marine Engines and Boilers, Condensers, Navigation, Locomotive Engines and Boilers, Air Brakes, Machine Shop Work, Ventilation, Heating, Mechanical Drawing, Air Compressors, Principles and Management of Direct Current Dynamos and Motors, Electric Wiring and Lighting, Storage Batteries, Automobiles, Etc.

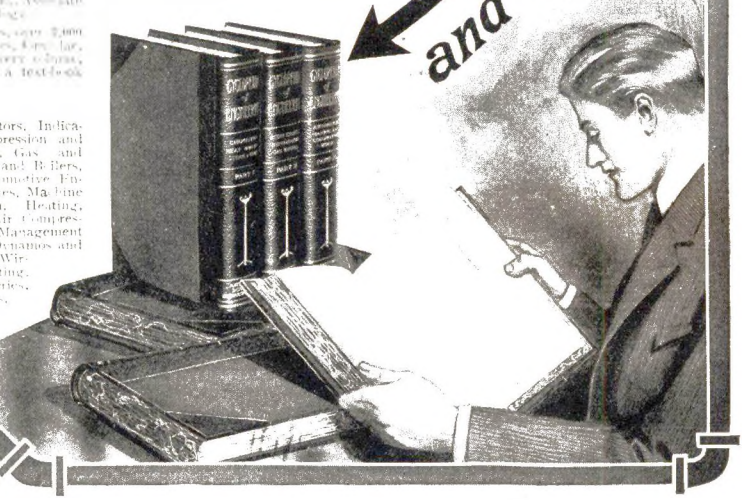
Pop. 12-07

CUT OFF COUPON HERE

Please send ... set Cyclopedia Engineering for ... days' free examination. I will send $2 within 5 days and $2 a month until $14.80 is paid; otherwise I will notify you to send for the books.

Name .....

Address .....



and Now

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SECTION

We have opened this classified advertising section, and invite all reputable advertisers to come in—no display—all must be set in uniform type—no objectionable advertisements accepted—minimum space, four lines; maximum space in this section, thirty lines. Our aim will be to eliminate all questionable advertisements, and we bespeak our readers' assistance to help keep this section clean and profitable to all. Rates, $2.25 a line, which includes AINSLEE'S and SMITH'S Magazines, making a total of 4,000,000 readers—the cheapest and best Classified Advertising medium on the market. Next issue of THE POPULAR closes November 18th.

Agents and Help Wanted

BE YOUR OWN BOSS! Many make $2,000 a year. You have the same chance. Start a mail-order business at home. We tell you how. Money coming in daily. Very good profits. Everything furnished. Write at once for our "Starter" and free particulars. Address M. L. Krueger Co., 155 Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS wanted to sell our $10 Stylographic and Fountain pens. Write for Catalogue and Agents' discount. J. N. Ullrich & Co., Manufacturers, 27 Times Building, New York, N. Y.

HUSTLERS Everywhere $25 to $30 made weekly distributing circulars, samples; no canvassing. Steady. Merchants Out-door Ad Co., Chicago.

LADY SEWERS wanted to make up shields at home; $10 per 100; can make two an hour; work sent prepaid to reliable women. Send reply envelope for information to Universal Co., Desk Q, Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS: HERE'S YOUR OPPORTUNITY, something new; household article; sells on sight; $4 daily easily made; no capital required. For full information and agents proposition address Dexter Co., Dept. A, 334 Dearborn St., Chicago.

AGENTS WANTED in every county to sell the Transparent Handle Pocket Knife. Big commission paid. From $75 to $300 a month can be made. Write for terms. Novelty Cutlery Co., No. 14 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

AGENTS WANTED. Portraits 35c, Frames 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait Co., 290-168 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS—$300 every month selling our wonderful seven-piece Kitchen Set. Send for sworn statement of $12 daily profit; exclusive territory. Outfit Free. P. Thomas Mfg. Co., 150 E Street, Dayton, O.

$75 WEEKLY easily made fitting Eye Glasses. Business quickly learned, pleasant, profitable. No field so little worked. Write for Free "Booklet 58." National Optical College, St. Louis, Mo.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

WANTED MEN EVERYWHERE. Good pay to distribute Circulars, adv. matter, tack signs, etc. No canvassing. 93 National Adv. Bureau, Chicago.

WANTED—A lady agent in every city to work from house to house; good salary easily earned and satisfaction guaranteed. Charles Chemical Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.

SALESMAN: With ability to earn $5.00 a day or better. Men or women. Position permanent. Commence now. No experience required. Outfit free. No triflers need apply. First National Nurseries, Rochester, N. Y.

A NEW ART and a fascinating, rapid moneymaker. You can decorate china, porcelain, pillowtops, anything, in colors or not, from photographs. No talent or experience required. More popular than hand painted china. Cost small, profits large. Send stamp for information. A. H. Vallance Co., Elkhart, Indiana.

Business Opportunities

START a mail order business; we furnish everything necessary; only few dollars required; new plan, success certain; costs nothing to investigate. Milburn Hicks, 706 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago

WE START YOU in a permanent business with us and furnish everything. Full course of instructions free. We are manufacturers and have a new plan in the mail order line. Large profits. Small capital. You pay us in three months and make big profit. References given. Pease Mfg. Co., 253 Pease Bldg., Buffalo, N. Y.

START MAIL-ORDER BUSINESS. Sell goods by mail; cash orders, big profits. Conducted by any one, anywhere. Our plan positively successful. Absolute satisfaction guaranteed. Write for Free Book. Central Supply Co., Kansas City, Mo.

PEACH FARMS—$2 per month secures you a 5 acre peach farm in the Famous Koshkonong District Oregon Co., Mo. Orchards in this district netted owners $300 per acre this year. Write for free booklet and full particulars. Frisco Fruit Farm Co., Des Moines, Ia.

Business Opportunities—Continued.

"SUCCESS IN THE STOCK MARKET." Our little book gives interesting details. It's yours for the asking. Write for it. John A. Boardman & Co., Stock Brokers, 53 Broadway, N. Y.

I MADE $50,000 in five years in the mail order business; began with $5. Anyone can do the work in spare time. Send for booklet; tells how to get started. Manager, Box 570, Lockport, N. Y.

"ADVERTISERS MAGAZINE"—should be read by every advertiser and Mail-order dealer. Best "Ad School" in existence. Trial subscription 10c. Sample copy Free. Advertisers' Magazine, 810 Grand, Kansas City, Mo.

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES are paid well for easy work; examinations of all kinds soon. Expert advice, sample questions and Booklet L 11 describing positions and telling easiest and quickest way to secure them free. Write now. Washington Civil Service School, Washington, D. C.

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CASH PAID FOR YOUR SECURITIES. Correspondents in every State and twenty years' experience in handling Unlisted Securities, enables us to find a buyer for your Stocks and Bonds. Bank references. Dudley A. Tyng & Co., 184 LaSalle St., Chicago.

Patents & Lawyers

PATENTS—Trade-Marks—Labels. Send for my free book "How to Get Them." Invent something useful, then have it patented and turn it into money, before some one else does. There is money in practical inventions. Send description for free opinion as to patentability. Advice free. Joshua R. H. Potts, Lawyer, 306 Ninth St., Washington, D. C.; 80 Dearborn St., Chicago; 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia

PATENTS THAT PROTECT. Book free. Rates low. Highest references, best services. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, Washington, D. C.

Patents and Lawyers—Continued.

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PATENTS Secured or Fee Returned. Terms Low, Highest Refs. Advice and Literature Free. Vashon & Co., Patent Attorneys, 546 E St., N.W., Wash., D.C.

PATENTS SECURED or fee returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. Guide Book and What to Invent, with valuable List of Inventions Wanted, sent free. One Million Dollars offered for one invention; $16,000 for others. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress; sample free. Evans, Wilkens & Company, 852 "F" Street, Washington, D. C.

Real Estate

CALIFORNIA LAND $1.00 ACRE. Balance entire purchase 20 cents week for each acre. No taxes. No interest. 5-acre tracts. Level, rich, clear. Ready to plow. Under irrigation. Perpetual water right. Immediate possession given. Particulars, Maps, Photographs, for 2c. stamp. Stevinson Colony, Room 35, 703 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco.

CASH for your property wherever located. If you want to sell, send description and price. If you want to buy state your wants. Northwestern Business Agency, 319 Bank of Commerce Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.

BUSINESS WANTED. I can Sell any Business, Farm or Real Estate that is salable, no matter where located. I reach the people who buy. A trial will convince you. Established 1881. If you want to buy or sell, address Frank P. Cleveland, Real Estate Broker, 1308 Adams Express Building, Chicago, Illinois.

For Sale

CALIFORNIA for 10c. Reliable information about California; invaluable to homeseekers. Subscribers' inquiries answered free. 6 months' trial 10c. Western Empire Magazine, 229 Times Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal.

Music

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG and I will write the music and present to big New York publishers. A "hit" may make you rich. My Song "In the Good Old Summer Time," made me a fortune. My experience will aid you. Write to-day for free booklet. Ren Shields, 99 Johnston Building, New York.

For the Figure

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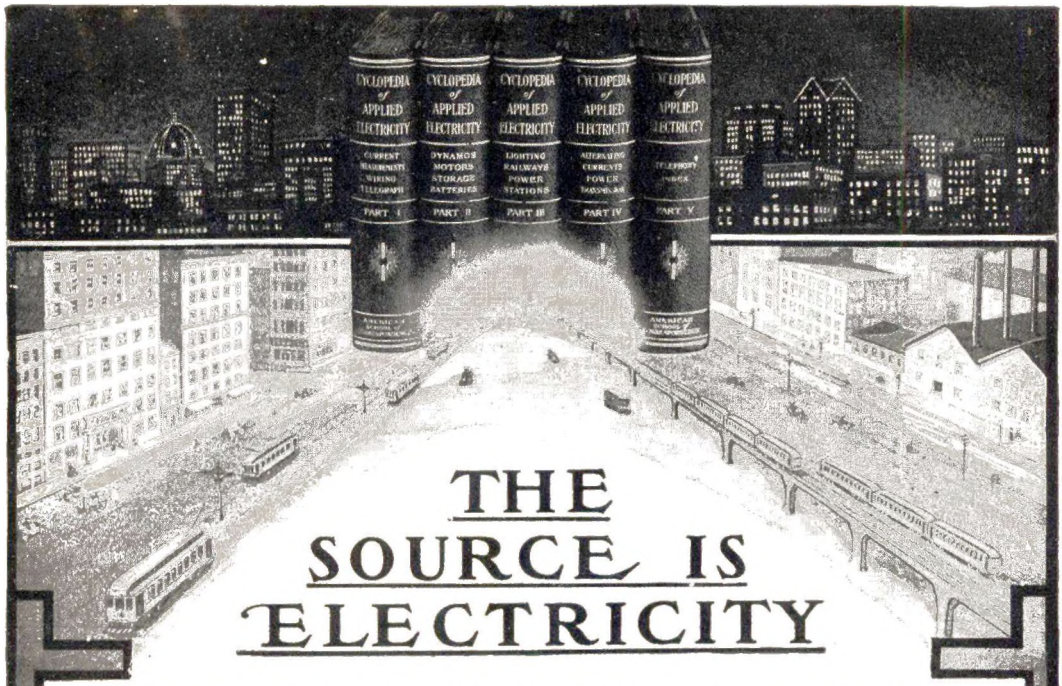

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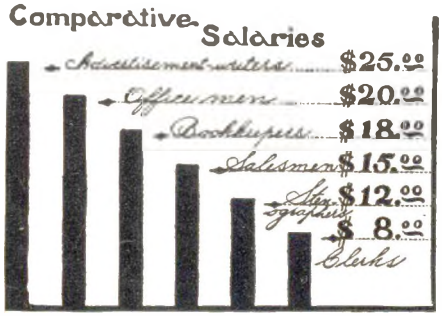

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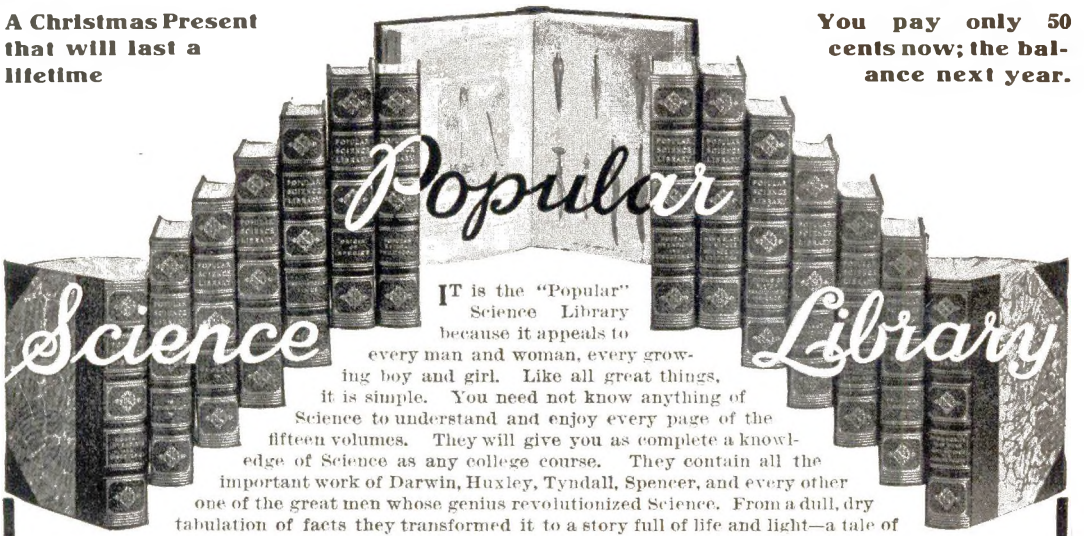

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VOLUME X | NUMBER 2

The Popular Magazine

DECEMBER | 1907

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. X. DECEMBER, 1907. No. 2.

Lastluck Lake

By S. Carleton

Author of "The Ribboned Way," "The Corduroy Road," "Bellegarde's Girl," "The Micmac," Etc.

Not long ago the readers of THE POPULAR were promised a story by S. Carleton, whose books "The Ribboned Way" and "The Micmac" enjoyed such a wide sale. In the present complete novel we have secured the best work that this author has ever done. The story of the lost mine in the frozen north, the mysterious man-wolf, the terrible struggle for the possession of the mine and a woman, as well, has a charm and fascination that cannot be readily described. We feel that our readers will agree with us in pronouncing it one of the strongest stories we have ever published.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

DEAD tired, Hazard was climbing the November desolation of the height of land between him and Lastluck Lake. It was time to get out of the wilderness that had been a nightmare to him ever since he had been fool enough to join an utter stranger in a mad expedition for gold there. The camp might not be absolutely starving when he got back to it after his fortnight's absence of useless prospecting, but there was no "might be" as to the men's hanging on the raw edge of mutiny. Unless he wanted to be up against both things, and the winter, alone, it was time to go.

"Thank the Lord I am alone, though, and haven't got to ram into Ridgeway again the fact that there's no gold in the country," he reflected almost cheerfully, though Heaven knew he had nothing more filling to be cheerful about than the prospect of dragging a drunken foreman and a gang of demoralized men out to civilization. He caught his worn-out boot on a stone; swore and, with the word half out, stopped dead.

He had gained the top of the ridge that overlooked Ridgeway's luckless mining-camp in the houseless north, five hundred miles from anywhere. Below him lay what would have been the gold-mine if there had been any gold in it; the dried-up river that made the only cut in the sheer wall of cliff he stood on; the useless office; Ridgeway's hut, and, incidentally, Hazard's own shack that he had never had time to make winter-proof.

Its owner forgot he was dog-tired, because he was suddenly very angry. Ridgeway's house should have been empty, deserted. Hazard had pulled himself together to be ready to see it deserted—and instead the usual smoke

was rising from its makeshift chimney, the usual light shining from its window.

"He hasn't gone," he said out loud; "Ridgeway hasn't gone!"

The foremost of three men who tailed behind him called out antagonistically: "What say?"

Hazard pointed downward. "I said Mr. Ridgeway must be here still, that's all! Give me the ore bag, Nelson; I'll let you know about it in the morning," as coolly as if he were not certain there was nothing in it worth letting any one know about. "You'd better get home."

Nelson moved off as antagonistically as he had asked "what say?" the others at his heels; undersized men with sharp faces, scum of cities that Ridgeway had got cheap. It had been no idea of Hazard's to come to Lastluck Lake or anywhere else with such men for working material, and as he watched them shambling down the river-bed to their bunk-house between Ridgeway's shack and the lake, a longing for his own clean, trained men came up sourly in his mind. But he had been fool enough to let Ridgeway pick the gang, and by the time he found out their quality it was too late to send out to civilization for substitutes; like everything else of Ridgeway's, Hazard had to grin and bear them.

He was in no hurry to meet his partner. He stood, instead, gazing out over the long stretch of lake that had been his only prospect since he had come up it, pleasantly excited, believing in Ridgeway, ready to find free gold in every bit of country rock—though not for long. He had made the journey to Lastluck with his own canoes and Indians, troubling little about his convoy of Ridgeway's men and heavy-laden canoes except to see that their foreman kept them together—and if his first shock came when those same canoes were unloaded, his second was when the Indians who paddled them turned tail, canoes and all, and fled; leaving a half-provisioned expedition stranded in the wilderness.

Before Hazard had a tent over his head he sent one of his own canoes back with an urgent letter to Ridgeway, and then, with a troubled heart, turned to his work. There might be gold in the country, and there might not.

What there was no conditional mood about were the badness and inadequacy of Ridgeway's supplies; the utter lack of means of communication with outside, except for Hazard's one canoe and the two Indians left to him; and the total want of preparation for the winter he must spend at Lastluck Lake if he meant to make good there.

And, as if those things were not sufficient burden for Paul Hazard's much galled shoulders, his senior partner in the abortive hole in the ground that represented the first mine at Lastluck had seen fit to arrive on top of them, with his daughter in tow.

Hazard cursed till he could curse no longer at the folly that had made him listen to Arthur Ridgeway and his visionary country that was to prove a new Klondike, as he went to the shore to meet them; but he said not one word of reproach when he saw Sophy Ridgeway's face. He had seen it ever since, in his dreams and out of them, though it was by no desire of his own that he loved her; she had never seemed to take any stock in him.

Even if she had, Lastluck was no place for any woman. All Hazard could do for this one was to get her out of it before the lake froze. If it was by main force that he had exacted a promise from Ridgeway to set out for civilization with his daughter on the very day Hazard himself left them to go prospecting, he *had* exacted it. And here was what it had come to—Ridgeway had sent the girl out alone with Hazard's Indians, and was still here!

"The fool!" said Hazard viciously. He looked out over the frozen lake that had been clear water when he went away, and wondered where the first ice had caught Sophy, and how soon he could get a move on Ridgeway to go after her.

"Though Lord knows how, except we tramp it," he growled, "and haul Ridgeway on a travois, for he'll never walk. Even he had no right to stay

here; his one mouth makes a difference, and he's perfectly useless. Everything he even *said* about this place was a lie, like his fool maps and plans!" For the first time he looked down at his bag that might as well have been empty, with satisfaction. "That ought to make Ridgeway listen to reason," he snapped. "There wasn't anything in my fool agreement to stay the winter if there was no gold here, and I don't think even Ridgeway will have any stomach to stay and fish for his phantom mines alone. He can see this rubbish, and take it or leave it; but it frees me, and I'm going. I don't admire the prospect of playing at mining with useless, discontented men, and Ridgeway bickering and driving at them and me the whole blessed winter. It was bad enough with Sophy here, but without her—well, I can thank God she's gone, anyhow!" and he lifted his cap as he did it.

Then he went round the river valley to Ridgeway's house, jingling his wholesome bag of rocks that held anything and everything but gold.

He opened the door without knocking, and stood in the stove-heated kitchen wearily, in the first hint of comfort he had known for days. The heat wasted out through the badly built place, but to a man fresh from biting cold it was like getting to heaven. Ridgeway was never uncomfortable, whatever his partner might be, and even behind the shut door of Ridgeway's other room he could hear the second stove in there roaring.

"Well, God knows there's plenty of wood, such as it is," said Hazard.

He tapped at the door and went in, with his bag of disappointments dangling in his hand; and dropped it on the threshold.

"My God," he gulped, "you!"

He stared in front of him like a man who has nightmare. There was no sign of Ridgeway; there was only one person in the house, and she was a girl. Hazard pulled off the cap he had forgotten, and stood foolishly, as a man sometimes stands when he is afraid. He had a mad hope that he saw relief, saw joy on Sophy Ridgeway's face before she spoke quietly.

"Oh," she said, "I thought you'd come to-day. I even went up to meet you, but I went too early. I'm glad you're back."

Hazard looked at her, stupidly still. She was rather a splendid sort of person, not the kind of girl to be at Lastluck Lake. She knelt on the floor by the stove, doing something with long bags like snakes and lake sand, and as she glanced up at him Hazard was aware for the hundredth time of the dark mist of hair that swept back from her forehead, of the thickness of her black lashes and the deep shining of her blue eyes; and, for the first time, that she could be deadly pale. Her knitted sweater was no whiter than her cheeks.

"Where's Mr. Ridgeway?" he demanded. "Where's your father?" He looked round the bare room as if the owner of it might be under the scanty furniture. "I—shall I find him in the office?"

"He's not anywhere," said the girl slowly. "I'm alone! Father went out to Tabeak for supplies, and dogs, and Indian drivers a week ago; just before it froze. He said he would be back by Christmas with—everything." If she hesitated it was because it was what he had said to tell Hazard, not what he had told her. But she was his daughter, and she must make his going sound at least decent. "He——"

Hazard cut her off on the word. "Why in God's name," he groaned, "didn't you go with him?" He had thought of every contingency except this—it seemed to him that no one but a crazy man would have imagined this—and then he saw Sophy Ridgeway's face. "I'm awfully sorry," he ejaculated. "I didn't mean to be rough. What I meant was that I don't see how on earth you're going to stand it."

"I know," said the girl slowly. She rose from her knees and stood facing him, her eyes on a level with his chin, though Hazard was a tall man. "But there wasn't any chance for me to do anything else. When I came out here

I promised father I'd never be a trouble or a drag on him; and I should have been both if I'd gone with him now. There was no room for me; there was only one canoe; and father had to go. His business——"

The man took no stock in Ridgeway's business; it was, like his gold-mine, non-existent. "Where were the other canoes? You had three when you came out."

"One of them Rider found all full of holes; one of them he couldn't find at all. Father took the third."

"Where was mine, then?" Anger, or something heavier, made him very quiet.

"The men sank it. One of them," dully, "was drowned. So father thought it best to take no risks about the last canoe. I helped him start."

"I suppose you did."

Hazard was used to seeing her help with everything that was not a girl's work, even to lugging in fire-wood if Ridgeway happened to be chilly; but this thing was beyond belief, was monstrous. Why, in all common decency, had not Ridgeway left an Indian if any one had to be left? He would have given his scanty livelihood to have laid hands, there and then, on Ridgeway. And Ridgeway's daughter saw it in his bleak face.

"Father couldn't make any of the Indians stay," she said slowly, "they were out of hand, and besides——" She stopped, as if she gripped herself to keep back something that was really no business of Hazard's. "I know what you think," she added, "but you don't understand about father. He had to go. You said yourself he ought to; he told me so."

It was not at all what Hazard had said, but he forced his tongue to lightness. "I didn't have to understand till now," he drawled. "Would you mind telling me what happened?"

"I suppose a sort of mutiny happened," whitely. "When you'd gone the men struck to go home. Rider stood them off father's canoe, but some of them got yours—and of course after that father couldn't take any chances about being stuck here all winter. After he left, Rider got the men pacified, I think. I haven't seen any of them, they haven't stirred out of the bunk-house." She looked suddenly straight at Hazard. "I didn't want to stay, Mr. Hazard. I knew what a dead weight I'd be to you. But what could I do?"

Hazard only nodded. He would have sold his soul to have her stay if he could have been sure of being able to take care of her, but he was not sure; and, moreover, he was horribly frightened. The men were only worrying yet, but they were men; and Rider, the foreman, only to be trusted when he was sober.

"I'll see Rider," he muttered, and half-way to the door turned back with a question: "Did Mr. Ridgeway leave any message for me?"

"Only that he would probably be back before Christmas, that he relied on you to continue prospecting, and—that you were not to trouble about me."

The message was more madly selfish than Hazard had expected, and two things he had not meant to say broke out of him, though he kept a third to himself.

"How can I help troubling about you? Can I go off prospecting and take any decent care of you at the same time? And I've got to tell you the truth: I might tramp this country for ever, I'd never find anything. Look!" He took up his bag and poured its miserable specimens out on the floor. "When I saw smoke here I came to tell your father that if I hunted for years I couldn't bring back anything else; there's nothing in the country. Not one thing. Even to dream of gold round Lastluck Lake was madness."

"Was it?" cried Sophy trenchantly; she looked at Hazard and controlled her tongue. He did not know all there was to know yet and she was curiously sorry for him. "Come up and have dinner with me, will you?" she asked, as if Ridgeway were at home. "I've a reason. I've something to say."

"Joe will be ready for me." With his hand on the door Hazard was churlish

for fear of being something else. "I can't."

For a minute the girl's courage failed her. "Both your Indians are gone. Joe—went with father," she got out shakily, and Hazard turned quite white. He had thought no better of Gabriel, but Joe—his own trusted cook and servant! That, if he had needed showing, showed him how bad things were at Lastluck Lake.

"I see," he returned grimly. "It's very kind of you to ask me to dinner."

"It's not kindness. I can't finish the sand-bags alone, and I——"

"Sand-bags? What for?" Hazard stared at the snaky things on the floor which were not his idea of sand-bags.

"To keep the wind off my feet," hastily. "But it's not the bags I want you for; I've something to say to you about *that!*" She pointed to the bag of failures brought home to be a lesson to Ridgeway, and Hazard actually winced.

"I'll come, with pleasure," he stammered. But once outside it was not pleasure that lined his face. He raced over to his own shack, shouting for Rider as he ran, and pulled up blankly. There had been no need to shout; Rider himself was opening Hazard's shaky door from inside, and standing there as if it belonged to him. And not only was the foreman absent from the bunk-house, his face was tallow, the tallow of hard drinking; even leaning on the door-post, he swayed on his legs.

It was what might have been expected, but for one long-drawn instant Hazard's heart stood still in his breast. He need not have flattered himself Sophy had been glad to see him; she had been just plain thankful.

CHAPTER II.

"You're back," said the foreman thickly. He stared dazedly at Hazard without moving to let him pass. "Well, I'm glad."

"You'd have been gladder if you'd kept off drink till I did come," returned Hazard grimly. He pushed Rider aside and shut the door on the two of them. "You might have tried to keep sober, anyway! My God, man, couldn't you even see you were all the protection Miss Ridgeway had?"

Rider brushed his hand across his eyes, and blinked at Hazard. "It's not drink," he said vacantly, "it's sleep. I guess you needn't remind me about Miss Ridgeway—I done my best for her. Mr. Hazard, I haven't more than what you'd call dozed off for a week. I haven't dared to, because of her. The men have been clean, stark crazy. I've had to live in here, and I guess you'll have to excuse it. I couldn't intrude onto Miss Ridgeway, and I could keep an eye on her from here. Things went hard before that"—he let out a string of epithets without apology—"Ridgeway left, and I didn't know but what they might get harder; I was scared solid what the men might do. There's two doors to the bunk-house, and I couldn't be at both of them; so I kind of thought it might be best for Miss Ridgeway if I stopped here. I guessed the gang would get along for a while without any foreman."

"I'm sorry, Rider; I ought to have known you were white," said Hazard quietly; and he had not known he was going to shake hands with Rider till the man moved away sheepishly. He looked round his shack, struck with a sudden change, and a total absence of the trade-winds that had been wont to make a sieve of it. "You've been doing some repairs, haven't you?" He stared at the brown paper erratically striping his walls.

Rider yawned cavernously. "No, it was Miss Ridgeway; I only gave her a hand. Them long sand-bags round where the surbase ought to be are fine, and she and I covered the cracks with some paper she had." He collapsed on the table and lay there rubbing his eyes. "I guess that's a fine girl," he volunteered, "and if I'd known what that father of hers meant to do with her I'd have tied him head and heels before he done it. Mr. Hazard, the man was plumb crazy with fright; clear, sheer fright. And I'd be comfort-

abler if I knew what of. There was a kind of mix-up with the men, of course, but nothing to start a girl's father off in the middle of the night with all the canoe and Indians we had, and leave her in the middle of it. But she never said a word—just told me she helped him go."

"I know," said Hazard absently; there were things more important than the state of Ridgeway's nerves. "Look here, you know as much about this country as I do. Can Ridgeway get to Tabeak, get supplies, and be back here by Christmas? You know he can't." It was the third thing he had not blurted out to Ridgeway's daughter. "First place, we're late in November now; he'll be too late at Tabeak, what scratch dogs there are there will have been picked up long ago. And God knows what provisions he can get there—I never saw any! He'll have to go on to the nearest Hudson Bay post."

"Which he can't, without dogs." Rider, trying fiercely not to nod, spat at the stove and missed it. "He wouldn't tramp it on snow-shoes to save the lives of the lot of us. No, sir; he'll settle down in Tabeak—if ever he gets there!"

"What d'ye mean?" The intention in the tired drawl arrested Hazard in a much needed change of socks, if the rags he put on deserved the name.

"I mean his three Indians mayn't want to go to Tabeak. If they don't, they've only got to cut down the long still-water going out of Bear Lake and strike the other chain straight home to their own place. Ridgeway won't know the difference till they get there—unless they dump him out at the still-water."

"Joe wouldn't dare," began Hazard hotly.

"Joe was the worst of all, I took it. If ever I saw Indians rubbed up the wrong way till they were dangerous it was yours and Ridgeway's. I tell you straight, Mr. Hazard, I was mad when Ridgeway left that girl here with only you and me to take care of her, but when I'd chewed on it I was damn glad she hadn't gone with him." And a roar from the bunk-house finished his period with no light emphasis, if staying were the better part.

"What are they drinking?" asked Hazard sharply.

"That stuff they make out of hemlock—and the Lord knows it'd be a blessed funeral if it killed them; they haven't obeyed one order I've given for a week. You don't know the worst of the hole we're in, Mr. Hazard. When Ridgeway left he as good as emptied our stores to take with him; all that wasn't too bad for dogs to eat. The most he left was some barrels of hard bread and truck he couldn't carry." He prudently omitted a few bottles of rum. "We've flour—and no tea; rotten pork—and no sugar! By the time I found out about the stores there was none of them left but the tobacco, and that Miss Ridgeway'd lugged up to her house with her own hands. And the men are crazy with fear of the place before they know about starvation."

"Fear? What of?"

The contempt stung Rider; whatever he might have meant to say he changed. "I suppose the same thing as Ridgeway," he muttered.

"Have it out, and be done," snapped Hazard.

"Well, they say the place is haunted; that there's somebody round that ain't human nor yet a beast."

"They must have thought you were dead easy," slowly. "Be sensible, Rider. Do any of them look as if they had nerves?"

"They've got something—call it devilment, if you like. But it'll get worse when the food gives out."

"All the men can't be cracked," cried Hazard. "Olsen, the Swede—I always found him steady enough. Nelson and Kelly—of course——"

"Won't be much worse than any of 'em when they find out about the stores," dryly.

"Ridgeway *may* get back," Hazard frowned.

"Back nothing! How can he be back from anywhere when he isn't going to get there to come back from?" despairingly. "No; you and I and the girl are up against it, Mr. Hazard; and

we're up solid! I guess if we had any sense we'd go right down to the bunk-house and shoot our hoboes before it strikes them to do the same by us."

"I'll talk to them," said Hazard—too quietly.

"I've talked." Rider contemplated a skinned knuckle. "We're past talking. We've got to do; and I'm looking to you to know what. A month ago we could have sent for canoes, and all trekked out down to the lake like Ridgeway; now, you and me could tramp it; but *she'd* die." He nodded backward to the house where Sophy Ridgeway waited for Hazard and dinner.

Hazard shook himself into a coat. "The whole thing is just what I expected all along," he said matter-of-factly; "but just because I did expect it I thought it probably wouldn't happen. Long ago, when Ridgeway first got at me with his stories of this place, I knew I was a fool to listen to him, but I listened; and you did the same. I'd never heard of Lastluck Lake, but I had heard of the country, and when I saw it—— Well, you may remember that when we got here last June I sent a canoe back the very day we landed to tell Ridgeway to bring out dogs and sleds and snow-shoes, and food for a famine. Instead he brings himself and Miss Sophy. You know the kind of life I led with him after I had to tell him there wasn't any gold here and never would be, but nothing I could say would put sense into him. Only to-night have I tramped in from one of his crazy errands, with the kind of specimens children save up till they forget they have them—I've never seen a sign of gold. The Lord knows why I didn't tear up my agreement with him and get out, but I didn't. I stayed, like a fool, nagging at the man to take away his daughter; like a worse fool, when he promised me to, I believed him; I thought they were both gone till I came out on top of the cliff to-night. What I ought to have done was to pack the whole outfit out a month ago, with Ridgeway tied in a canoe, if he wouldn't go any other way. Now we can't expect to get out without snow-shoes—and there's not a pair in camp but my two."

Rider yawned again. "I guess I can't care, Mr. Hazard," he said thickly. "I meant it when I said I hadn't dared to sleep. I'll die if I don't now! So if you could keep an eye on Miss Sophy I—I guess I won't talk any longer about what we can't do. If we'd dogs we could dog out, and if we'd skates I guess we'd skate out, but——" He dropped his arms on the table and looked foolishly at Hazard, with eyes that were red and gummy in a twitching face.

Hazard took him gently by the shoulders and shoved him over to the bunk; and Rider was asleep on his feet before he got there. The younger man opened the door and stood motionless in the freezing dark.

The men in the bunk-house were singing, with a note that did not cheer the soul of the solitary listener; in front of it stretched the lake, black in the gleam of the needle-pointed stars. No one could make any time on that ice without skates — and even Hazard grinned at the image of himself and Rider and Miss Ridgeway, and all their riffraff crew, skating for their lives and the nearest township—no woman could tramp along the edge of it—till she died God knew where; and to stay at Lastluck meant starvation.

Hazard shut the door on the sleeping man and crossed the hundred yards between him and Sophy. There was only one thing to do. No doubt, being an amateur at the work, he would do it badly, but he would do it; if he died on the road out Sophy Ridgeway should not die here.

He opened the door of Ridgeway's house and went in; he had more to do than to die for her. He had to keep her unconscious that he was a man and she was a woman, and that he had loved her very nearly since first he saw her face. So he was smiling cheerfully as he came in on her, where she stood by the kitchen stove, whistling. It was her only trick that Hazard did not like.

"You're late," she said. "I hope I haven't spoiled things—though I may

as well tell you I haven't much to spoil. Hard biscuit and fried hare—and hard biscuit and molasses; there you have your first course and your second. But I've got half a bottle of whisky, and I'm sure you need a drink."

Hazard did; more than thirst was drying his throat to ashes. But it would be drier before he drank her last bottle of whisky.

"I'd sooner have coffee," he ventured, knowing there was no tea.

The girl could have cried with shame as she looked at him. "There is none," she said hardly, "only biscuit coffee. Rider showed me how to roast the crumbs."

"Then Rider knows more than I do," carelessly. "By all means, biscuit coffee." He took the curiously smelling pot from the back of the stove before she could reach for it. "Now I think we're ready. I'm horribly ashamed of keeping you; it was only that I had to dress for dinner," with a grin at his worn tweedy coat.

"Did you see Rider?"

"He's asleep," truthfully.

He pushed Sophy's chair to the table; there were things he had got to tell her, but not till she had eaten. Besides, the smell of the meat had gone to his own head, till he knew he was starved; he had hard work to inquire with decent carelessness where she got it before he fell on his first mouthful.

"Rider killed it," said Sophy shortly; it was none of Hazard's business that since the pork went bad she had lived on hare.

"Good man!" And he meant it: he owed a deal to Rider. "Have some biscuit? No, not raw; I'll heat it up in the pan where the hare fried, and it'll be twice as good. If Rider can get hares I'm a chef with biscuits."

Sophy's eyes dimmed suddenly as she watched him over the stove. He was unsuitably tall and strong to be cooking biscuits. There was a fine-drawn look about his face that she liked, just as she liked the steadiness of his gray eyes. He was always so businesslike and comfortable; even stuck out here with a girl on his hands he would never be anything but—reliable. Somehow the quality seemed odd to the girl, in a man as good-looking as Hazard.

The biscuit was good, and they ate it, if by common consent they shied off the second course of hard bread and molasses. It was not till Hazard had been worsted in an argument about washing the dishes that he lit his pipe and remembered he had Sophy to thank that they still had a store of tobacco; but he did not say so.

"Now I'll tackle the sand-bags," he observed between two draws of his pipe, "seems to me you've done your share of them. I left my shack a sieve, Miss Ridgeway, and I find it a palace."

"So Rider wasn't asleep." She arrested her dish-towel.

"Not just at first." Hazard rammed in sand viciously as he saw his slip. "Did you invent these snakes? For they're the best wind-breaks I ever saw."

"I should hope he wasn't, at six o'clock." Sophy ignored the sand-bags. "What on earth did he want to sleep for, Mr. Hazard?"

"I suppose he found hare-hunting fatiguing," gravely.

Sophy threw down her towel. For a moment she stood before Hazard, a sight to make a man's heart ache, her face pale as ashes and her eyes blazing dully.

"I was a fool to ask," she said bitterly. "I know! Rider was up night and day taking care of me till you came back—and now you'll go on taking care of me till you wish I was dead and buried! I ought to have done anything, rather than have stayed here. Father told me if I went I'd be a curse to him, and now I'm being a curse to you. I was mad not to know it."

Hazard put down the sand-bag. "Now you're talking rubbish," he rejoined coolly. "You are no more trouble to Rider and me than we are to each other. If that's the sort of thing you're thinking it's time we had a talk, as well as for other reasons. We can't any of us stay here, Miss Ridgeway; we've got to get out. For one thing, there's

something the matter with the men; they're useless, and worse."

"Get out! Do you mean give up?" It was quiet, but Hazard reddened.

"We'll get to that by and by. For now it's this: Your father can't be back by Christmas, not before February; he'll have to go too far for supplies. And by that time we'd be dead. As it is, we've just enough food to get out with; if we can make snow-shoes and toboggans I think we can fetch the first settlement."

In the dead pause he had time to see how people can compare a woman to a tigress, even before Sophy turned on him.

"*I'll* never go," she cried, "no matter what you do! It's cowardly, sneaking, to give up; it's acting a lie to father. If you haven't a duty to him, I have."

"I've a duty to the men, too." Hazard's eyes were cool on her angry ones. "They're not the men I would have brought in here, but I can't see them starve—and they've got to starve if we stay. They've practically struck work already; and as for other things—if you want to know, I was afraid to turn my back to the three I had out with me for fear they'd do for me, and make a break back to camp to clear out in the canoes before the lake froze."

"They can't be like that! Father had them, or most of them, before we came here." But she had to set her lips to say it.

"Working where they could paint the nearest village red every night—yes! Here they've had neither work nor play, and they're feeling it. But if they were the best men in the world and contented, I couldn't expect them to sit here and die for their day's wages. We've got to go. It makes me sick to think of the hardship for you, but if we stayed it would be worse than hardship—I can't put it plainer. Get back to the settlements is the only thing we can do." He meant the only thing we can try to do. "It's not as if we had a working gold-mine; then the men might settle down—they'd see what they were doing, and even if they're pretty poor stuff they'd get bitten with the gold. They'd *want* to stay, and they'd trust me to make shift to feed them. Now they see as well as I do that our being here is sheer madness; they won't stir to dig for the gold they know isn't here. In a way, I care for their miserable bodies, and in a way I don't—but as far as our own are concerned, I think we'll make a try to save them; and the only way is to go."

"You've a plan already?"

"Yes. The best one I can make."

"Well"—Sophy drew a hard breath—"you can leave me out of it. I won't go! Father put every cent he had in the world into this thing, and since he's had to go away we've got to get it out." A sudden appeal in the "we" pleased Hazard. "I said I had something to say to you about the rubbish you brought in from prospecting, and I have. If it's only saving our lives you're thinking of, I suppose it won't make any difference, but it's—this!" She stopped, drew a tin pan from under the stove, and held it out. "It's father's gold!"

Hazard jumped up as she overturned the pan on the cleared table. Before him, dull in the common lamplight, lay nugget after nugget of smooth, water-worn gold.

CHAPTER III.

Hazard had once before seen such gold, but only once. For a moment he stood over it with a queer feeling of physical sickness. "Sophy," he got out at last, and never noticed he used her given name. "Sophy!"

She nodded. "It's here; I don't know how much. Now, does that make any difference to the plan you had 'already'? Will you take the men out now?"

"Oh, Lord, I don't know!" Hazard was touching the stuff, smelling it, tasting it mechanically. "It's like the first Klondike gold," he commented heavily, and a hundred things fought in his mind before he could go on. "Why didn't Ridgeway tell me? Where did he find it?"

"I found it." She had been a tigress a minute ago, now she sat down by the table and leaned on it. "I'd no right to speak to you the way I did about leaving here, but—well, you know you'd been horrid about father. I knew you didn't believe in him, and I was furious. I'd never lied to you; why should he have? And you don't know what finding the gold means to him—or to me! I was certain the gold must be here; I was always thinking of it, always; but I never could find anything. I was too ignorant how to look. It was accident in the end. The day after father left I —got frightened; the men were fighting so in the bunk-house, and Rider—I should have known better about Rider, but you know what he is when he's drunk, and I could hear his voice louder than any. I slipped out, up to the dried-up river."

"But there never was anything there."

"I know that; I only spoke about the river to make you understand where I went. I crossed it, and climbed up the bank at the other side, and up the hill, till it began to dip into a funny, round hollow parallel to the river. I've got to be precise, or you wouldn't understand me—unless you've been there?"

"No! I didn't know there was another break in the hill behind us."

"There isn't. East, the mountain was still solid in front of me, and west there was no break in our cliff; but *south* there was a sort of round place, a deep depression without any outlet. There's a pretty high ridge between it and our dried river, for I found a bit of a brook still running, and the water went south. It was a queer-looking hollow, with gullies draining into it all round, like the spokes of a wheel, and a rim like a wheel round them. I wasn't thinking of gold; I was looking for a place to stay in till Rider was sober and could manage the men; and I—— Truly, Mr. Hazard, I thought it was an earthquake, but it was only the ground caved in—just gone away from under me like shell-ice, right in the middle of the hollow. I went down over my head. When I climbed out of the gravel and stuff I was all bruised and stupid at first—see my hands! And then—I saw these!" She pointed to the nuggets. "Everywhere—under my feet—sticking in the gravel."

"Were you hurt?" He was not looking at the gold.

"I never thought about it."

"You might have been killed," said Hazard sternly; and then he thought of his trade, and his failure at it. "It's funny; I tried all over that river when first I came," he pondered. "And after that——"

"I know," quickly, "father always kept worrying you to go north; he must have got turned round about the place somehow. Anyhow, this wasn't *near* the river; I know you've never been there. It was a sort of big dried-out pothole, that didn't show till I fell into it. I meant to tell you as soon as I saw you to-night, but at first I was——" She looked at him frankly. "Oh, I was too glad to see you—and then, somehow I couldn't begin. You'd been so far for nothing, and you were so cross about father. You never really believed he knew about the gold here, and wasn't just guessing at it, and I got—angry with you."

"If he'd known where to find it, I'd have believed," said Hazard simply. "But you know—to come out here with a man who says he knows the very spot to go to, and then doesn't—it couldn't help sounding like a fable."

"If it hadn't been true," almost dreamily, "true!" And for a moment Hazard wondered how the gold could make even a girl forget her own father had practically abandoned her, and suddenly caught her eyes. "I know I'm a fool with joy about it," she apologized. "But what are we going to do?"

"It depends," Hazard answered slowly because he was thinking like a mill-race. "Supposing it's an isolated pocket, or perhaps a series of them, it's not worth while doing anything. We couldn't carry out what we got, and it wouldn't be enough to stay here and die for."

"But if it isn't?"

For a long moment the man was si-

lent. Going out was probably not much more possible than staying in; it was only a choice of two deaths, with two kinds of agonies before them; and he had, in his hard way, his own honor to think of.

"Your father put in the money," he declared abruptly. "I put in nothing but my knowledge, and that seems to have gone back on me." There was not a trace of bitterness in his voice or his mind. "And my promise to stay here till spring. If the ore's here, we'll stay."

"I thought so," said the girl unsteadily. "But, oh, Mr. Hazard, how can we? The food! And yet we've got to stay. You don't know," incoherently, "it's not only father's own money; it's all he's borrowed—and other things. He's ruined if you don't pull him out!"

It was Hazard's opinion that Ridgeway deserved ruin, but he only looked at the gold consideringly. He had seen moose-tracks that very morning; Rider could take out a couple of the men who were decent shots, and they could freeze the carcasses. They had some flour, and enough molasses if it were doled out as a luxury—and suddenly knew he was building on luck and nothing else. They might get over the winter, and they might not.

"Food," he repeated vaguely. "Well, I suppose we can scratch for it—if it's worth our while to stay. I think you know I'll tell you the truth about that, when I see where you've been prospecting."

Miss Ridgeway nodded. Even that undisguised distrust of her father had long ago taught her that Hazard was deadly honest; honest enough to half-kill himself on the long tours that Ridgeway drove him out on.

"Nobody's seen the gold," she said, "not even Rider. I didn't know how the men would take it, so I held my tongue."

"Just as well, till I see how much there is," returned Hazard abstractedly.

It had dawned on him that starving for the sake of another man's gold might not have much attraction for his riffraff; for all he knew the men might refuse to work it. If they struck, and struck obstinately enough, there would be nothing for it but to go. And he was suddenly as stiff about staying at Lastluck Lake as he had been about leaving it; he would never give in to the men.

"When I know what your strike promises I'll have a talk with Rider; he knows what stores there are better than I do."

"Oh, that's another thing!" Sophy exclaimed. "Mr. Hazard, father never could have taken all that's gone in that one canoe he had—it would have sunk! I was down at the store while he was loading, and I took what tobacco there was because Joe, your Indian, was filling up his clothes with it; but I didn't take anything else. And when I went back after father'd gone I seemed to miss a lot of things he hadn't taken. I don't see where they went to!"

"More than you think would go in a canoe." He either did not, or would not, see the tentative look she gave him. "Four men can use a good deal." It would not have been past Ridgeway or Joe, who was apparently his ally in the whole affair, to build and cache a second canoe somewhere, but there was no need Sophy should ever find it out. "Oh, I guess we'll manage; we've had pleaty all along, such as it was." And this time he was bitter; Ridgeway's stores had sickened him all summer. "It's no good to talk about it," he amended hastily, "we've got to do what we *can* do! But I want to know something, Miss Ridgeway." His face that was too hard for his years flushed a little. "Do you trust me to be the judge of whether we go or stay? I mean, to decide whether or not you've struck ore enough to risk the men's lives for? I know I've got to risk them, and yours, anyhow; but I've got to be sure, too, which way is the right one. And I want to know if you'll feel I'm doing my best, whichever way it goes."

"I don't think it's worth your while to ask. You know!"

Her blue eyes were as steady as his gray ones, but something in them dazzled Hazard. He took the hand she

held out to him with a self-control that did him credit.

"That's all, till to-morrow, then."

Perhaps he was tired, for he wondered how he could ever take care of the girl all winter, and not let out he loved her.

As he turned to go, something caught his nerves more than his hearing. It was just the noise a man might make who had been stooping to peer in a window, and had slipped as he straightened up again; and unless he was dreaming he heard that man's feet as he stole away.

"Put away the gold, and lock up after me," he advised, with an excellent carelessness. "Good night!"

And he was out of the house quite quickly enough to have seen any one lurking in the open round it in the light of the white stars. But there was no one to see.

Except for the bunk-house, the office, and Hazard's own shack, the bare level between him and the lake lay immensely deserted, immensely lonely under the black sky and the sword-bright stars. There was no sign of life anywhere, nor a breath in the barren stillness.

Hazard crunched loudly round the house, and silently doubled back again; but he ran into no one circling it to escape him. For a radius of fifty yards there was no cover for man or beast; Ridgeway had cleared out what few spruces there were, and no one could have got out of the bare space quickly enough to make neither show nor sound —yet Hazard swore to himself where he stood in the freezing silence. He had been a fool to have forgotten the crack in the outside shutter when Sophy spread out the gold. If the men had been used to seeing gold it would have been different; as it was, they had been told there was none, had, to the best of their own knowledge, proved it; and seeing it in Sophy's house, a secret, might be just the spark to fire their straw. There was no knowing what material there was among them, nor what sort of man had been the spy.

Hazard hung in the wind an instant, and then knocked at Sophy's door.

"Are you all right?" he called. "Everything locked for the night?"

"Everything." Her voice came muffled through the door. "Good night!"

"Shoot off your gun, if you're not," Hazard answered loudly, and did not echo her laugh at the joke, though he knew perfectly she had no gun. "I have, though," he thought grimly, "and it may be as well to let my hoboes know it. I'll have a taboo-line put round Ridgeway's to-morrow."

Which was all very well, but to-night was to-night. Dog-tired though he was, Hazard did not make for the shack where Rider slept like a dead man after his week of waking. In bare decency he could not rouse Rider, even supposing he could keep him roused; the man was exhausted. He circled softly round the bunk-house, and the bunk-house snored. Hazard was sure the man he had heard was one of the snorers, but he would not make enough of it to go in and say so. There were plenty of things the men would spy on Miss Ridgeway's loneliness for, leaving out gold; and he had a helpless fury at the knowledge. But he could govern their actions, if he could not govern their brute thoughts.

He stared into the starlight and the starlight shadows by the landing, till he thought one of them moved; but when he got to it there was nothing there; his tired eyes had deceived him. He hunted the whole crescent of level ground that lay between the lake and the amphitheater of overhanging cliff that walled it round, passable for man or beast only down the river valley, and saw nothing, but even so he had no thoughts of going to bed. Instead, he shut the door of his house and sat down by the window that overlooked Sophy's, and had not thought that in five minutes he would feel an agony of sleep grip him, a sheer physical desire that bit to the bone.

"I suppose I can stick it out till daylight," he said fiercely, and jerked himself to his feet.

When he slept standing he would fall and wake himself, to keep on staring

out at the night and the dark bulk of the shack where Sophy should sleep undisturbed.

But perhaps if he had opened his shut door and looked out that way he might have done differently; for he would have seen the same shadow that had moved in the rocks by the landing-place detach itself bodily, and melt silently away.

CHAPTER IV

It was a different Hazard who woke in the bunk where he had flung himself when at last he dared to sleep. The gold was there, and Sophy had found it—after five months of despair. The two thoughts smote on his half-roused brain, sang in his blood, sent him flying to the frosted window to peer through it on the new day—the day he had never thought would dawn for Lastluck Lake.

It was sullen-looking enough, iron-gray sky arching iron-gray world, but the first thing it impressed on Hazard was that he had overslept himself. It was ten o'clock, and the men were in the bunk-house still, if noise showed anything; Rider was lounging outside Miss Ridgeway's door, and the girl herself standing in it, waiting for Hazard—and only Hazard knew what else. He flung into his clothes, shaved recklessly, and joined her; nodding to Rider to follow them into her house.

It was not till he was actually looking once more at Sophy's nuggets that the mockery of them came over him. If she had found them four months ago they would be a working, well-provisioned camp now; as it was—standing over the gold, Hazard reckoned the months ahead of them, starving months whatever he did; and looked bleakly at Rider. The foreman was staring at the gold as Hazard had stared the night before, and in the silence Sophy Ridgeway looked from the hard face to the rough one, and caught her breath as Rider spoke.

"We can't do it, Mr. Hazard. Not if there's enough to be a second Dawson, we can't."

"We'll see first," said Hazard sharply.

Sophy, as if she had been waiting for the word, pushed her gold into its hiding-place under the stove, and led the way out. Hazard would have been better pleased if the bunk-house had showed some curiosity about the expedition of three; but, except for a loud laugh that came from some member of it, it might have been uninhabited. He followed Sophy and Rider across the flat ground between the houses to the forbidding cliff that backed them, and along its base to where a dried-up river made the only break in it for miles.

It was up the river the girl almost ran, over the bare stones that lay like the paving of a road. Where the south bank was almost a precipice she seemed to have found a path, for she fled upward like a deer to the top of it; then, upward always and more slowly, over a ridge that spurred out from the great bulk of mountain to the east of them, till she stood panting on the crest of it.

"There!" she cried, and pointed.

The lie of the main hills was north and south; the river cut them insignificantly from east to west, in a gash not big enough to deserve the name of valley. To climb its high southern bank and go eastward would have been to gain the top of the main hill and look down into a second valley, parallel to Lastluck Lake—but it was not there Hazard's eyes turned, but southward. For southward the ground drooped suddenly into a cup, a natural basin, with no outlet. All sorts of small gullies drained into it, just as Sophy had said—but they looked dry; the only trace of water he could see was a small brook that was frozen solid. Sophy's voice, that was almost a sob, startled him.

"There's—here's," she corrected herself, moving down into the basin before the two men, "where I fell in!"

Hazard stood where the ground had caved, and mechanically noted that it was slate, weather-worn into thin slices. Before him was a funnellike opening, sliding rubble on three sides, too dry to be frost-bound; on the other an open, black hole below an arch of unbroken rock.

As mechanically as he had stared he lowered himself into the place, though there was no need; from where he stood he could see the gray light of day lying hard on all he had never thought to see at Lastluck Lake; had never thought to see anywhere. Smooth, fine gold, in bits from a pin's head to a man's fist, lay in the loose gravel, slid under his feet; gold water-worn, ready-mined; pushed up by ascending springs that must have been dead and dry for hundreds of years, but not before they had done their work by eroding the quartz and quartzite to the slate above it; by washing the gold out of the gullies to be centralized in a hollow, ready-made mine.

For the opening where Hazard stood was only the beginning of things, if he knew his trade. The dark arch that made one side of it and dropped slates threateningly, was the beginning of an underground passage, that wanted only timbering to be a tunnel, into the central chamber to which every converging gully must have given its quota of gold in addition to the main upheaval from below. The water must have brought it so far and no farther from the depths and heights where it lay, when something—and God knew what it was—had stopped the springs and heaved up the bed-rock round the basin till what was there should never get out except by the hand of man.

And as he thought it Hazard's eyes narrowed. First, he had misjudged Ridgeway; the man had described this place to him just as it lay, only he had sworn it was north, not south, of Lastluck—and, second, some one had been here before Sophy; her weight could never have broken in even that rotten slate. But neither of those things really mattered. He looked up at Sophy where she craned dangerously near the mouth of the hole.

"You're all right, Miss Ridgeway." It was queer that his face felt stiff as he tried to smile. "You've struck it! Here's luck to your mine!"

"Luck," shouted Rider scornfully. "It's Klondike in '98—that's what it is! I was there." He dropped on his knees and scrabbled with both hands in the pay gravel. "It's not only the big bits, either; it's every bit of it pay-dirt, right down to the bed-rock—and Lord knows how far that is! Look here"—he held out a handful of fine stuff and blew into it carefully—"look at that!"

"Why, it's sawdust," shrieked Sophy, horrified, as the grains shifted.

Rider laughed. "It's gold; good gold—and enough of it to keep us washing for two years, after we've got out the big stuff; and——" He threw down the dust as suddenly as he had paused, and jumped down after Hazard under the archway that might cave on them any minute.

"And what?" demanded Hazard abstractedly, lighting a candle with a frozen wick. He got no answer, and as the light caught, was startled by the change on his foreman's face.

"And no more good to us than so much cheese," said Rider quietly, he knew better than to be loud till the props were up. "We can't work it, Mr. Hazard; the men won't work it. They wouldn't even turn out for me this morning. They mean going, and we can't do anything without them. Supposing we go, too, and come back next spring—where'll our gold be then? Somebody'll have heard of it and got out before us. And we can't make out to stay by it, either; it's all come too late."

"Good Lord, Rider," Hazard turned in exasperation, "don't croak! We can stay if we want to."

"And if we do, this stuff'll have our bones lying in it; it's like laughing at us now," cried the man unexpectedly. "For what'll be the good of it to any one but that skunk Ridgeway, when we've kept *her*"—he pointed over his shoulder to the girl above them and out of hearing—"here to her death to get it?"

"Ask her," snapped Hazard. It was no affair of his to get the foreman on Ridgeway's side, but if Sophy chose to, it was another matter. He moved forward cautiously in the queer, tunnellike place, where gravel and gold churned under his feet. It was rich beyond com-

parison; even if this one tunnel were all there was to it, he was not going to leave Lastluck Lake till he had got out the nuggets; it was too late in the year, so far north, to hope to wash out the dirt. As he swung himself out of the pit again Rider was standing sheepishly by Sophy, and the girl flung out both hands to Hazard.

"You're going to stay—work it?" she demanded; and as he nodded the change in her face made him jump. He could have sworn she threw back her shoulders, as if a burden had fallen from them; she looked happy—happy, out here in this forsaken place—though all she said was: "I'll go home now, my fire will be out. Oh, I wish father could know we've struck gold!"

But behind the first rock that hid her from the two men she stopped, and let her exultation come out of her.

"We're free, father and I both," she said aloud, for the sheer pleasure of hearing the words. "We're free of Atherton! Even if he were to come here he couldn't touch our gold, and I can keep him quiet about father now with money; good, clean money. I never need marry Atherton now, and father needn't have gone off for fear he came here."

It might have given Hazard food for thought if he could have heard her, since he happened to know a man called Atherton perhaps better than she did, but she was too far off. Besides, Rider had broken into speech the moment she disappeared.

"She believes in him," sputtered the foreman, "in Ridgeway! And I've said I believe in him, too. I couldn't do anything else. I'm a bigger damned liar than ever I thought I was, and that's saying a deal. I said I'd stay here, if you would."

"I guess we'll get the claim staked before you settle whether you lied or not," returned Hazard dryly. "We'll get at it right after dinner."

"Why on earth? We're a million miles from people."

"I dare say. But we'll stake her right now, all the same. Four-inch stakes, too, and you see they're properly lettered. Meantime, I'm going to break into the debouches of a couple more gullies, and you get after Miss Ridgeway. I don't fancy her going back to camp alone."

He was an hour at his breaking-in, and he had not thought that when he climbed out of his third hole he would be shaking; but he was. If he was not a particularly unselfish person, his first thought was that Sophy need never have another care in this world, when once this gold was bullion; he was even willing that Ridgeway should be rich, too; nothing mattered, first of all, but Sophy. As for himself, he could do with all that was coming to him. Rider should work on a share.

If the men would only stay on the same basis, then that way he would bribe them to it—and trust to luck to feed them. No hardships or hindrances would matter, when once that gold was bullion. But it was odd that somewhere underneath his elation lay a queer thought that it would not be bullion easily; and as he happened to lift his eyes to the hard rim of hills that was his only horizon, something in the look of them smote Hazard's mind to dumbness.

"The Lord knows I'll have plenty to fight without looking for trouble," he thought, forgetting he had been sure that Sophy's was not the first foot on the gold, and for the first time he knew what Rider meant when he said the nuggets laughed at them.

It was the terrible wilderness round him he had to fight—and master—not the men, or possible claim-jumpers. There was something threatening in the vast silence of it, and the threat was in a language Hazard knew.

It was with the sense of something inimical near him, the need of human speech suddenly heavy on him, that he scrambled out of the slate-floored basin, and up to the top of the spruce-covered ridge that hid it from the riverbed and the camp. With eyes that held a new somberness he looked down on the narrow valley that widened into the strip of level that made a crescent on the lake shore, backed everywhere by

mountains; the tiny space where Ridgeway had set his mining-camp that had been a failure all the long summer, and now that it was a success the wilderness meant to starve.

"I guess not," said Hazard, and it was exactly what he did do; there was going to be no certainty at Lastluck Lake about such airy trifles as his own life, or Rider's, or even Sophy's. He left out the men's lives, because with the very realization of the potential horror of the desolation of the northern winter there had dawned on him that the thing that was on the men *was* fear, as Rider had said; fear not of starvation, but of something in the wilderness; something they could not name. He had seen that fear once before, and not seen the man who could master it. But—he could try.

As he walked over the river stones toward his shack he was not the fancy picture people have of a miner who suddenly finds himself rich. With plenty to whistle over he was having hard work to whistle, when he saw Sophy Ridgeway come out of her house and walk to meet him. As she neared him she hesitated, but she came on.

"Look here," she said, "I've got to tell you something, because I let it out to Rider, and he'd tell you if I didn't—but I don't want you to make a fuss. Promise! My gold's gone. Some one took every bit of it while we were out!"

"Gone!" For the first time Hazard remembered the spy of last night; the shadow that had been only a shadow when he reached it, and was probably a reality that had been too clever on its feet for him. "I wonder which one of the men it was," he thought swiftly, and turned to Sophy. "Did you lock your door when you went with us?"

"I locked it, and it was locked when Rider and I got back, but the gold was gone." She glanced at Hazard and was frightened. "I wish I'd never told you," she cried. "Don't look like that, there's plenty more! I don't want you to ask the men about it. I never would have mentioned it if I hadn't known Rider would say it was gone."

"It can't stay gone," retorted Hazard, "for I know who took it—and that was one of the men! Even supposing I meant to run the mine on a free-for-all gait—which I don't—this isn't the way I'd begin. Anyhow, this isn't the mine; it's your personal property that's been stolen, and it's got to be returned. If it isn't, the man who keeps it will find he's got to pull the laboring oar. I know it was one of them."

"I suppose so," she admitted. "But I wish again I hadn't told you; we'll get the men against us, just when we can't get on without them."

"We can! And if we couldn't—well, I'd deserve all I got from them if I began by standing a thing like this. Get in out of the cold, Miss Ridgeway. I'll see to your gold."

"I wish you wouldn't," said Sophy flatly, and it was not till long afterward Hazard knew her intuition was better than his. Now he only shook his head.

"Got to straighten them out," he returned. "Please go into the house."

It was not said with any emphasis, even, but Miss Ridgeway was offended. She marched off without looking at Hazard, which was a pity, for he was rather a splendid sight as he strode over to the bunk-house in his canvas clothes that were too cool for the weather. The one person who did look at him took in nothing but the expression of his face. Any mood of sympathy Hazard had had for the men was over; it was not so much the plain theft that had roused him, but the entering Sophy Ridgeway's house through a locked door; if that could be done in the daylight it could be better done in the dark. Anger made Hazard slow always, and he was very slow now; Rider, coming out of the bunk-house door, had plenty of time to close it behind him before he spoke.

"Hold on, Mr. Hazard"—he had a scared look that sat oddly on him—"just one second! I don't truly believe any of the men took that gold."

"Then it must have been you or me," roughly. "There isn't any one else."

Rider looked up at the black mountain that loomed above them. "I don't know," he muttered, "I wish to God

I did! One of the men knows, anyhow; but he's struck dumb."

"What!" exclaimed Hazard contemptuously. "You, too!" He opened the bunk-house door and went in.

CHAPTER V.

There were things in the bunk-house, besides the men, that might have given Hazard food for speech; but at first he did not see them. The stuffy gloom was almost darkness, after the light outside; he could just make out the shelflike rows of empty bunks round the walls, and the rough board table that ran down the center of the place. By the red-hot stove the men were gathered in bunches, all standing. Not a man spoke as Hazard came in, but every one of them looked at him, and something in the direct gaze of the many eyes he had been wont to see lowered sullenly struck him like the sudden snapping of a tension-screw.

"Well," he said, "I came down here to tell you men we'd made our strike at last—Rider can tell you what sort of one it is—and the only other thing I've got to say of it at this present minute is that the man who knew about it last night, before even Rider did, and made his own strike out of Miss Ridgeway's house this morning, had better hand over her gold—now!" His eyes had got used to the gloom, and they ran from one to another of the shiftless, stubborn faces. Something in them startled him, but all he said was: "Well, I'm waiting."

Some of the men shuffled, but no one spoke. In the background a boy sobbed chokingly.

"Stop that!" said Hazard sharply; the sob had been plain hysterics, for the boy was quiet. "Now, Olsen," he cut out with his glance the big Swede he had at least found honest, "you've always seemed to have a head on your shoulders; tell me what——" He swung round on his heel as on a pivot. "What's that?" he rapped out.

Nelson, who had said "what say" antagonistically the evening before, with whom Hazard had taken no chances while he was prospecting, had suddenly come up behind him. "It wasn't us that took the girl's gold," he cried furiously, "we didn't know she had it till Rider said we'd stolen it. It was——" He looked evilly at Hazard. "I guess you'll find out what it was soon enough, like Ridgeway found out; like——" But any grip he had had on himself was suddenly gone, he screamed out like a woman. "Damn you, like that boy that's crying! He was my bunkie, and look at him. Go look at him, you——" and did not know why he stopped.

"That'll do for you—you can wait." Hazard was getting slower than ever. "Now, Olsen, do you mean none of you men have that gold?"

The man looked up, a big Swede whose eyes met Hazard's and stayed there. "Not one of us; we did not know," he returned simply. "There might be one, outside of us, who did know."

"What do you mean?"

"All of it I do not know," slowly, "but such as I know is this. Always, since first we came, I knew there was something which did not wish us to be here; I do not know what, but something. I say nothing, but soon I see all of us know—as Mr. Ridgeway, too. Some Indian talk I understand—I know why those who brought us would not stay; I know why Joe and those others run away in the night with Mr. Ridgeway. There is a thing here very evil; I do not know its name; I have heard it called many names. First our canoes go, all but two. *That* took them. Then our stores go, our clothes, so that we fight one with another; then things happen if one goes out alone—not big things, little things, but such as make a man afraid. A pick put down and gone without hands when one man is alone; when two are together a rock falls; at night we lock the two doors and wake with wet faces, but *What* waked us is gone. Ridgeway is looking round him always—always—till one day he ceases to look because he has seen, and that night he goes. That

canoe our men drowned in, it was all pierced in little holes, but they do not care. They have seen his face before he goes, and they fight to go, too, and are drowned. So now it comes that we all will go. We fear to go out of the bunk-house as we fear to come in; we lock our doors and drink, and make these." He pointed to a bench, and Hazard saw a raffle of clumsily made snow-shoes, most of them ludicrous, but all nearly finished. "Toboggans we make, too, and so we go—if you had found a hundred times gold! The girl that found it, she should go, too. It is not us that steal it from her, it is It. That boy who sobs, he saw It—and since then he speaks not; he is what you call a stroke because he is afraid. So to-morrow we go, all of us."

"Let me see the boy." Hazard frowned for fear he should burst out laughing, though the thing was not funny. "Why, it's Bernstein!" For Bernstein was another who had at least the makings of good in him; Hazard had never seen how Nelson had been the little Russian's friend. "It's all right, Bernstein," he said soothingly; he stooped over the dumb thing in the bunk that had even ceased to sob. "Nothing can hurt you. Steady on, now, and tell me what's wrong."

To Hazard's horror, the only answer he got was that Bernstein put up his arms and clung to him. He was not clean, and he was just out of some sort of hysterical fit, but the hands that took down the dirty arms were kind and slow.

"I'm here," said Hazard easily, the hysterics would begin if he pitied the boy. "Now, what's the matter with you?"

"It was"—Bernstein's eyes had too much pupil, but at least he was speaking. "It was *not* a wolf!"

A click of excitement came from the men as Bernstein found his tongue, but Hazard took no notice. "You've seen wolves before, if it was," he laughed; "that couldn't frighten you."

"There was a face on it," Bernstein said slowly. "Olsen knows. Otherwise it was a wolf. See!" He held out a grimy hand with some wiry gray hairs stuck to it.

What Hazard saw was that hysteria from the loneliness without work had given Bernstein the jigs; he did not attempt to explain the hairs—they were part of the boy's trouble; hysteria and histrionics always went in couples.

"Well, whatever it was, it didn't hurt you," he said, rather pityingly. "I'll send you some stuff to take; you won't know yourself in half an hour." He laid the boy down in the bunk, and the way he covered him was not lost on Olsen before Hazard turned to him. "Were you all here, all the morning?"

"All but him. He went out, and comes back screaming; he foams at the mouth and falls dumb—till now. There was not any thought of that girl's gold, for we had not known about it. We build snow-shoes; also we drink."

"So I should suppose," dryly. "As for Bernstein, all he saw was his own nerves and liver." Hazard knocked his fist once on the table. "Yesterday," he said, "I meant to leave here, taking all you men with me, because there was no sense in staying; to-day, there is. What we've struck isn't what I ever thought to see with my own eyes, nor any of you, either. Personally, I'm going to stay and work it, if I starve—which I don't think I'll do. Any one who wants to stay with me can work on lays—any others can go; no man can stay here idle.

"Only before any of you go you'd better hear the truth about the journey. Even with toboggans, you can't pack out enough food for five hundred and seventy miles, which is the precise distance to a settlement; you won't see any moose, unless you happen on where they're yarded, and caribou are scarce—for the next hundred miles, anyhow. *And* you don't any of you know the way; it isn't the same finding it for yourselves as being paddled up by Indians. That's all—you can think over it. But any man who wants to stay with me and stick out the winter, will have his lay to go home with in the spring and at least have a roof and a fire, if he may have to hustle for food.

"There's not one of you, except perhaps Olsen, who knows how to get along for one night out of doors; you can count up how many nights you'd have on the journey, supposing you did twenty miles a day—which you won't. As for the wolf-scare, or whatever you like to call it, I've seen those things before; they don't last, after you're making money. But if you're all really scared blue by the rubbish Bernstein talks, every man jack of you can go, the sooner the better, and Rider and I'll run the work alone.

"That's all, I think; except Miss Ridgeway's gold. I could go through the lot of you till I found it, but I don't mean to. The man who brings it back will get as much in other gold, and no questions asked—but he won't stay at Lastluck Lake unless he chooses to prove how he got it without asking. If you've anything to say, say it."

"What kind of lays would we stay on?" The voice came in a hurry from the worst specimen of the lot.

"That I'll have to work out and tell you. Enough to let you go to the devil in an automobile when you get home, anyhow!"

"Aw!" said the man scornfully; and Hazard looked at the pinched face that had never known good from evil.

"That's straight, Kelly," he said quietly, "if you can do it out of a few thousand dollars. I couldn't—but I wasn't brought up in Boston."

Kelly's friends laughed, and the man scowled at them. "I guess I was brought up a quarter of a mile too close to hell to care for ghost-stories," he snarled. "I'll stay."

Kelly's friends would stay, too; also a raw young devil called West, whose boast was that he had been kicked out of Yale. They were the toughest part of all the gang, and there were fifteen of them.

Hazard did a mental sum, with them for figures. Drillmen he had no need of, so far as he knew; rock-men, gravel-men, in this case—say eight. That left him seven, four of whom, even five, must be timber-men—the first thing needful was the timbering—and two over. He must have one more man, unless he and Rider were never to be off duty. He might use Kelly and his friends, but he could never trust them, nor West, either. For Nelson he had no use or anything else; he could go, like poor Bernstein, the sooner the better.

He did not lift his eyes toward Olsen, who stood apart with the better members of the gang; he would not ask any man to stay. Olsen was a genius at timbering, as the first abortive mine had shown; was all that Kelly's gang was not; but he would not even look at Olsen to stay. And suddenly he knew Olsen was looking at him.

"You have no fear," said the Swede slowly, "and so you stay. I have much fear, but—I shall stay, too! That is so. I have always thought to die in Stockholm, but it has come to me in this half-hour that I do not see Stockholm again in time to die there. I stay here."

Hazard was put to it not to cheer, and the curious fatality in the Swede's voice did not strike him; perhaps for the sordid reason that it was two in the afternoon and he had had no breakfast.

"That leaves twenty-four of you to go," he said. "If you like you can sleep on it, for you don't know what's before you on a long winter road. I'll give you what you can carry; and it's giving, mind! If you break down and come back there'll be no more, unless you work for it. One of you come with me now, and I'll give him some medicine for Bernstein."

It was not the way Hazard had meant to leave the bunk-house; he had made no very brilliant showing there, and he was no nearer Sophy's gold. He swallowed his lunch in silence, and in silence started with Rider and Olsen to do his staking. Suddenly he turned on the foreman while the two measured distances.

"What is there in this thing, anyway?" he demanded. "Bernstein, of course, is cracked, and Olsen's a mystic — but most of the others aren't either."

"I don't know." Rider spat reflect-

ively. "Sometimes I believe in whatever it is, and sometimes I don't. When I first came here I got an idea there was something round I didn't like, but I kind of got used to the feeling of it—I knew I didn't like anything about the whole show, if it came to that. I never saw anything of the monkey-shines Olsen talked of."

"They might have been Bernstein; he's the kind to stir up trouble by play-acting," put in Hazard. "He's chock full of hysteria."

"I dare say," carelessly. "Anyhow, losing a pick or so shouldn't have worried them; they weren't using 'em. There was something else, I don't know what, that kind of ate into them; you could see for yourself they were afraid to-day, with the only kind of fear some of them could be scared by. And there were things all along I couldn't see into myself. It was true Ridgeway was always looking over his shoulder after you left, but I thought he was afraid of the men. What they say about the stores doesn't worry me, for I believe Ridgeway took them. He was the kind to have them cached somewhere, and it'd be easy to get them off with the Indians helping him."

It was Hazard's own idea, and he nodded. "Ridgeway lifted the stores, and some of the men lifted the gold—and took Bernstein's fit for cover. That's what the wolf-story comes to," he said quietly. "But it sticks in my throat to let them get off with it."

Rider marked the point for the last stake and stood up. "Mr. Hazard," he said desperately, "the men haven't got the gold. If they'd known about it there isn't one of them but would have swiped it—but *they didn't know!*"

"Then who looked in through the crack in the outside shutters last night when Miss Ridgeway was showing me those nuggets?" demanded Hazard. "I didn't tell you, because I forgot about it, but I'll tell you now. While we were standing over the things I *heard* the man come and look in; heard him breathe; heard him slip. I didn't get out in time to see him, because he was too clever for me; but I know he was there. It seems to me that disposes of the men's ignorance about the gold."

"I guess it does," Rider whistled dryly. He looked at Hazard, who shook his head.

"I said I wouldn't search them, and I won't—but if I were you I'd have an eye on Kelly."

"D'ye mean he took it?"

"No, I mean he'll find out who did—for the reward and the shindy over it."

"He'll get no shindy," said Rider unexpectedly. "The men aren't in shape to handle good in a row; some of them'd fly out crazy, and there'd be murder. I guess I'll let Kelly be."

"I'll bet you a dollar he's been through most of them already." Hazard could be unexpected, too. "Kelly didn't believe for a second that none of the men knew about the gold—he only thought he'd be neglectful not to know about it himself; you won't have any stirring up to do to Kelly. You keep away from the bunk-house for a while after we get back, and give him a chance. He won't have any murder; they're all too much afraid of him." He broke off, and looked round the desolation where his newly erected stakes showed bravely. "I suppose you know they're only good morally, if any one comes and disputes them," he added in a different voice. "Lord knows where the nearest surveyed line is to tie them to, for recording."

"Any one comes!" Rider's eyes bulged. "Nobody'd come, in the first place—and, if they did, what's the matter with the claim?"

"Nothing, but that any one desiring to locate a claim in unorganized territory is obliged to make a survey at his own expense, to the first surveyed line; otherwise, there's nothing to tie your claim to."

"Shoo!" said Rider. "I guess we'll record somehow, when we've got the stuff. I guess it isn't likely any one will survey up to us and make trouble. Why, no one knew this place *was*, even, when we came to it."

"Not for all we know," carelessly. "Anyhow, if there was a rush, even, I guess we can make our own laws here."

"Um-hum," Rider grinned. "I guess I'll go down now and get some water and such for Miss Ridgeway. I suppose you won't begin work till the men go?"

"I'll begin timbering to-morrow. The men can't leave till there's snow. What would be the good of their toboggans? They couldn't haul them!"

Rider nodded, and disappeared with Olsen. Hazard, following them, sat down in his shack to make a sketch-plan of his claim, and time flew at it. Not till after dark was he aware of a sudden commotion; of the voice of Kelly in wrathful yells, of Kelly's friends in rude laughter. As he opened his door to investigate Rider banged on it.

"They're gone; lock, stock, and barrel," he gasped. "All but Kelly and his lot, and that young West—the last man we wanted to stay. We forgot the ice, Mr. Hazard; they didn't need to wait for snow. Ice is just as good going for toboggans."

"But the stores? They'll starve!"

"They took all they wanted; broke into the store. They may have to throw things away, but they won't starve. You were in here, Olsen and I were fixing Miss Ridgeway's stove, and they just got out, clean and easy."

"The fools," said Hazard slowly. "I meant to give them a map, and tell them things, so that they could have had a chance to get somewhere."

He was appalled at the plain suicide of the thing, and ashamed to know that he was relieved, too; he had not looked forward to the society of the malcontents for the next week. He marched over to the bunk-house, and a sudden silence fell on it as he stood in the open door.

"Which of the men had the gold, Kelly?" he asked coolly.

Kelly fairly rocked with the oaths that tore out of him. "Any of them," he sputtered, "any damn one. I knew they had the stuff, because none of us fellows had, and it was no use their saying they was all in here last night, for they weren't; only I didn't take notice which of them was out. I gave them an hour to cough it up, while the rest of us went on a little *pascar*, and——"

"I said that way was not good," put in Olsen slowly, "nor any use was it to search them."

"Said! I know you said," snapped Kelly, "but you went out same as we did, and when we gets back—they're gone." He pointed to the darkness over the lake bitterly. "They're out there, somewhere, getting along like hell; and one of them's got the gold. They didn't kid me any with their wolf-stories. I bet that gold's in Nelson's clothes this minute."

"Of course," said Hazard; if it had not been for Sophy's being the loser he would have grinned with pure pleasure. It was the best thing that could have happened, for it killed all spooks and wolves with men's faces deader than a door-nail. "Brace up, Kelly. There's plenty more gold."

Kelly exploded. "It ain't the gold; it's me, getting done by a lot of scabs like them."

And the bunk-house roared cheerfully, with a laughter it had not known for weeks. Even Rider wore the face of a different man. Olsen alone said nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

Miss Ridgeway was hungry, there were no two words about it—yet for once she was trying to remember the sordid fact instead of ignoring it. It must be hunger and nothing else that was responsible for a frame of mind composed of hateful memories and worse forebodings. She stood shivering on the ridge that overlooked the brand-new mine of her own discovery, and for the first time since her lucky strike took no pleasure in it.

Lastluck Lake claim was not the plain sailing Hazard took it for, if no one but Sophy knew it, now that Ridgeway was gone. Her thoughts went back a year past, to the days when she had first met a man named Atherton, who had flashed like a meteor into the little mining-town where she and her father

happened to be living. That her father had known him before was all he said about him, though he might have said more if he had known the unwilling fascination Sophy had for the man.

She remembered the day Atherton had first made love to her, with a sick wonder at herself. It had been one morning when she was looking at some sketchy maps and plans Ridgeway had got she did not know where—maps of Lastluck Lake and the position of a wonderful pocket of gold there. She had never connected the sight of those maps with Atherton's sudden avowal that he loved her, but she did now, standing alone above that very pocket. She saw the man instantaneously in her mind—and was almost afraid to look up lest he should be before her bodily—tall, hawk-faced, splendidly dark and handsome; could feel the touch of his hand as he and she fingered those maps.

Atherton had carried them off with him, carelessly, as if by accident; Sophy's face hardened as she remembered it. That was the first time her father had ever been angry with her, the first time he had ever spoken plain truth to her about the life he had led and the things he had done. Some of them she had perhaps guessed at, but that was different from hearing in cold blood that he was wanted for forgery, and that Atherton held exposure and prison over him as a trainer holds a whip over a beast.

"I could have paid him off," Ridgeway ended furiously, "if it hadn't been for you! If you hadn't let him see those maps I'd have been safe out in the Lastluck country in another month. All he wants is money—do you suppose he'll sit here quiet and let me take my chance of paying for his silence out of Lastluck gold when he can go there and get it for himself, and have me pay him, too? My last chance to get square with Atherton was the gold that I *know* is round Lastluck Lake; and you've spoiled it. Unless"—he stopped, staring at a totally unexpected look on his daughter's face, and finished his sentence with five words that struck the girl like so many blows—"unless you can manage him!"

And Sophy had managed him.

Looking back, she thought the two men had played pitch and toss with her like two boys with a ball. She had never been sure just how or why she had promised to marry Atherton; he had not threatened her father, he had even laughed at the forgery business as a joke; he had given back the maps—or Sophy thought so then, she was not so sure now that they had turned out all wrong; the only thing she was sure of was understanding that to get her father clear she must marry Atherton. The fact might have made deeper marks on her if Atherton had not departed soon after on business of his own, and never seen her since.

For once Atherton was out of sight Ridgeway was a different man, and as his courage came back the gold at Lastluck drew him like a magnet. He carried off his daughter to Toronto; and there, with secrecy, begged, borrowed—or anyhow, got—enough money to start Hazard and Rider on their prospecting expedition to Lastluck, which no one had ever heard of. If the stores were bad the only wonder was that there were any stores at all, since they took almost the last dollar out of Ridgeway's pocket.

If he took Sophy with him to Lastluck it was because he had no money to leave her anywhere, and he said so frankly. But it was not till he was in despair of ever finding the gold for which he had come that he said something else, something that had sent the girl more frantic than he was on making a strike.

Atherton had given her back the maps just to keep her quiet, as men do give women things; had wanted to marry her only because she was about the most beautiful thing he had ever laid eyes on. Her promise had not prevented him from making Ridgeway swear he would give up all claim to Lastluck, and would never dare to go there; Atherton meant to have the gold there as an extra, and not as any payment from Ridgeway. And Atherton

himself was coming out in December; it was no matter how Ridgeway knew, but he did know.

That, and nothing else, had been the reason of his fevered haste, his incessant driving of Hazard; if he struck gold before Atherton got there he would be practically out of his power; he could face the man with good gold to back him. But without it as December drew near Ridgeway's nerve broke, till, as Olsen said, he was always looking behind him, and made him blurt out the whole ugly story to his daughter. He could never face Atherton and his sneering threats of exposure; he must get away somewhere and hide, before Atherton found him here with his broken promise and his delusion of a mine, and demanded the blackmail he could never pay out of the gold that was not in the country.

He had left Hazard to face the winter without any thoughts at all; left Sophy—and standing alone in the biting afternoon the girl's cheek turned scarlet with the shame of it—to hold Atherton at Lastluck where there was no gold till Ridgeway got safely away; left her to manage Atherton, just as if she had made a good business of it before.

There was no need to manage him now, she had the gold to pay him off instead; and yet there was a sick terror in the girl's heart. She had found out long ago that she could not always believe her father; he had said the maps were his, but Atherton had implied something else, something that made him look magnanimous enough when he gave them back to the girl he said he loved. It might be true that they had been his in the first place, and then, whose was the mine?

Sophy was too ignorant to know. She did know, though, that Atherton had always bent her to his will, and something in her shrank from the very thought of the man now that she knew Paul Hazard. She spoke the truth to herself deliberately; she had been a young fool when she had tried to manage Atherton; she had been happier alone in the wilderness with Hazard than she had ever been in her life. She felt suddenly that it would kill her to have Hazard know Atherton had ever kissed her, ever had the right to lay a finger on her. And he would know if what Ridgeway said were true, and Atherton meant to come to Lastluck.

"I don't believe he will," she thought painfully, and all the same was not so sure. If he did come her father might be safe and she certainly need marry no one to save him, but she had a shrewd idea her life would be in ruins all the same. Even if she could trust herself to repulse Atherton it would not make him hold his tongue about her, and she was not sure she could so trust herself. The man had always had an uncanny power over her, could sway her with a look when she was with him.

But whatever happened it was no good to stand here and borrow trouble about it. She would not think any more till she was forced to. The girl straightened herself suddenly as if she threw a burden from her, and looked down on the staked claim below her.

From the hollow came the muffled sound that meant Olsen and his gang were timbering underground, and from close by the crack of axes where Kelly's lot were rough-hewing props. Hazard was here, there, and everywhere, with no time even to look up at the girl who stood above him; and she turned away with an unreasoning pang.

The last thing she wanted him to do was to neglect work for her, yet she was deadly, deadly lonely to-day. A worse shiver than usual warned her she must be moving, and she set off slowly round the hollow that hummed with work, and turned south, because it would be new ground.

"I'm worried and miserable because I'm hungry, really," she said to herself petulantly. "What would do me good would be shops, and an electric car, and a restaurant—a good warm restaurant where they had table-cloths. I wouldn't think of Atherton then, even if it's true father stole his maps," and in spite of herself she laughed.

Black mountains to the east of her, one spruce-covered hill after another to

the south, and sheer cliff between her and the sun westering over the ice of Lastluck Lake were not promising for restaurants. There was no sense in going home to the rabbit and hardtack coffee that had sickened her all day; she looked round instead for cranberries, anything. But the only edible thing seemed to be teaberry leaves.

Sophy picked some with half-frozen fingers, and chewed them distastefully. "I'm a fool to walk," she thought, "it only makes me have more of an appetite. And they're so good to me—I can't say it makes me sick to *look* at rabbit! I never thought I was greedy, but—Oh, I'd like to hurst out crying with my head on somebody's shoulder, and stop wondering if father's all right, and if Atherton's going to get here, and being brave!" And before she knew it she was sobbing.

Instead of looking where she was going she stumbled on blindly, careless of anything but that Hazard might come after her, and see her tears. She was a gallant slip of a thing, but after all she was a woman, and no woman can live a man's life very long. It was not till she had fought down her foolishness that she even wondered where she was; and at what lay before her she started and stopped short.

She had wandered into a queer sort of gully, very dark and cold between high rock walls. The only reason she had not sprained her ankle long ago was that she was on a path; narrow, but a smooth, worn path. In a place where there were no people that very smoothness frightened her. There was a deathlike quiet, too; the sound of the men's axes did not even echo to her, and the very lie of the place was strange.

Sophy turned back sharply on the worn track she must have entered by, and brought up against a dead wall of rock; ran forward on the path, and came to more rock. She stood there, breathless.

"I'm a perfect fool," she said aloud. "Where I got in without even looking I must be able to get out." She was suddenly sure some one moved close by her. "Mr. Hazard," she cried furiously, "how hateful of you!"

But the rustle had not sounded like Hazard, nor, for that matter, like Rider; it was too furtive. She looked up at the wall of rock over her, and had all she could do to keep on her legs. Something was looking at her; she could see its eyes. She said "it," because there was nothing else to say, and the men's stories swept over her sickeningly.

The thing between the spruce bushes and the rocky wall of the gully over her head was a wolf, all but its eyes, and—Oh, God, its hand! She could see its hand, rough, human, coming out of the skin of a wolf; could see its eyes, human too, heavy on her eyes between gray fur and gray fur.

She was brave as women go; which means being braver than a man at the last pinch. She walked straight out under the thing, and then began to run, slowly, but to run all the same, to a rock to set her back against, and at the crash of something leaping behind her wheeled like a flash to face it—and fell.

To her credit or not, she never thought of screaming. She was scrambling up, with only one impulse, to face the thing and be done with it, when she heard a man call:

"Steady on, girl; steady! I wouldn't hurt you. I didn't see you were alone."

Sophy sat down on the frozen ground in the sick revulsion that went through her. It was only a man—and for a moment she could not even wonder how a strange man came to be at Lastluck—a man who stood towering over her, pulling off a wolfskin mask with horribly natural ears on it, and stripping off a wolfskin coat.

CHAPTER VII.

For a long moment the queer pair looked at each other in silence. Then the strange man spoke gently.

"There, I didn't mean you to see me; but since you have I'm not going to scare you to death."

"You did, almost." Sophy tried to

smile, but the blood was drawn from her face.

The man looked at her consideringly. He might have been any age from thirty to fifty; his hair was grizzled, but there were no lines on his face except round his eyes. A black mustache hid his mouth, but not his teeth as he smiled. They were white as a wolf's, and for a moment Sophy was afraid again. But his voice came with a sudden gravity.

"I've got to beg your pardon for that. I don't believe in frightening women; and you're a lady." His eyes had swept her face, not her clothes, that were too thin and threadbare.

"I'm Sophy Ridgeway," she said simply. "Who are you?"

"Ridgeway?" sharply. "I thought you'd gone with your father."

"He couldn't take me. Would you show me the way home? They'll be frightened about me at camp."

"Who—Donkin? He never was frightened about any one. He deserves to be, anyhow, for letting you stray round alone."

"Donkin?" Sophy stood up. "There isn't any Donkin. There's only Mr. Hazard, and Rider, and me, beside the men."

"Well, didn't Donkin send your father out here?"

"I never heard of him in all my life." The truth was so evident that even the strange man in the wolfskin leggings and red shirt saw it.

"I don't understand." He had spoken all along like an educated man, and his manner was suddenly the manner of a gentleman. "How did you all get here if Donkin didn't send you?"

"We came," said Sophy. "And we ——" She had not meant to tell him and it was none of his business, but the whole story of the miserable gold-hunting where there was no gold came out of her, with even the reason for the need of hurry over it that she had kept back from Hazard—the man Ridgeway had run from when he saw no chance of paying him off with Lastluck gold. "Then I struck it," she ended simply, "just before it was too late. But half the men have run away, and we've hardly any stores."

"Tut, tut!" said the man pitifully. He looked at her face, at the circles round her eyes that were too sunken, the pallor round her mouth. "I don't care a straw for Ridgeway," he added coolly, "he shouldn't have left you here. But I do care for you. I haven't happened to meet many girls like you. I suppose you guess now it was I made trouble with your men, and scared off the lot that went?"

"I know now; I didn't. What I don't see," wonderingly, "is why you choose to dress up in wolfskins to frighten us."

"The 'why' is the simplest part of it." For a moment his teeth showed in the way that was not quite human, or quite sane. "I imagined you were Donkin back again."

"I don't understand," cried Sophy impatiently. "I told you we'd never heard of any Donkin. There's never been any one here but us."

"So far as you know." He looked at her with a slow scrutiny, as if he took her measure. "I don't know whether I can trust you or not," he announced abruptly, "but since you've seen me I suppose I've got to take chances on the rest of it. You may give me a better one if I make you understand about me and Donkin. First place, I suppose you're wondering why I'm at Lastluck without ever showing up, except as a haunt."

"I'm wondering why you don't want any one else here," bluntly.

"You won't, in a minute. Did you ever hear of a bad man, Miss Ridgeway?"

"Plenty," returned Sophy rather bitterly; till she met Hazard she had not heard of many good ones.

The man did not smile. "I mean what they call a 'bad man' in the West," he explained: "a man who's shot up a sheriff and posse and—and other people—just to pay off a debt. Because I'm one; and that's why I live at Lastluck Lake, and why I like it lonely. I had to run for my neck a while ago—it doesn't concern you from where—and

after I thought I was safe I found out a man called Donkin was trailing me for the blood-money. It's Donkin's livelihood, blood-money; but I didn't see the force of his getting mine. It might have been better judgment to shoot him, but it seemed less trouble just to clear out of where I was and come here. Nobody knew about this place. I built a house and lived here in peace—till one morning last year I very nearly ran full on Donkin. First I thought he was after me—God knows he'd been hot enough two years before, but I soon saw he didn't know a word about me; he'd come out prospecting for gold like any ordinary man. And," slowly, "if he'd been an ordinary man I'd have let him."

"Well?" said Sophy, with a queer feeling of breathlessness. The reckless story came out so lightly, yet with such an undercurrent of dead earnest, that she knew it to be true, and sane.

"Well, I didn't let him. I happened to scare one of his men badly by rolling myself in a wolfskin and looking at him, and that gave me an idea. He'd only French Canadians with him, frightened blue of wer wolves. I wer wolfed them," grimly, "till they cleared out—and even Donkin couldn't stick to business alone. He didn't know the trouble was me, nor any other man for the matter of that, for I was mighty careful he never saw me; I wasn't hoping to have him get back to the settlements and say Dev——" he checked on the name and corrected himself sharply —"say I was out here waiting to be roped. All he knew was he didn't even carry his life in his hand. Something, he couldn't tell what, was sparing it for just as long as it had a mind to, and no longer, and by degrees that kind of ate into Donkin. He ran for his skin in the end, without ever seeing what he ran from, and without laying a pick to your gold. He spent the day before he went with his back to a rock, watching his chance to get into his canoe. I'd lifted his guns two days after he came, and even his knife. He didn't spare time to look behind him when once he'd made a break for his canoe, but he went, and that was all I wanted. So now you understand about Donkin, and why I live here. I've nowhere else to go for one thing, and for another there aren't any mounted police."

"And you thought we were Donkin come back?" asked Sophy pitifully. The man might be what he said, "a bad man" who was wanted, but she had a sudden foolish compassion as she looked at him. It could not be gay to live here in the solitude, the vast loneliness, because one had "nowhere else to go."

The man shrugged his shoulders. "N—no," he said, "I didn't exactly think Donkin had dared come back himself, but I thought he'd sent you people. That was why I shook up some of your men, the little Jew for instance; I didn't want Donkin to hear it was plain sailing up here. But your lot that cleared out didn't take any trouble worth speaking of; I was waiting till Donkin himself showed up to do a little scaring with some backbone to it, or I guess," thoughtfully, "you wouldn't be here now. If I'd known the boss of your show was just a girl I mightn't have done what little I did; but I couldn't have Donkin back here at any price, and that's about the whole of it. And just because you are a girl, and I wanted you to understand things, I guess I've pretty well put my life in your hand. Now, why don't you sit up and say you'll never tell one word of all I've told you, even to Hazard?"

"Because you knew I wouldn't tell before you said a word," quietly. "I saw you look at me, and decide."

The man nodded. "I guessed it," he returned almost indifferently. "But—what sort of a man is Hazard?"

The question was rapped at her so sharply that Sophy answered before she knew it. "The only man I ever knew I would have stayed here with. He's always"—she flushed without knowing it— "reliable."

"Ah!" commented the man. He looked once more at the worn beauty of the girl's face, at the long lines of her swaying figure that was too thinly clad, and knew Hazard must indeed be

reliable, just as he knew a good woman when he saw one. "You're shivering," he announced abruptly. "Are you afraid of me?"

"I don't know," truthfully.

"Well, you needn't be. I was a gentleman once; I think I've enough decency left in me to be one still to you. You look straight at me, and see if you think you can trust me."

Sophy obeyed. The wildness was gone from his eyes now, and his face was assuredly not the face of a liar. "I think I can," she said simply. "Why?"

"Because first I'm going to feed you, and then I'll take you home," as placidly as if he had not sprung out of nowhere and owned his life was forfeit. "I live just round here. I should think you would have guessed somebody did from the things that happened round your camp—though I did hear a big Swede swear I was a ghost." He laughed, and it is the test of a man, as every woman knows; the devil himself cannot disguise the laugh he has given to his own. "Besides, if you'll come to my house I'll give you something I owe you."

"Oh!" Sophy balked, anything but prepared to go to wolf-men's houses, "I think I ought to go home."

"You said you trusted me. You can go straight home if you don't."

"No," and she could not have accounted for the decision. "I'll come."

"I don't think you'll be sorry," said the man slowly, "You're doing me an honor, if you'd like to know my part of it; I never expected to speak to a lady again. This is the way. It's simple enough when you know it."

Perhaps it was, if a path with twenty branches could ever be simple. But they were out of the dark gully and in a little clearing where the sun still lingered before Sophy knew how they got there. The house that stood against a thicket of spruce was miserable, outside; just logs, a scrap of window without glass, and a low door. The man flung it open, and turned round to her.

"I don't want you to come in if you've any fear about it," he explained; and perhaps what he meant never dawned on her.

"I haven't," was all she said. She went in ahead of him—and cried out.

The place was warm with a big fire, with skins on the floor and walls; had a table and even a rough chair beside a scrupulously neat bed covered with a moosehide; but it was none of those things Sophy saw. On the table lay her gold—her own gold. She could not be mistaken in the nuggets she had handled and polished like so many jewels, and counted as she did it.

"Yes," said the man; for the first time he was sheepish. "I said I owed you something, and I do. I took your stuff. I thought you belonged to Donkin." He did not add that any woman who was with Donkin was cut from Donkin's cloth. "Locks and things don't bother me much, and if you'd been Donkin's men you'd never have done more than *see* what gold you took out, and you'd never have known what took it. But since you're not—well, I apologize. I'll carry your gold till you get nearly home. And now I've trusted you, mind; I know you won't tell my story, but I don't want you even to mention me, even to the reliable Hazard, unless you have to. There won't be any more monkey tricks with you or your stores, so I don't think you will have to. I'd rather be what you call incognito, a kind of god in the machine, if you don't mind. Understand?"

"I suppose I do," she returned unwillingly; and he smiled.

"I thought you would! And now I'd be honored if you'd drink some coffee. By the way, I believe you haven't any. It didn't make me feel a brute before—but I suppose you'd say even common miners have feelings."

Sophy said nothing. The man had turned to the fire, taken a tin can from it, and was holding out a steaming cup. She went suddenly faint and sick with sheer hunger.

The man swore. "I didn't know you were so bad as that," he exclaimed. "Drink some; quick!" He held the cup to her lips deftly. The strong stuff

tasted like fire, and like life to her. It was all she could do not to snatch at the soda-bread he handed her.

"That's right," said he, with some relief, and filled his own cup. "Here's your health, Miss Sophy Ridgeway, and I'm proud to know you. And I'm glad —since you aren't Donkin—that you've struck gold."

"Tell me," said Sophy suddenly, "was it Donkin who'd dug at that place where I fell in? Mr. Hazard says some one did!"

"Just me," dryly.

"Oh!" cried Sophy guiltily. "But why did you ever let us mine at all, then, if it was your gold?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I didn't want it. I don't happen to be in the business. I told you why I lived out here; I've been driven this far north by gold rushes and—and other things" —he turned his face away—"till I'd lost my taste for gold, and the men who were mad on it. It happened to be Donkin who did the most driving, but I needn't trouble you with that again. The long and the short of it is that the only time he didn't know he was following me he got almost on to me, and that's why I made trouble with your men; I didn't want to take any chances of any one else doing the same thing. I don't want miners here talking about me when they go home, so you'll do me a favor by not speaking of me. Of course this place has got to go now like Larder Lake and all the rest went, but I'd like to have the good of it while I can, before the rush comes."

"I wish so many people didn't know about Lastluck," said Sophy irrelevantly. "There's Donkin, and—and the other man I told you about. I—it makes me nervous."

"What did you say his name was?" the man asked suddenly.

"Atherton," faintly.

"Never heard of him. What's he look like?"

Sophy started. "I don't want to remember," she flared out hotly.

The man laughed. "So it's that way, is it?" with some amusement. "Well, I guess you won't have to. I'll look out for Donkin, and I expect your Hazard's equal to plain claim-jumpers—for that's what Atherton will be if he turns up and tries to make trouble. Now, if you're ready, I'll pack out that gold."

"But you can't. I couldn't take it, and hold my tongue about you."

"You can have found it, I suppose. You did: I never told you I had it. And mind you, Miss Ridgeway, I don't mean you're to hold your tongue about me forever—you can tell I'm here if you ever really have to. But unless there's trouble with Donkin coming back or that other man trying to jump your claim you won't have to. I'll make a different bargain with you. Don't you speak of me to Hazard till you've told me you're going to."

"But I can't find my way here to tell you."

"Wouldn't let you if you could. If you want me just tie this red handkerchief down in a sort of cave you'll find by your storehouse, and I'll come there. If there's likely to be any trouble about your not mentioning me you can just let me know, and I'll straighten it out." He held the door open for her to pass, and then went before her carrying the gold. "You watch me, and not the way," he ordered lightly, and Sophy realized with a shock that he was young, in spite of his grizzled hair. To her surprise he turned suddenly in the starry dusk. "Now you put both your hands against my shoulders, and lean on me; and you don't even want to breathe," he said shortly. "It's a rough way, but it's a near one."

Impossible would have been most people's word. If it had not been for the man's main strength and sure-footedness Sophy could never have kept her feet down the sheer glissade of rock under them; perhaps she did not, for suddenly the two of them shot into darkness, to level ground, and were out in the light of the growing stars.

"There," said the man; and Sophy saw she stood in the mouth of a tiny cave, opposite, of all places, the storehouse at Lastluck. She held out her hand impulsively.

"You've been awfully kind. Won't you even tell me your name?" she cried.

"You'll hear it soon enough if Donkin comes back," with sudden grimness. "Here's your gold." And he was gone into the dark cave before she could draw breath.

For a moment the girl stared at the recovered gold that she could not explain. She should not have promised to be silent about how she came by it; it was being a sneak to Hazard not to tell him about the man who had taken it, and yet how could she ever repeat a story that might mean his life? Sophy untied the handkerchief that held the gold and dumped every nugget on the ground. Somebody could find it, and explain it any way they liked—but it was not going to be Sophy Ridgeway!

CHAPTER VIII.

She had not been prepared for its being Hazard, though. When early in the morning he knocked at her door with his pockets bulging she could only stare at him.

"By Jove," he said rather ruefully, "I've got your gold! Found it down by the landing behind a rock."

"Where?" gasped Sophy; it was the only thing that lent her a decent semblance of surprise. The strange man must have been behind her all the time, and seen her drop it, known why, and moved it for her. She was not sure if she liked such care or not. But after all, she had no right to leave the theft of it on the shoulders of the men who had deserted them.

"Some of those poor devils must have thrown it there, or else it was the ghost that took it." Hazard had not noticed her lack of surprise, nor even of pleasure, apparently.

Sophy frowned. "There's no ghost," she said uncomfortably. "I wonder if those poor men ever got anywhere."

"No knowing, unless they starve and come back. Anyhow, here's your gold, and it's about the last thing we needed to make things look peaceful. It's funny, but Lastluck seems a different place since we got rid of that ghost business, or whatever they thought it was."

And it did. Even Olsen's blood swung placidly in him when day after day passed, and there was no sign of life about except that centered in the little mining-camp. He was timbering the mine like a genius, doing three men's work by sheer knack. Hazard had found tunnel after tunnel converging to the main chamber of the queer place, and he and his men worked like madmen after Olsen, clearing out the gold as it was safe to dig.

To his surprise the person who worked hardest over the thing was Sophy. She had spoken the truth when she said she was nervous about other people coming to Lastluck; it was not of the unknown Donkin, either, so much as of the other man she knew too well. There might be nothing Atherton could do if he did come, but the girl was eaten with a fever to get the gold out of the mine and safely hidden somewhere; and she would rather have died than have Hazard know why.

For it was true that with finding the gold she had dared to be happy at Lastluck, and she was quite honest with herself as to the reason. Every pulse in her body sang Hazard's name now, and she knew it. If she also knew he loved her she was proud of him for holding his tongue about it, just as she always felt safe with him as she had never known safety in her life. She could never tell Hazard anything about Atherton, who had pretended to love her and then lied to her; and in the haunting thought of him and the gold that was to make him powerless she almost forgot she was holding her tongue about the wolf-man who had restored her gold.

Not quite, since it was clear to her that he was responsible for the quiet at Lastluck, but at least she had never seen him again.

She was soon too tired to think much of any one. If Rider checked the gold before Hazard's improvised ore cars came down the chute and long rails to the office it was Sophy who received it there, and Kelly, proud of responsibil-

ity, who stowed it away. Even in the evenings, when the whole tired force worked at toboggans of a peculiar fashion, to be used when the snow made the rails useless, Sophy helped them.

What Hazard had prophesied had come true; the gold had gone to all their heads. Of the pay-dirt they thought nothing; the men ground under their feet what ordinary miners would have shouted themselves hoarse at; shoved it aside in heaps, carelessly, to wait for the spring. It was the nuggets and the free gold that enchanted them, till they worked like horses all day and slept like the dead at night.

To Hazard the best of the difference in the men was that with the departure of the neurotic Bernstein and his mates they had ceased to be a terror as regarded Sophy. They were cheerfully respectful to her, and they took her as a matter of course. He was doing better, too, on the food question than he had dared to hope.

Olsen had set three moose; had, with the odd knowledge he had picked up from the departed Indians, showed the bunk-house cook where to find an evergreen plant that was as good as cabbage. Tea and coffee were the only things the men groaned for.

Hazard had no illusions about things; the pinch would come when the first flush of the gold was over, and there was—as there never would be—no sign of Ridgeway coming with provisions. But it was no use to discount that now. He watched, instead, for the snow; with the aid of Sophy, and woful, green mooseh ides, worked at home-made snow-shoes till his head was nodding and his fingers blistered. They were not the snow-shoes of commerce, and Olsen, seeing them, turned silently to work on some things of his own country, though it was his opinion they would have to wait long for snow; the weather was too cold for it—which was just where he was wrong.

It came on them suddenly in the night, without warning, out of a sky that was clear with the moon at bedtime; came silently, without wind; and changed the face of creation.

Rider, issuing from the bunk-house at the first daylight, checked on the threshold; looked at the death-white world where the green was drained from the spruces till they were blackly pale, at the blacker bulk of the mountain where it came down sheer and snowless.

"It's so damned solemn," said he, and he shivered.

"Aw, go on," Kelly jeered from behind him, "it's a dandy." But as he took in the black and whiteness round him his face changed with his sentence. "It's going to be a devil of a day," he concluded curtly; and retiring, shut the bunk-house door.

It certainly was. While the men were at breakfast the wind came up with a roaring leap that shook the stout bunk-house, and bade fair to bring the ill-built office round Hazard's ears. There would be no working till the wind fell and the snow stopped, and he told the men so. Instead of cheering they grumbled, but it was healthy grumbling, and Hazard laughed.

He had plenty to do in the office, but somehow he could not settle to it; the very turmoil outside made him restless.

Toward the middle of the morning he slipped his moccasined feet into the thongs of his snow-shoes and, with a half-laugh at his own childishness, went out. It was a tough business even to shut the door behind him, a tougher to fight against the wind and snow that streamed down the river-bed till he could claw up the stiff bank, and over the ridge to the mine. He had to see it; see that the snow-sheds over the workings were solid; assure himself that the basin would not be choked with snow too hard to tunnel into; a thousand things—and really he just wanted to stand alone in the hissing storm and realize that luck had come at last to Lastluck Lake.

It was not so wind-swept in the basin as on the way there; and Olsen's sheds, as far as man's work would go, were adequate. Hazard, at leisure to realize all he had done, felt a sharp pleasure in the thing he had accomplished with his handful of men; an elation of good

work; a hope, even, that he could wear through the winter, even if Ridgeway never came back. And in the very height of it, causelessly, he turned sharp on his own heel, and looked behind him with a sudden sense of being watched.

There was no one visible, but with the wind in his face the snow cut like needle-points; and he fought through it to the shelter of the basin side. Even under the lee there was nothing to see in the white smother, unless it were above his head; nothing to hear but the hundred notes of the wind and snow. Yet he felt some one looked at him.

"Kelly," he thought viciously. Yet supposing it were Kelly, nothing worse than idleness or monkey curiosity would have brought him. Hazard shut his mouth before he had opened it wide enough to shout Kelly's name. It was not Kelly; it was only—— He tried to ram a snowball together out of the sandy snow that would not stick, and sent it powdering at something that moved on the basin side above his head.

"Nothing but a plain wolf," he said disgustedly. He had seen the iron-gray fur through the spruces, and he turned comfortably away.

Half-way up the opposite side of the basin he stopped, and this time sent a stick hurling in front of him.

"The cheek of the brute," he growled, "trying to cut me off in broad day! Wonder if we're going to have many of them—they'll be a plague if we do."

Quite suddenly he was sure the beast was not watching him, but some one else; and a sick terror went through him. For all he knew, Sophy might have followed him, or even taken it into her head to inspect the snow-sheds as he had done.

He tore up the hill to see if she could be coming, careless that the wolf seemed to be tearing too, keeping close to him, never on his track, but ahead and in cover.

"By George! I believe he is hunting something; he'd be clever enough to know the difference between a man and a woman, too," he thought, and as he gained the top of the ridge got a surprise that nearly made him slip headlong down the cliff.

It was Olsen's voice shouting his name from the river-bed, and as Hazard answered the gray shadow in the bushes disappeared.

"What's wrong?" he demanded, scrambling down to the man. "Miss Ridgeway's not out, is she?"

"Not anything wrong, she is indoors." The Swede stared in astonishment. "I came because the weather is so bad, and I see you gone a long time. The sheds are all right?"

"Right as nails!" Hazard had a question about seeing the wolf on the end of his tongue and decided to swallow it; Olsen was a queer soul, anyhow; if he did not swear it was Bernstein's wolf he would make a bad omen out of it, and go home with dismal prophecies of stolen meat and probable starvation. "It's a bad day."

Olsen nodded. "It will freeze solid after this, Mr. Hazard;" abruptly, "has it come to you that the *froken* has no warm clothes?"

Hazard forgot about the stray wolf. "No warm clothes! How do you mean?"

"Just so! Her furs—where are they? Her moccasins that you have given her are all right, but what stockings has she to put in them? And all the rest. The girl is not clad; she is cold."

"How do you know?" But he was furious with himself for not noticing what a common miner had seen easily.

"When she must go out she runs to be warm; so they do in Sweden," knowledgably. "If I had soft fur I could make her a coat."

"Wolf do?" said Hazard, with sudden recollection.

The man did not look at him. "Not wolfskin; they smell," he said slowly. "And—she would not like it. Something else."

"By George! I believe I've an old fur coat. She can have that if she'll wear it. I was a fool not to think of it. How do you mean she has no stockings?"

"Only silk."

"Good Lord, and she never said anything!" Hazard's own were rags, which

was bad enough, but silk—in this weather! "I'll find something for her feet," he said as they reached his door. "I'm obliged to you, Olsen."

The man nodded gravely.

Hazard, hot with shame at his own carelessness, ransacked his trunk when what he called his dinner was eaten. There was a coat, rags and tatters of raccoon-skin, but still a coat; for leggings he ruthlessly sacrificed one of his meager blankets. Armed with them he marched in at Sophy's door, and had another shock at the way he had neglected her for the sake of the mine.

At his knock she had evidently risen from the hard bench where she had been lying, and the red blanket that had covered her lay where she had tossed it on the floor. She flushed as he entered, but he had time to see how tired she looked before the blood came to her face.

"Oh, Sophy!" cried Hazard; her name was none of his business, but it came out recklessly with something very like a groan. He looked at the stove where no dinner had been cooked; at the scarcely touched breakfast that still lay on the table.

"Don't 'Oh, Sophy!' me; I know it's frightfully untidy here," she said lightly. "What on earth are you carrying?"

"Things you should have had long ago," he tried to get hold of himself, but he was not doing it—"that I hadn't the sense to think of even now, till Olsen told me you were cold."

"Not more than any of us—you especially," she flashed.

"Oh, don't," said Hazard. "It's true, and it just shows I'm not fit to have the care of you. A man with any sense at all would have let the gold go, and got you out of this, somehow, before the snow came. My dear, I know the food's beastly"—he never even knew what he had called her—"and I believe you're not even warm in here unless I come round to bully you. I've been a fool as well as a brute to let you stay."

"You've been every single thing any one could be," said Sophy quickly; somebody had to be sensible, and unless she were careful it was not going to be Hazard. "I'd be dead by now if you'd sent me away; besides, none of you could have stayed if I hadn't." There was more truth in it than either of them knew. "You couldn't have sent me out alone with the men."

"Well, I didn't, any how!" Her matter-of-factness had steadied him; never mind how heart-sick he was for her, it was no time to make love to her, and that was what he had been on the verge of doing. "You sit down, please," he ordered, "I'm going to tidy up."

"That's rude!"

"Not so rude as having let you sit in that office checking gold all day till you were worn out. I'll put Olsen at it tomorrow; we can't do any more timbering, anyway."

"And what am I to do?" But she sat down thankfully; it was sweet to be taken care of, sweeter to know he wanted to do it; she had had enough of loneliness that snowy day.

"Oh, you can stay in and sew." He was putting away the last of the dishes, and turned to hand her the coon coat. "It needs mending, and it isn't the newest style," gravely, "but you'll have to wear it. The blanket's for puttees; I'll cut it into strips."

"They're yours and you need them both," cried Sophy hotly. "I do wish Olsen had held his tongue; I wasn't cold! You ought to have that coat on this very day. No, I won't take it!"

"I don't need it. And don't you be foolish; keep the old coat, anyway, and put it on when you go out. Oh, and that reminds me! Don't go out alone, anywhere, for the next few days."

Sophy turned the scarlet of remembered guilt. "Why? The men are all right. I was silly ever to be afraid of them."

"It isn't the men. I got a glimpse of a timberwolf this morning, and the brute had the cheek to dog me—or Olsen. Not that it mattered, but I wouldn't like it for you."

"What?" cried Sophy, and it was curious that Hazard had never thought she could be a coward. Of course it might have been a real wolf, but she wished she were sure! If it was that

man in the wolfskins—she had trusted him when she was with him, but she was not so sure about him now. He had looked crazy, and been crazy when he talked about a Donkin she had never heard of, and it would kill her—just kill her—if anything happened to Hazard because she had been fool enough to hold her tongue about a crazy man. "Dogged *you?*" she said faintly.

"Oh, they're not dangerous. I only thought you might get a fright if you saw him. I'll shoot him in a day or two."

For a moment he did not think she heard him. Suddenly she turned narrowed eyes full on his.

"I don't want him shot," she said sharply.

If it was the strange man she could not let Hazard shoot him, nor would she let him hound Hazard either. A day's grace, even one, would give her time to see him; to say she must tell he was there unless he promised to keep utterly away. Even for Hazard, unless she were sure it was at a real wolf, the crack of a sudden rifle she could not bear, till she knew.

"I saw a wolf weeks ago," she added suddenly, "and I don't think I've been afraid. If I'm the reason, please promise me you won't shoot him." But the words did not go with her bloodless face.

Hazard turned away awkwardly, since he could not do what he wanted to, which was to gather her to him and say foolish things about taking care of her against all the wolves on earth without shooting one of them, the only thing was to go.

"Well, I won't wolf-hunt till to-morrow, anyway," he said from the door. "I'll send over some lunch for you, and you've got to eat it."

But Sophy sat looking at the snow outside, without even a word of thanks. It was an awful day to go anywhere, but she supposed she had got to go.

Hazard only thought she was done up, and he could not wonder. He got together all he could find that she might eat and carried it over to her himself. When his third knock was not answered he walked in, with a foolish terror that she might be ill. The house was empty.

"Fool that I was ever to tell a woman not to do anything."

He swore, staring at the nail where Sophy's outdoor garments were wont to hang, clattered the food down on the stove, and turned out after her into the swirling snow. Rider would be waiting at the storehouse for him, but Rider could wait. He would have no peace till he had corraled Sophy.

CHAPTER IX.

Manlike, Hazard went off in the very wrong direction; Sophy was within two hundred yards of him as he turned up the river-bed, fighting her way down to the storehouse against the wind and snow. She might never have found the place if she had not long ago reconnoitered its position; she stumbled in, tied the wolf-man's red handkerchief to a little spruce-tree that grew just inside the entrance before she even cleared the snow from her eyes; and as she turned to go had all she could do not to cry out.

The wolf-man himself stood in the darkness at her elbow; not in his grotesque and horrid wolf skins, but infinitely changed in an ordinary blanket coat. He took his pipe out of his mouth, smiled at her, and put it back again.

"Well," he said quietly, and as quietly offered her a box to sit on.

Sophy took no notice of it, nor even thought of the incongruity of boxes in an uninhabited cave. She was startled and angry. When she had expected only to leave a signal, it did not please her to run on the man himself; it was too like being watched for, and there was too much secrecy about it.

"You've been dogging Mr. Hazard," she said crossly, "and I don't like it. That's what I came to say."

"I don't think so." He looked at her oddly. "How do you mean?"

Sophy told him. "You said you wouldn't hunt round and worry us,"

she ended wearily, "and I believed you; and then you go and do it, and it's silly. For all you know you might have ended by having Hazard shoot you today."

The man's hands came out of his pockets and his pipe out of his quiet mouth. "I might," he returned coolly, "if it had been I, but you see, it wasn't. I don't habitually promenade the country in wolfskins; I only did it when I wanted to frighten Donkin's men and, incidentally, some of yours."

"Then Hazard did see a wolf?"

"Possibly; though I don't happen to have noticed any round this winter."

He frowned, as if the simple question of a stray wolf at Lastluck worried him. For a moment he looked at Sophy as if he meant to say so, and then changed his mind: the girl was worn to a thread with cold and privation; there was no need to add apprehension. His eyes were more used to peering through the snow than Hazard's, and by an odd chance he, too, had seen that wolf—which was not a wolf at all, but a dog strayed from some one's dog-train; and that meant men near, if not coming, to Lastluck.

Donkin, Atherton, or anybody, it occurred to the wolf-man that the simplest plan was to say nothing about them, and frighten them away. A mining-camp with rival factions and fights would be no place for a girl to be alone in, even supposing Hazard *were* reliable.

Then at a sudden thought that came to him the wolf-man whistled. Might, so far as he knew, was the only right Hazard had to his claim; if a big enough gang of men should turn up where would Sophy Ridgeway's gold be? More things were done in unorganized country than ever came out in the papers.

"See here," he exclaimed, "you're a very nice, sensible girl, but I wish you were a man! How much do you know about this claim, anyway? I mean the working—the practical end of it."

Sophy told him, and he grunted.

"There's no two ways to your deserving all you get out of it," he commented dryly: "I don't know so much about your father; nor even your paragon, Hazard."

"I never said he was a paragon," hotly.

"You wouldn't be here if you didn't think him one." She saw his teeth in the smile that, if it were kind, was half-envious. "Now, listen. I know he's staked your claim, and all that, but it's a deal easier in a new country to find and stake minerals than it is to hold them. What's he done," sharply, "about recording the claim?"

"Done? Why, nothing! How could he?" But she paled. "Do you mean there's danger of any one jumping us at the recording-office?"

"I might," he fenced coolly; it was the first thing any one would do who came to Lastluck, unless he could somehow prevent them. "How do you know I won't?"

"I don't think you're the kind," slowly. "Besides, if you'd wanted that gold you'd have had it long ago."

"And they say women have no logic." He laughed at her openly. "Well, you may be right; you can think that as well as anything. I don't know why I've taken to you; I never happened to know another girl with dark hair and blue eyes, and loved you for her sake," with a cynicism that was for himself. "I think it's just because I've found you a brave little soul, helping to fight your man's battles."

Sophy felt her blush begin at her shoulders. "I haven't any m-man," she stuttered indignantly.

"Oh! I thought you'd a father," but he was laughing, and she knew it. "I don't see what Ridgeway got out for," he added, in a different voice, "he ought to be here. It couldn't have been any of my little efforts, for I didn't play any of them on him."

"He wanted stores," mumbled Sophy: even in her headlong confidence the day she first met the wolf-man she had kept back Ridgeway's forgery, Ridgeway's fright of the man who knew of it, and she had no intention of airing this now.

"So you say; I don't seem to feel it. You don't, either, for you don't expect

him back." He silenced her as she would have protested. "Now, you look here! You're no business of mine, but I choose to take an interest in you; you needn't mind why. That was not I your Hazard saw to-day, and I don't think it was a wolf"—for that much he could say—"but I'm going to find out. If Hazard doesn't know what it was he'd better shoot it and see; and you wire into him that if he has to begin shooting in this place he can't go on with it too quick. You don't understand, but he will—if he's any good. But don't you say one word to him about me yet, for it won't suit me. I don't believe in explaining things people haven't wondered about for themselves, and you've got no present concern to explain; I've stopped playing wolf-man, as far as you're concerned, anyhow, and Hazard himself," significantly, "found your gold. You needn't look for me for a while, either, if you don't see me. I may be kind of round on your business, perhaps; I don't know yet. Only, before I say good-by, I want your honor that you won't speak about me to him or any one till I give you the time."

"I don't know," said Sophy bluntly. "You see, Mr. Hazard's my partner."

"I'm your partner, too," rather bitterly, for the work he meant to take into his own hands was not so easy as Hazard's. "And I've trusted you—which is what I've been pretty well cured of, with human beings. You know I have my own reasons for living out here and asking you to hold your tongue on it; I'm wanted for something, nearer town. Are you going to give me away, or stay by me?" He would not say the choice might affect her gold.

Sophy reflected. He had trusted her, but she was not going to have any trouble with Hazard about him.

"I'll never tell your story," she said slowly. "About your being here I'll only promise I won't tell without letting you know first."

"I thought you had sense." There was a certain grimness in his smile, seeing her reservations, and thinking of the thing he was going to be fool enough to do for her before he saw her again.

"Well, you fight your own fight for your own man—you needn't trouble to explain again that you haven't one—and perhaps I'll help you, for," hastily, "the joke on Donkin! You'd better go home now; it's no day to be sitting in caves."

Sophy obeyed mechanically, wondering why she was not gladder to get away from an avowed blackguard. The man stood watching her where she stooped to tie her snow-shoe just outside the entrance. When he dismissed her he had meant to go straight home up the glissade of snow-covered rock, but if that were a dog he had seen that morning he might have no time to lose in scaring away its owners.

It was lucky he had cached his wolfskins in False River, a cut in the cliffs up the lake of which he happened to know Hazard and his men were ignorant; he had a feeling that if new people were coming to Lastluck it was from up, and not down the long, frozen waterway; but with any luck they should not come at all. After they were disposed of, temporarily, anyhow, he could have a try at the other thing in his mind. If he failed in it——

"Well, God knows I'll have done my best first," he muttered. "I'm sick of this life since I've talked to that girl, somehow. If I can't pull it off, she'll be none the worse, and if I can—well, I dare say she'll get Hazard to thank me!" with a grimace.

He had done his thinking quickly. Sophy was only tying her second shoe; and suddenly he followed her out into the snow.

The girl stood thunderstruck.

The wolf-man's hand had fallen on hers, as, kneeling in the snow, he kissed her cold fingers. "Good luck to you," he said gruffly; but before she could answer he had bounded past her and disappeared down toward the lake.

It was hours later and pitch-dark when he came wearily into the cave again on a devious way to his own house, with his heavy wolfskins under his arm. They, and his time, had been wasted; he had not seen trace nor track of dogs or humanity on his weary

trudge; and yet some sixth sense assured him both were near.

"I guess they're fumbling round in the snow somewhere," he mused. "I know that was a dog I saw this morning, and it didn't come here without people. I believe, just in case I'm right, I'd better start on my little walk. If they, whoever they are, come while I'm gone—Lord! Hazard will have to do some of the fighting for his girl and his claim himself!" he concluded angrily. "I can't be at both ends, even if it was safe for me. I guess this is about the only other thing I can do to help in case a gang does come on here."

He scrawled something on a bit of brown paper, and stuck it in the iron clamping of the box Sophy had not even noticed, and went on his way home.

Hazard made it five hundred and seventy miles to civilization; and so it was, by the way he had come. The wolf-man, doing sums in his head as he went to sleep that night, made it but a round five hundred, there and back, to Macleod, the first recording-office; but Hazard had lacked his foot-sore acquaintance with the country. He would trouble no lakes; through the mountains till he struck the southwest watershed was his way, and he wanted no dogs to get there; his legs were best in that kind of traveling. It was quite true there was a price set on his head near, if not in, Macleod, but it was also true that he was sick of his life and his loneliness.

"It'll be doing something, anyhow, if I do have to run for it again," he concluded almost light-heartedly, "and there's nobody who *can* go to record the girl's claim but me. Besides, I kind of imagine I'm as well away from Lastluck before it strikes any one that Bill Devenish has ever been there; and so far no one but the girl's seen me." And he turned comfortably to sleep.

Long before day the wolf-man's cabin was empty, the door not even locked on his fireless hearth, and the useless wolf-skin dress and mask he had thrown on the floor. His rifle and snow-shoes were gone; gone, too, the few things that could connect the wolf-man of Lastluck with Bill Devenish, who was wanted.

The man who had been both things reflected comfortably on the last fact as he trudged toward the townships. What he did not reflect on was another fact; if he had not been recognized at Lastluck he had not, either, got away from there quite unseen.

CHAPTER X.

Early on the afternoon of Sophy's secret interview Rider had plowed down to the storehouse, cursing Ridgeway for putting it where it was.

"Of all the fool places!" he ejaculated. "I don't wonder he had the chance to sneak all he did. There wasn't a man in camp cross-eyed enough to see down here and catch him."

It was true, as far as seclusion went. The storehouse bulged crookedly between the encroaching mountain and a high rock that hid it effectually from the rest of the shanties. There might not have been a human habitation for miles, so lonely was the narrow pass where it stood, blocked now by fallen snow.

Rider surveyed the cliff-side opposite him with distaste, noted an odd, dark hole that seemed to show in it through the veil of drifting snow, and set to work at checking the dwindling stores. There was little enough to check. He had still a few precious potatoes, thanks to the unfailing supply of Olsen's queer evergreen that the men called cabbage—but the foreman wondered dolefully if they would be able to go on finding it under the snow. The bad pork did not particularly matter, since there was fresh meat to be had for the shooting; but Rider paused, frowning, in front of it. There had been one barrel when he was here last, with some used out of it. How in Heaven's name were there two now?

"I must have been drunk last time, that's all," he thought stupidly. "I made sure there was only one." And he went hastily round the half-lit place. Under a raffle of rubbish lay a bag of sugar, a half-chest of tea, open, and with some gone out of it. "Well, I'll

be damned," gasped Rider, "I guess I will, anyway, but this ain't right! I might have overlooked the pork, but I didn't miscount any trimmings. Only I don't see how they came here: 'twas locked, or I might think some one put 'em in!"

He tore down empty bags and barrels only to be more puzzled than ever. Nothing else had mysteriously reappeared, and there was nothing to explain what had. The foreman was so puzzled and excited he did not even realize the cold of the place till he began to feel his stiffening fingers; he walked dazedly to the window and stood beating his arms, like a cabman. It happened to be on the lee side with no snow on it, but he was hardly conscious that he was looking out.

"I guess I'm not very keen on telling Hazard," he reflected; "he'll only think I was drunk not to see the things —and God knows I haven't seen a thing to get drunk on since he cached the rum. All I could say was that I'll be damned if they were there. It's funny he don't come down himself; it's not often he says he'll do a thing and doesn't. Hello!" He spoke out loud with surprise.

There was some one coming, but it was not Hazard. It was his coat, though; and inside it, Miss Ridgeway! Rider stared. It was no day for her to be out, though the snowfall had turned to vicious flurries, but he was thankful to see her and share his perplexity. He was just going to open the door and call her in when he saw her face.

"I don't wonder," he muttered; "she don't say much, but I guess we're kind of tough for her. I'll let her think she's alone if she wants to."

He had seen her look worried before, but never like this, and he was no fool. He stepped back where she could not see him, and kept an eye on her. There was more the matter with her than fretting for a father who had left her to sink or swim with a camp of rough men.

To his surprise, she did not make for the lee of the storehouse. She stopped, pressed her lips together, as if she made up her mind, and hurried toward the dark hole in the cliff-side opposite.

"Well, I suppose it's as good shelter as any if she wants to be alone," the man thought, "but I guess I won't go home and leave her there; it's a wild-beasty looking hole, if it is so near camp."

He walked up and down for what must have been half an hour, and paused at the window.

"I believe I'll go for her," he said, "and——"

He stood paralyzed at the window. There was no need to go; she had come out; had looked round her furtively; but it was neither of those things that electrified Rider. A man's hand, holding a red handkerchief, had shot out and lay on hers, and a man's head was bowed on it till his lips were on her fingers; a man's figure clothed in blue blanket brushed past her, and was gone toward the lake before Rider could move.

The whole thing was so instantaneous, so like a flash-light photograph that Rider had not even time to guess who he was. But he was no dream, for there lay his track. It was not the secrecy of the thing that knocked the foreman silly, so much as that the girl concerned was Sophy Ridgeway, on whose straightness he would have set his life.

"Who on earth——" Rider muttered wildly. "Hazard ain't that kind—besides, she can see him all she wants to; and there's no one else except the men. God have mercy on me, the *men!* It can't be one of them; I ain't right in my head," and he grabbed at it to make sure it was on his shoulders. There was no sense in trying to follow the man since he must be one of their own lot, and—— "Well, God knows I can't speak to *her,*" groaned Rider; and suddenly thought better of it.

Speak he would, and that very instant. He banged the storehouse door and flew after Sophy, but without snow-shoes he made heavy weather of it. Instead of catching up to her, he met her, coming to him from the river valley, as if she had been taking a stroll.

"For any sake, mind yourself, Miss Sophy," he began hotly; he wiped the drifting snow from his face and turned toward her shack with her, but his courage ebbed as he did it. "It's no day for you to be out," he added lamely. "I made up my mind to tell you so, too, the second I saw you—though it's no business of mine."

"Where did you see me?" demanded Sophy sharply. And suddenly she knew. Rider must have been in the storehouse. Her eyes, even in the dusk, turned suddenly blue and steely. "It certainly is no business of yours," she added coolly; she was not going to have Rider ask questions till she could tell the answers to Hazard.

Rider lied; he had been right when he knew he could not speak out to her. "Coming down here, I suppose—and of all the crazy places to walk!" He writhed over the sudden relief in her laugh.

"Mr. Hazard said there was a wolf up there this morning, so of course I went to see," she announced.

"I guess not," retorted Rider bluntly; he had heard nothing of Hazard's wolf, and he did not want to hear her lie.

"I guess not, too, since I didn't see him. I just went out to take the air. Good night, Rider."

"Air!" Rider gazed into the drifting snow and spoke aloud to it as Sophy opened her door and shut it behind her. "I bet I'll put a spoke in that kind of air; it's not wholesome for girls."

He was tearing back to the storehouse to follow the man, with the conviction that he had been a fool not to do it before, when the cook's voice smote on him from the bunk-house door.

"Say, was that Miss Ridgeway? The boss and Olsen have been hunting for her half the afternoon—thought she was lost or something."

"Well, she ain't," snapped Rider. "You send after the boss and tell him so!"

Olsen's society had put Hazard out of the show, and Rider disappeared hotfoot to the storehouse. It was dark when he got there; he had to light matches to find the hole in the rocks; and when his last one burned out, stood with it scorching his fingers. There was nothing to be seen inside the apparently shallow cave but a few rocks, and all trace of the way it's occupant had taken out of it was gone. Every trace of a track, even Rider's own, was drifted over. He turned angrily, and went home.

"Like father, like daughter," he muttered, "and God knows there ain't an honest bone in Ridgeway! I s'pose I could tell Hazard—but I guess I'll see if he don't know first. If he does—— Well, what makes me mad is *there ain't any need of it;* he can talk to her in plain daylight! No—it ain't him; it's some one she's ashamed of; some one like——" He had not thought he should turn sick at the sight of a blanket coat. It was young West, plain, as he vanished through the bunk-house door; and it was the last straw to Rider. "Lord, I can't tell that," he muttered; and found himself banging at the office door. "Miss Ridgeway's all right," he blurted from the doorway. "I met her out walking," for somebody had to shield her. "But I guess you know."

Hazard, very cross from tramping the country after a girl who had not been lost, made no answer. Rider, glancing at the old canvas coat that lay on the floor, knew it had not been the boss who fled miraculously down to the lake. "Say," he mumbled abruptly, "she—she told me you saw a wolf this morning."

"So I did," snapped Hazard.

"Miss Ridgeway oughtn't to go out alone, then," miserably.

"Now, look here," Hazard misunderstood, "if you're going off on that old story of Bernstein's you may as well stop now! I saw just a plain, common wolf. I told Miss Ridgeway not to go out for fear it might scare her, and, of course, she did." He caught Rider's angry eye and laughed. It did Hazard good, but the other's grin was crooked.

"I guess she wasn't looking for it," he said slowly.

All Hazard vouchsafed was "No." In spite of his laugh, he was angry with

the girl, and angrier still that the old scare should have been revived in Rider, which was the only thing to account for his perturbed bearing. If he had to shoot the thing and make the men eat it they should know their former bugbear was only plain wolf.

He meant to keep away from Sophy, but as he sat working in the office she called to him.

The snow had stopped and faint stars were shining as he went over to her, wrathful still, and inside her door stood disarmed. His blanket had been made into irreproachable leggings, his fur coat hung mended on the wall. Sophy stood by both of them. The man thought he had never seen anything so sweet as her face over the whiteness of her old washed jersey.

"I didn't mean to be a bother today," she said quickly.

"Well, you were," returned Hazard baldly. "You'd no right to go out alone. You're your own mistress, of course; but there are some things I know better than you about, and one of them's your own safety. I might as well die as be scared to death all day; and you'd said you'd stay in."

"I don't think I did," she corrected gently. "I felt as if I had to go. Please don't be angry."

"I'm not. Only you might have stayed out forever, if you'd got lost and strayed on that hungry wolf."

"'Grandmother, grandmother, what big eyes you have,'" she quoted sweetly. "What about you?"

"I'm different; he wouldn't bother me!"

Sophy looked at him curiously, as if she meant to say something and changed her mind. "No," she answered in a different voice, "I don't think he would now." And long after, Hazard remembered it.

"You don't mean you shot him," he exclaimed.

"Me! I never shot anything. I never saw him. I tell you truly, I don't know what I should have done if I had; I *think* I'd have lain down and screamed. But I didn't. And—your coat was so comfortable, Mr. Hazard."

"Oh, Lord," groaned Hazard; in another minute he would be telling her the whole camp might be eaten by wolves if she would only believe he adored the very snow she walked on. But he was to all appearance totally unmoved. "You must have looked very fashionable in it," he commented, "but I'm glad you had that much sense and wore it. Was that why you wanted to see me?"

"I wanted to tell you I was sorry you were worried," she answered quietly, and this time Hazard turned on his heel. There were things a man ought not to be put to, alone in the wilderness. Supposing he said things, and found she did not care to hear them.

"I always think whatever you do is right, and you know it," he said roughly. "Take a day off in the morning; we won't be sending down gold, anyhow; there's a lot of digging and clearing to be done. You stay indoors. Good night."

But she put out her hand detainingly. "You're not angry?"

"I don't think I ever was." His voice was hard, and most women would not have looked at his eyes. "I was pretty frightened was more like it."

"So was I," with a queer little laugh. But Hazard had had enough for one evening; he hurried out of doors.

"Lord, that was near," he thought; "it's been near, for that matter, all day. I've got to keep away from her, or I'll be telling her to take me for a doormat, and all the rest that no one but a cad would say when she's got no one else to turn to. Meanwhile, I'd give half the mine to get her something decent to eat, and so would Rider."

But Rider was thinking of anything but Miss Ridgeway's food; he had even forgotten about his miraculously renewed stores as he watched Hazard in and out of Sophy's house. Whoever she had gone to meet, it was not Hazard.

Rider turned acrimoniously on the only man in the gang whom it possibly could be, that young West who had been kicked out of Yale, and harried him for something committed two days ago. He was not pleased when in response West merely grinned.

"All the same, he'll grin on the other side of his mouth if I catch him with any red handkerchiefs," reflected the foreman. "I didn't think she'd have looked at a worthless young devil like him." And in a voice there was no gainsaying he ordered the whole bunk-house to bed.

CHAPTER XI.

Two days after the snow-storm the living cold came down on Lastluck, a vicious, tireless enemy that made the simplest business hard. When the shifts were over the men scuttled back to the bunk-house like rabbits to a burrow, but, for all drawbacks, the output of the queer mine that Hazard expected to pinch out any day did not lessen.

The men grumbled wonderfully little. Even Kelly made no remarks, except when he openly broke up the old thermometer that was the treasure of the bunk-house. "I ain't going to be taking no back talk from it," he growled, "about it's being only forty below, when me own nose tells me it's sixty," and forthwith threw the fragments into a snow-bank.

The only person in the outfit who was disgruntled was Rider, and—though no one but Rider noticed it—Sophy Ridgeway.

Her interview with the wolf-man had not pleased her, especially since she thought Rider was aware of it, and her promise of silence suddenly appeared to her as madness. She spent all her spare time in fruitless expeditions to find the man and tell him so, but the cave was empty; and do what she might, she could not find his cabin.

She was coming from a vain search for it late on Christmas eve when she ran on Hazard. For a moment she was tempted to break her silly word of honor; but his silence as he joined her put the wolf-man out of her head.

"You're worried," she said abruptly, as they reached her door.

"No." He shut it behind them, and began to dig at the stove; the lamp oil was done long ago. "At least, it's chiefly Rider. I don't know what's got into the man. First he never said a word about overlooking that tea and stuff till to-day, and then—— What was he dogging you for to-night?" suddenly.

"Was he?" Sophy silently reviled the wolf-man and all his works. It was no news to her that Rider's little pig's eyes were always on her with an ugly suspicion in them. "He always had a way of looking after me," she added hastily.

"Not like this," ungraciously. "I suppose it's the way the cold takes him; he seems to have a grouch all round. I had to give him beans to-day for harrying young West for nothing. He'll upset the men if he doesn't look out."

"Oh, never mind him!" said the girl slightingly. "Let's just be thankful he did find the tea and stuff; don't let's care how we got it." She knew perfectly that the same hand which took the things had put them back, and vowed to find the wolf-man the very next day; it was time to be done with a silence that might be dangerous, if the sulking Rider had seen things and chose to tell Hazard.

Hazard stretched his tired arms over his head. "I know I'm a pig," he observed suddenly. "The fact is, I'm a brute without tobacco. Oh, Sophy, I'd give my head for a smoke!"

"Haven't you any tobacco?"

"Gave the last to the men for Christmas," dolefully. "Don't know how they'll peg along when that's finished!"

Sophy disappeared behind him. Her voice came over his shoulder with a catch in it. "There! They look too nasty and awful, but I saved them," she shoved a box into his hand. It was nearly full of cigarette ends, some of them two inches long, all of them with some unburned tobacco. "You used to throw them away half-smoked," she explained, "so I got into the way of picking them up. Are they any good?"

"Good?" Hazard pounced on one, lit it, sat with the first smoke of a week curling through his nostrils. "You don't know what good is till you find a sumptuous box of cigarette ends. How on earth did you think of them?"

"You think of me," she stammered,

and drew back. He had let his head touch her sleeve, her bared wrist; if it was by accident or not the touch of the rough fair hair made her feel choking. She longed to let it lie there, yet till Hazard knew the sort of girl Ridgeway's daughter was—till she knew herself—how could she?

A queer electricity ran through Hazard, a knowledge that here was his chance, and it was beyond him to let it go. "Sophy," he cried, in a quick exultation, and saw the girl recoil.

"I want to tell you something," she muttered. "It's not fair you shouldn't know."

"I don't believe I care." He made a step to her very deliberately.

"You will." She set her teeth on it. "Look here, did you never wonder *why* father went away?"

"I don't know. I wondered, at first, if the wolf thing could have got on his nerves."

"He never heard of it," hardly, "but you're right, in a way. He went away because he was afraid to stay here, and I was afraid to have him stay. But I lied to you when I said I expected him back by Christmas. I don't expect him at all."

"I knew that," said Hazard placidly. "You wouldn't have been so angry with me if you hadn't been trying to make out a case for him. I wouldn't let a miserable failure like that kind of a lie worry you." His gray eyes softened as he looked at her.

"I wonder if you'd always—understand," Sophy hesitated.

"You?" The tone held a hundred things. "I'd try!"

"Well, you'll have to try pretty hard, then, now," she returned recklessly, "for I want to tell you things I don't understand myself, I mean my part of them. I suppose you think I've always been looked after and cared for, like any other girl? Well, I haven't! I've been used to living on father's wits, and helping him out with mine in tight places. And one day I helped him wrong."

"How?"

"About Lastluck—or I mightn't tell you; and you ought to know. There was a man—I thought he was in love with me. I let him take a sort of map father had of this place; I thought he'd help us out with it."

"Did you"—the stove sputtered in the pause—"like him?"

"I don't know," said the girl painfully. "When I was with him I thought everything he did was right; I used to feel as if I hadn't any will of my own, that I had to do everything he said. If he were here now I—I believe I'd have to, even if it was about the mine."

"I haven't observed him in the neighborhood," drawled Hazard.

Sophy went white. "That's why I told you; he might come! He knows about Lastluck; he knows something horrid, too, about father; he made him swear he'd never dare come here, that he'd leave it for him, or he'd put him in jail. At least, father said so; I didn't believe him till I knew he was afraid to stay here and meet him. Then I thought if we could only get out the gold, quick, and go, I'd save father. If he came, do you think I—could buy him off?"

"Buy nothing!" said Hazard slowly. If he were furious that Ridgeway had cleared out because he was afraid to stay, and left the girl to face things, he did not air it. "The gold's ours; we found it." And suddenly he smiled. "Do you think I couldn't do any better than buy you off?" he demanded.

"I'm afraid," said Sophy slowly, "of what *I* might do."

"Yet you stayed here?"

"I felt safe," simply. "I never felt safe anywhere before." Hazard's blood leaped in him. "But lately I've got worried. He—the man—said the map was his before it was father's, and perhaps—that's true!"

Hazard faced her, very tall in the dim light. "Suppose it was," he said simply. "Don't you see there's nothing to all you've told me, except your own worry about it? No matter what kind of a row any one's had with Ridgeway, there are better ways of settling it than buying off; and he won't be here to wrestle with, no matter who comes.

There's nothing to it; none of it's half as important as that all we've got to eat is half of the last cariboo Olsen got. Don't you see I'll take care of you?" And if he was going to say "because I love you," he did not get it out. Sophy had flung herself past him to the door.

"Listen!" she gasped. "What's that noise? Oh," she turned white as wax and then scarlet as she dragged on Hazard's old coat, "it's some one coming! Can't you hear them shouting to dogs? I believe it's father, after all."

Hazard leaped after her into the cold of a world he looked to see elementally empty from sky-line to sky-line, and stood dumb. The men were tearing helter-skelter down to the lake in a queer silence, and over it came clear and plain the shouts of weary dog-drivers, the creak and squeal of hard snow.

"Ridgeway!" he thought blankly; he did not want the man with his nonsensical terrors. "Or else it's my bad luck that's coming!"

Involuntarily he caught Sophy's hand, as if he would prevent the bad luck from being hers, and ran with her down to the shore.

There was more than noise now. Black and plain on the ice under the starlight came clotted specks that resolved themselves into four dog-teams and eight—no, ten men—running with them; and the dead silence round him suddenly struck Hazard.

"Ridgeway," he yelled, "Hello!" He saw a mighty torch of pine flare up behind him under Kelly's auspices. "This way!"

The dog-team swerved as at a rifle-shot, stopped, tumbling over each other. There was a sound of furious voices, a hesitation that took minutes, while Kelly waved his torch and Kelly's friends whooped; and suddenly the whole strange outfit flowed on again, without a single answering shout.

Hazard wondered if Ridgeway were crazy; as Ridgeway's men showed clear in the circle of torchlight he wondered more. They were in blanket coats and Klondike parkas, in all the garments the Lastluck gang lacked. For his life Hazard could not pick out Ridgeway among the hooded figures, nor see how he had been far enough to get such clothing.

"Father," shrieked Sophy. She tore herself from Hazard's hand-grip, and ran out on the ice. There was something in the note of the cry that hushed even Kelly, and in the dead pause a voice that was not Ridgeway's, a voice that Hazard knew, and had never expected to hear out of wildcat mining-camps and mad booms of money-making, rang out with anything but pleasure in it.

"Hello, there, whoever you are! What camp's this?"

"Atherton," said Hazard blankly. "Jim Atherton!" His bad luck had come with a vengeance, for he would rather have seen the devil. He leaped forward to keep Sophy's hand from Atherton's arm, but he was too late.

"Where's father?" cried the girl; if she, too, had known the man she made no greeting. "Where's father?"

Even Hazard could not have recognized the hoarse voice; Atherton certainly did not. He shook off her hand on his arm, and shoved back his parka. For one second there was ungoverned rage on his face; the next, he was as he always was, a sight to turn a woman's head; even under the flickering torchlight that threw queer shadows on him.

"My dear, I don't know," he returned with smooth insolence, as to a stranger. Hazard had time to see his smile as he spoke, before he could slip down and bulk solidly between the two figures.

"Great Scott, Atherton!" he cried. "Where on earth have you come from?"

Atherton had only stared at him, and was holding out his hand to Sophy. "You!" he said blankly.

It was a strange way for engaged people to meet, but Atherton was not thinking of engagements now. For the moment he did not care whether Sophy lived or died, any more than if she had been the strange girl he had taken her for. It was the man behind him he thought of, who had forestalled him at Lastluck, and was a different quality to

deal with from Ridgeway. He had to make himself go on speaking to Sophy. "It's never you—here!" he ended lamely.

"Yes," was all Sophy said. There was a queer note in her voice that might have meant anything.

Hazard, standing stone silent, heard Rider swear as if it were jerked out of him.

CHAPTER XII.

Atherton looked from one to the other. "By George, it's Hazard!" he exclaimed; his laugh and his look at the girl were out of the same mint of red-hot rage. "What? I'm delighted—now that I've got over being astonished."

"We haven't," retorted Hazard. "We thought you were Ridgeway, who's gone down the lake for supplies." It was the easiest way to explain how Sophy was alone. "I suppose you know him, since you know Miss Ridgeway?"

Atherton's bow covered furious amazement at Ridgeway's absence. "Of course I know him," he said impatiently. "But I haven't seen anything of him. Has he been gone long, Sophy?"

"Not very," she said slowly. "I suppose you didn't hear of him down the lake?"

Atherton shook his head, apparently without interest. He was too angry at his tool's escape to care where he was. "I didn't come up the lake," he said frankly. "I came over it; from Rupert's House last. I suppose"—he could see the firelit bunk-house now, and he stared at it—"you won't send me packing to-night, Hazard?"

"Lastluck's at your service." Hospitality was hospitality, even to a liar, but "Rupert's House" stuck in Hazard's crop. It was too far, for one thing; for another, Atherton had excellent reason to avoid it. "There's room for your men in the bunk-house," unwillingly.

"Right!" Atherton was as placid as if he thought himself welcome. He pulled out a red silk handkerchief, and thoughtfully flicked off the glittering frost particles that clung to his small dark mustache, and under his parka there showed the edges of a blue blanket coat.

Rider stood looking at him as if he were stunned, and kept on looking as Atherton spoke.

"I was nearly here a good time ago, the day of the big storm. But I lost my hearings a bit, and went back to a sheltered piece of shore I'd left. My dogs were tired, so I camped there—which I wouldn't have done if I'd known you were here." He looked, with a laugh, at Sophy. "I don't suppose you're so terribly surprised to see me," he added, in a quick whisper.

"No," said Sophy, her voice had still that queer quality that might have meant anything. "No!"

Rider scowled impartially at the two of them as conviction swept over him. "It was *him* I saw." He swore inwardly. "It wasn't West! Only you needn't tell me he's been at any other side of the lake till to-night! I guess she expected him, all right, if Hazard didn't. What beats me is why she kept the whole thing dark." And he turned sharply to stare at Sophy. But the girl was walking away.

"Well," said Hazard impatiently, "we may as well get along out of this cold."

He had no use for Atherton, but he had not much choice. He thought grudgingly of the half-cariboo that was all they had.

"I suppose you've grub for your men and dogs? I'm sorry, but we're rather short."

"I've *some*. That was one thing that made me go on looking for you—or for whoever was here; I never dreamed of you." His short stop at the sight of lights and men looked more as if he had not dreamed of any one, and perhaps he remembered it. "At least I'd picked up a story at Rupert's House there was a camp here prospecting, so I just came along to see."

"Funny how news flies." Unless the very trees had carried it, Hazard did not see how it had reached Rupert's

House. "I don't see how any of our men got there," he added plainly, "unless it was some of the Indians who brought us here last summer!"

"Very likely; I didn't hear who told it."

Atherton's eyes roamed over the beaten paths to Sophy, walking slowly to her shack; suddenly, without a word of excuse, he strode after her. As Hazard followed, something in their attitudes, their low voices, struck him with a chill he had thought he was too cold to feel. It was foolishness, anyhow; she could never have meant Atherton just now. He was not a person to have the upper hand of even a Ridgeway; he was too slack and heady, and too much of a coward, if you got to the bottom of him. It was just a coincidence.

But it was a coincidence that cut as he joined Sophy, and she was silent except for the quick good night with which she turned into her shack.

Atherton looked after her for a second before he moved away with Hazard; over a certain dashed puzzle in his face came a covert elation.

"You seem pretty solidly fixed—what?" he remarked abruptly, stretching his splendid self as he chucked down his parka. "Are you making out on it?"

"We're short of grub; otherwise it might be worse. I can't offer you a drink, but there'll be something to eat shortly."

He surveyed his guest with distaste. Most people liked Atherton, unless they happened to differ with him over such trifles as women or money; and Hazard was acutely conscious of Sophy, if he forgot the mine. Atherton's dark gaze grew amused, as if he read his thoughts.

"Sophy says"—he drawled on the name—"you've struck it. What?"

"We've struck something, or I wouldn't be sitting here waiting for Ridgeway. He——"

Atherton sat down on the edge of the bunk. "I suppose you know it's my claim?" he interrupted coolly.

Hazard looked him up and down. "That's a good one, even for you. What do you work that on?"

"Your beautiful partner! How do you suppose Ridgeway ever heard of this place? It was I told him—more fool me! And what does he do? Hooks my maps and uses all my information, and I find his outfit working my claim. I don't wonder he skipped out; he expected me, all right, in December. He hadn't any longing to wait for me."

Hazard whistled. Some of it might be true, but some was a plain lie. "It doesn't work, Atherton," he said slowly. "Ridgeway didn't have any maps, or any information that was any good. He was gone, anyway, when we struck it. What do you mean about your claim? You'd never been here."

"Last winter I was. I couldn't make out to stay, but I was here, all right." It was absolutely true, if he did not add that he had been driven out without even putting pick to ground.

"Stake her?"

"Yep!"

"I suppose that was why you pulled up when you saw us," dryly. "Lord, man, why don't you stick to one story? Nobody'd ever stuck a stake round our claim. You needn't try it on!"

"It's just what I'm not doing; the stories match, right enough. I did think there was some one here, but I believed they were back of me on the mountain; I never thought of any one being on the lake." He paused, rather pleased with his blend of truth and lies, and added abruptly: "I was here last winter, whether I staked or not; and morally the claim's mine."

"There aren't any morals in gold-mining." Hazard would have thought Atherton was lying all round the compass but for two things; the hole Sophy's light weight could never have broken through if it had been untouched, and a couple of sentences out of what she had just said to him.

"There don't seem to be," sneered Atherton, "but you're on my ground, all right. Oh, I'm not kicking! I'm only wondering——"

He broke off abruptly and walked round the shack, his mind like a slate

he was marking things off on. If enough could be marked off he was not so late at Lastluck, after all. He had got a deal that suited him out of that short interview with Sophy; even if Ridgeway had cleared out, Hazard was short of grub and might be made to go, too. The devil-wolf, that he had excellent reason to know had last year made Lastluck untenable, was the only factor he could not account for—and perhaps he had not got as much out of Sophy as he imagined. If that could be eliminated he might yet be able to get hold of the claim. He had a card up his sleeve, too, that he was not anxious to play, having a keen regard to his own skin, but if it came to the pinch he would play it.

"Say," he demanded suddenly, "you may as well come out with it. Did you say Ridgeway went out for stores or any other old thing and left you stuck here, before he knew you'd struck pay-dirt? Because if you did he'll never come back again."

"Think so?" dryly.

"I know so! How in hell did he ever come to leave Sophy here?"

Hazard told him, with reservations.

"Ah," commented Atherton sharply, "then you did have trouble. That was what I was wondering about." He followed up the line that had been marking itself out in his head. "What sort of men stayed when the rest cleared out?"

"The best of the bunch. Why?"

"Nothing, except I don't see how you got any of them to stay. I don't know what's wrong with this place, unless, as they say, it's haunted; but I know I had a devil of a time here last winter, and I'd hard work to get my chaps to come now. It was that turned me back the day of the big storm. Lord knows *I* didn't see anything, but all the same, my whole outfit bolted down the lake," which was absolutely true if he had said "up" and not "down." "They've been making any old excuse not to come here ever since; swore the dogs were sick and all the rest of it. But I knew they were scared of the haunt."

"What haunt?" Hazard was not as interested as he might have been two months ago.

"Couldn't get that out of them," blandly. "Some kind of wolf-devil, or something. I know I had to kick 'em here."

"My men don't care," said Hazard easily, "they're salted."

"Then you've seen it, too?" The question flew out of Atherton.

"Not I! Some of the fools who split off from us said they did, but the gold steadied the rest of them."

"You mean to tell me you've had no trouble—that it's all rot?"

"Every bit," casually.

Atherton stooped to untie his moccasin and hide his stark amazement. He had had good reason to know some sort of devil was a reality here the winter before; it was fear of it and no thought of Ridgeway that had brought him here deviously. And here was his bogy exploded—and Hazard getting out what should have been his gold! Atherton's teeth gritted before he stood up smiling. "Any claims left?" he asked quietly.

"I haven't looked."

"Well, I guess I will. I'm about cleaned out, Hazard; broke."

"You travel as if you were," scathingly.

"What? The dog-train? I had 'em, and I had to lug pemmican and potatoes and other trash. I proposed to do some work this winter if you hadn't got ahead of me on my claim."

"Look here, that's enough about your claim," snapped Hazard. "If you did stake one, you didn't stake ours."

"Well, I'm not fighting you on it. I suppose I can work another without going back to record. Think it's safe?"

"Not if they've heard of Lastluck at Rupert's House," dryly.

"Shucks!"—he stopped as if he remembered himself. "It's too far. I guess I'll stay for my assessment work; you seem to be pegging along all right."

"Oh, we'll pull through." It was none of Atherton's business how.

"Say," jerked Atherton suddenly, "what made Sophy stay?"

"She had to," gruffly.

"You forget I knew her before." He had no intention, yet, of airing his connection with Sophy, but he saw the innuendo sting.

"I shouldn't say it was particularly well, then," retorted Hazard. "It was lucky for us she did stay; she found the first color."

"Hell!" And Atherton meant it. "Well, I suppose she doesn't live in the bunk-house," significantly.

"House to herself, where she lived with her father." Mixed with a growing desire to kick Atherton came the remembrance that no one had ever called the man honest, and that under the floor he stood on lay Sophy's, and the men's, and Hazard's own gold. "You'll have to hunk in my shack," he added involuntarily. "I sleep in here, but there's no room for two."

Atherton's smile made Hazard clench his teeth, but he said nothing. Atherton was prowling round the office, and suddenly pointed to a nugget that lay on the useless assaying-table. Hazard was not assaying these days; Lastluck gold was no matter of concentrates.

"That your stuff?" he shouted. "Then, by the Lord, I'll—stay!" The last word came out with a queer drop, as if he had hastily substituted it for another one. His gaze gloated on the nugget, till Hazard knew his pre-discovery of the claim was a lie; if he had ever stuck one pick into it he would have known the sort of gold it held. But before he could say so the man moved alertly to the door, and stood looking out on something.

"I thought you said there wasn't any haunt?" he asked softly, and pointed. "Look there."

Hazard glanced up. Something like a gray shadow might have run past Sophy's house; he could not be sure. "One of your dogs," he said scornfully.

"I don't know." Atherton's voice came slowly, as if he were thinking, "about that!"

As soon as he had swallowed his dinner he disappeared. It was close on bedtime when he came back again, and if he had made a discovery about the haunt of Lastluck that suited his book to the ground, he said nothing about it.

"Been hunting your dog?" asked Hazard, yawning.

Atherton smiled. "I guess I imagined it; wasn't anything there."

Curiously enough, Hazard was certain he was lying. Perhaps it was that which gave him a vivid dream toward morning; a dream of more dog-sleds and more men going by his door, silently except for the creaking of the snow, till the faint sound of their passing died away in the river valley. The dream was living enough to make him get out of bed, but all he saw was the night, empty under the naked stars.

It was not till the dawn that he woke again, and this time he did see something; it might or might not have suited Mr. Atherton to know he threw on his clothes and went after it.

CHAPTER XIII.

Whether it was a wild-goose chase or not that Hazard went on, the shadow of the mountains lay in white sunlight on the frozen lake before he came home, and as he rounded the river valley he pulled up short in his tracks.

Sophy stood in her doorway, and even in the shadow her face shone warm against the cold azure of the snow under the misty darkness of her hair. There seemed to Hazard to be waiting in it longing—and suddenly he kept back an oath. There might be both things; but they were not for him.

Atherton in all his smartness, with his hands as full of parcels as if this had been Christmas where there were shops, had come round the corner of her house and stood holding both her hands. They were perhaps a splendid couple, he in his dark-blue and she even in her washed jersey, but it was not what the onlooker thought of.

"Atherton!" he said to himself. "It was Atherton she meant last night, all right! And I held back and didn't say anything—left the way clear for a devil like that. God, what a fool I was not

to tell her things while I had some chance!" For Atherton, dropping his parcels, had bowed his handsome head and kissed the girl's hand.

Hazard jumped forward instinctively to stop him; perhaps to make the chance he had been fool enough to miss; and stood still. He was in plain sight; Sophy had met his eyes fair and square if Atherton had not; and she had drawn Atherton inside her door by the hands that he still held, and shut it in Hazard's face.

"Seems to me I'd better wait for my Merry Christmas," Hazard thought slowly, for there did not seem to be anything else to do. He could not well knock at that deliberately closed door and say the things he knew about Atherton's past history, even if they were true. He went into the office and shut the door on himself and his raging temper.

When, by and by, some one knocked at it, he neither answered nor looked out to see who it was; if sounds went for anything there was a row in the bunk-house, but if he had to do foreman's work he would know it. It was not Atherton's being here that he was so angry with as with himself; if he had not held back, like a fool in a book, he could have made short work of Atherton; and suddenly he realized that he was being a brute as well as a fool. If he had promised to take care of Sophy he was not doing it. He opened his door to go to her, and fell over Rider.

Anarchy, it seemed, had reigned all night in the bunk-house. Atherton's men had essayed to fill up Kelly with tales of the devil-wolf, and Kelly and his gang had been trenchant; so much so that a free fight enlivened the evening. As for the night, it had been peculiar, but Rider put it down to Atherton's dogs getting loose, which had started a fight again in the morning. But it seemed even Kelly's gang had fought half-heartedly, remembering past events, when there had been no strange dogs to scratch softly at doors and windows.

"They're as damn uneasy as ever they can be," concluded the foreman, "but that ain't the worst; every scrap we had for dinner's gone out of the kinty!"

"Well, I don't run the bunk-house," said Hazard impatiently. "Get the men out after anything they can find; rabbits, if there's nothing else." He had an idea that it was not bunk-house politics that had brought Rider, and it did not please him. "You'll have to settle them somehow. I've got to see Miss Ridgeway."

It was what Rider wanted, and he jumped at it. "She's not there." He nodded back at her house. "She went somewhere with Atherton!"

"On the dog-sled?" Hazard's face did not change; he had heard Atherton's teams go shouting by.

"No; walking. At least, they were walking when I saw them go up the river."

"I dare say." And at something in the foreman's face, Hazard added: "Miss Ridgeway and he are old friends, anyhow."

"That's what I can't understand." Rider bent over, and Hazard was suddenly aware that he smelt of whisky. "Why didn't she tell you about him when first she came?"

"I saw him come myself," said Hazard sharply. "For Heaven's sake, Rider, if Atherton's men had a jug you might have had the sense to leave it alone!"

The man's eyes blazed at him. "I had a drink, now, to make myself come and tell you what I'm going to say; I'm as sober as you are, and I know what you don't. Atherton was here weeks ago. I saw him, blanket coat, red handkerchief, and all, kissing the girl's hand down by the storehouse, and legging it down the lake to God knows where. And what I want to know is why didn't she say so? You heard her yourself when she said she wasn't surprised to see him here—and I guess that was right, all right!"

"You're mad," said Hazard slowly, "or else——" And there came to him suddenly the day of the big storm, when he had seen what he imagined was a wolf hanging round; if it was the same kind of wolf that had got him out of

his bed this morning he might know what to think. "See here, Rider," he cried abruptly, "are any of Atherton's dogs gray?"

"Not a single one," irritably. "What's dogs got to do with it? I tell you Miss Ridgeway knew he was coming because he'd been here; if it ain't any business of mine I thought it might be of yours, and so I came and told you."

"Well, you can forget you did." Hazard was quite white in spite of the cold. "If it's true it's Miss Ridgeway's business. I'm only her partner; I don't know about her private affairs. What difference does it make, anyhow?"

"It makes this difference," said Rider unexpectedly, "that I'd thought I'd met one woman who was straight; and I guess I haven't. From what I heard her say to him this morning I guess it's going to be him and her against us about the mine; and now you know it." He walked off, not too steadily, to the storehouse.

Hazard stared after him uncertainly. It was a strange dog out of some one's team he had seen on the day of the snow-storm, and it was the same strange dog that had waked him this morning. If it were Atherton's it would be proof enough that Rider told the truth; but Hazard had no heart to go and see. Nothing could make any difference in the things Sophy had told him about Atherton, or the fact that she had shut her door in his very face this morning. At the thought he went back into the office and banged his own door.

He was in the middle of the hard-tack lunch that replaced the stolen meat when Atherton strolled in on him, and sat down with a silent nod. The perturbation of yesterday had been wiped from his face as with a sponge by certain discoveries of last evening, of which he knew Hazard to be ignorant. It was true that he was hard up; he had come to Lastluck for nothing but getting its gold; and last night he had despaired.

This morning it was different. The gold was practically his; the only doubt was the way to take it. His evening's pursuit of what he knew perfectly to be one of his own dogs had been a simple excuse for exploration; with the result that the whereabouts of the devil-wolf which had last year chivied him away from Lastluck no longer worried him.

His bugbear had been only a man, dressed in wolfskins and wearing a wolf's mask; he had found both things when he found the deserted cabin where they lay discarded. Of one plain man Atherton had no fear, especially when that man had evidently been gone from Lastluck long enough to let Hazard mine in peace.

But he had a brilliant use for him; his cabin, wolfskins and all, could be used against Hazard; were being used already. Mr. Atherton's men were not merely the ten who had arrived openly; it had been no dream that Hazard heard a dog-train go by in the night; its men and dogs were camped in the wolf-man's house now; one of them had been out all night in his wolfskins to scare, and steal from, the bunkhouse.

With those facts behind him and Hazard ignorant of them, Atherton saw the mine in his hand. But he had no relish for superfluous fighting; he would try easier ways of getting the claim first. He beamed suddenly on Hazard, and chucked a handful of bean-like nuggets on the table.

"She's good," he announced, as if he had been cogitating about the claim. "I guess I'll stay; though I don't like the neighborhood much."

"Why?" For one reason or another speech stuck in Hazard's throat.

"Oh, nothing! I don't care for mining in a hollow like that. Too much like being a mouse in a bowl if any one made trouble."

"Well, for a white man," sneered Hazard. "How did you get in the mine, anyhow?"

Atherton looked him in the eyes. "Sophy took me."

If Atherton had been a stranger it would have been natural enough; as it was, Hazard sat staggered. "I suppose you arranged it when you were here in the storm?" he conjectured dryly.

"What are you talking about? I never said I got here; I said I didn't, if that's what's worrying you. I didn't trouble your old mine, anyhow; bit of crumble round the workings was good enough for me. I've got to get back there, too. Sophy's waiting for me." But he cast himself on a stool instead, and regarded Hazard's lunch. "If you're down to that trash you're pretty set on staying here," he observed politely.

"I am!"

Atherton lit a cigarette, and shoved paper and tobacco back in his pocket. "I don't know that I would be. As I said, it's a kind of a tough proposition up there, for all she's so rich."

"How?" Hazard's cigarette ends were in Sophy's house, and he would have died before he asked for Atherton's tobacco; yet the smoke he was longing for cut his raw nerves like a lash. His wrath suddenly exploded. "What on earth are you driving at? I don't give a damn for any of your mysterious hints about things going wrong. There isn't anything to go."

"There may be and there mayn't," said Atherton shortly. "Like to gamble on it?"

"How?" It was a different "how" from the first, but Atherton did not notice.

"Well," he said, "from the way you beamed at this floor last night I take it you've got out a fair stake, even counting in Ridgeway's. I'll change with you—your gang to my dog-teams and drivers—and let you pack out. Sophy can please herself. I guess she'll stay!"

"What in the devil have you got to do with what she does?" said Hazard.

This time Atherton did notice. "Keep cool," he said hastily. "Soph and I are old friends; she'll tell you right enough what I've to do with her if you ask her"—which he had every intention of not giving him a chance to do. "Come back to business. I'll let you pack out with what you've got, and I'll stay and gamble on what you haven't. What do you say?"

For a moment Hazard was speechless; certain that Atherton must have come on something even better than he knew was in the mine. "Isn't anything *to* say," he retorted suddenly. "I'm not in that deal—even if you seem to have settled with Miss Ridgeway. What about my sheds and my ore-ways, and my tools, and dynamite—not to speak of a common low-down thing like honesty? Not much, Atherton." He broke into an ugly laugh at the sheer gall of the thing. "What should you propose my saying to Ridgeway?"

Atherton shrugged his shoulders. "He's letting you starve here. I don't see much difference between getting out with a whole skin and dying as regards explaining to Ridgeway."

"Talk sense; I'm not starving yet."

"So I see," looking at the bare hard biscuit. "Sophy looks pretty fine-drawn, though."

"You can leave her out of it," said Hazard whitely; if this fine plan were Sophy's she could explain it to him. "Unless, if I don't accept your crazy offer, you mean to take her out yourself."

"You needn't get gay," returned Atherton slowly. "I'm talking business. Do you mean, straight without any trimmings, that you won't take my offer about the dog-teams and get out with your stuff? Even if you take the girl?"

"Your fool cheek, I'd call it! No!"

"Well, then, I guess I'll come in on your mine. It's a kind of home without a mother business, prospecting this weather, anyhow. What?"

"Look here," said Hazard, "I don't care what kind of a fool you think I am, for I don't happen to be it. You've talked and acted like a plain lunatic, with your ghosts——"

"Not my ghosts," coolly, "your men saw 'em. As for what I've talked, I've been looking for the easiest way. I don't like trouble, and from all I can see I think you're going to have it, and I wanted to help you out. I saw enough this morning to know you aren't alone here, and I guess you're going to have some good old-fashioned claim-jumping out of your Lastluck ghost. Somebody's playing it on you, if you don't seem to know it."

"You can't play it on me, anyhow," returned Hazard succinctly. "As far as you're concerned you can put out of here to-day; I don't need your assistance. I wouldn't have you or your men in my mine, not a damned one of you; and as for your ghosts and your claim-jumpers you can talk about them to some one else; they won't bluff you into my mine. There's no one to hear me, and I may as well say it straight. I wouldn't run a one-horse cab on shares with you, for you'd go off with the horse the first day and hook the cab while I was looking for it. And you know it as well as I do!"

Atherton flushed to his eyes. "That's enough," said he thickly. "It's all I'll stand, anyhow. But if you knew as much about this place as I do you'd see my offering to help get your gold out of it wasn't all gall. But if you won't go," he laughed suddenly, "I'll see what Sophy says! For there's one thing you can't get hot in the collar about; this isn't any fit place for her to be."

"That's the only thing you've mentioned that's none of my business," said Hazard smoothly; but he went to the window as Atherton's dog-teams tore up the river valley.

Every team was complete, but there was not a gray dog among them; yet it was impossible there could be any dog round that was not Atherton's. It seemed a little thing to make a fuss about, but it worried Hazard. He watched them turn south. It was odd, but not a man of Hazard's outfit had ever been south of the claim since they had been working; before that he remembered Ridgeway's harryings to go north; the long useless search that had come of them; and wondered if Atherton really knew the country. He knew enough to keep out of the north, anyhow.

There was something at the bottom of the man's crazy talk that he could not get at. To think of claim-jumpers at Lastluck was rot, as the ghost-wolf had been; the only real danger was—— His eyes suddenly fell to the floor he was pacing, the floor that hid the mined gold.

"Atherton wouldn't dare, even if he could get the chance to load it up on his dog-sleds!" he said out loud; but, all the same, he was not so sure. It was just the sort of smart thing that would appeal to Atherton. "Damn the man!" Hazard said deliberately. "I don't care if Sophy meant him last night or not, but he sha'n't have an ounce of her gold!"

He turned and did a little unostentatious work at the door and windows, with a sick and puzzled thought as to where Sophy would come in if his suspicions were true. She had asked him to go to her for his Christmas dinner. Well, he meant to go; he could at least find out where she stood between him and Atherton.

As he turned the key in the door to leave the office he ran into Rider, and spoke without a second glance at him.

"Miss Ridgeway expects me to dinner. Don't you let one, or half a one, of Atherton's men out of the bunk-house till I see you. Understand?" The thing in his head might be foolishness, but till he knew he would act on it.

Rider broke into a string of oaths. "Much she cares where you eat! She's been off with Atherton this livelong day, God knows where." A wave of Atherton's whisky made him grab the door-post. "She's not any more good than her father." He hiccoughed. "She's going to——"

"Get out to the bunk-house," roared Hazard. He swore, locked the door, and being rattled, opened Sophy's without knocking, to see the girl jump from Atherton's side.

"Have you seen Rider?" she cried, and if Hazard had not been done with doubt it would have settled him.

"Yes; if seeing him's kicking him back to the bunk-house," he responded grimly. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing, only it's a shame, on Christmas eve!" From behind Atherton she gave an appealing look at Hazard, which was wasted. Sophy's heart came into her mouth. "Talk to each other for a minute, will you?" she said, as if it were an afterthought, and vanished into the inner room.

Hazard thought she was gone a long time, but everything was at such sixes and sevens that he did not care, and as he thought it the girl appeared again. Her cheeks might easily have been scarlet, but there was no need for her to be panting.

"Dinner's ready," she said rather bitterly, "mostly Mr. Atherton's bacon. I'd nothing." And as Hazard moved to the outside door she started. "Where are you going?"

"Nowhere," curtly. "I've got to see where Rider is!" For if the foreman had not happened to hit the bunk-house he must be lying somewhere in the snow. He thought Sophy made a step after him, but if she did Atherton stood in the way; and then he forgot her.

The sky over the lake glared copper to the zenith; was shot as he looked at it with rose that turned suddenly blood-color; if it was Northern Lights they were queer ones. Hazard stepped outside, looked behind him up the river valley, and had no need to sniff the icy air. At the note in his voice as he shouted for Rider, for Olsen and Kelly, Sophy flew out of the house.

"I've got to speak to you," she began, and clutched his arm. "Oh," her voice changed, "what is it?"

"My sheds; they're on fire," said Hazard; his eyes were not on the glow, but on the bunk-house. There was row enough in there, but there was nobody coming out.

Sophy gave a queer, half-stifled cry: "Oh, they're locked in!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Shut in, somehow, they were. Hazard had always thought it a fool thing to have the bunk-house door opening toward the outside, and he remembered it now as he had to take time—good time—to knock out the solid wedges that closed it.

When the men swarmed out at last he never even gave them an order, only pointed to the glare over the mine; they knew what they had to do. But for an ugly minute they hung in the wind. It took another to put the fear of God in them over Atherton's leaven of superstition.

When they moved off with a rush Hazard was suddenly aware of Rider, inert on the office threshold; and at the thought that came to him he swore.

He turned and shouted to Sophy, and at the ring of his voice the girl came tearing to him.

"Get in there and stay, will you?" said Hazard. "I can't trust to a tin-tack key in a shingle door to-night, and Rider's useless." But for the last clause it was an order; she was no more the girl he loved, but a doubtful quantity. "Lock the door, and don't let in one soul till I come. I suppose you care for the gold; I don't know, but I'm trusting you!"

"Yes," said the girl rather wildly, "Oh, wait. I want to tell you something! I—Atherton——"

The whole sting of the day rushed back on Hazard. "I know," he said sharply, "all I need to! But for to-night stand by the men and me. To-morrow you can tell me about—you and Atherton." And he raced after his men.

For a moment Sophy stared after him. Then she locked the office door on herself and Rider, snoring in the corner where Hazard had flung him, and went dully to the window. If Hazard knew what she had meant to say he was behaving like a fool—there was only one way to treat it. But he had never been a fool.

"He can't know, he *can't*," thought Sophy. She looked with hatred at the unconscious foreman. "If Rider hadn't dogged me all day till I got so late that Atherton caught me I might have saved it all," she thought bitterly. "As it is I don't know what to think: I'd give every bit of my gold if I did! I'm sure the wolf-man was straight, for all it doesn't look like it. It's I that have been the sneak—to hold my tongue!" She peered through the frozen window. All she could see of the fire was the glow that grew and reddened till it frightened her. Accross it, as she stared, Atherton and his dog-teams swept like black demons over the

orange of the snow, and disappeared, yelling, in the indigo shadow of the river-bed.

"Women always have to wait till men have time to be told things," Sophy commented wearily, "and then it's nearly always too late. I was a fool not to make Hazard hear me, and to stay here."

And suddenly she remembered the gold. Curiously enough, it lightened her heart. Hazard must know what she knew, for he had put her here as a sentry; yet the thought startled her, too. The office was familiar enough. She had often sat all day alone in it, with the men away as they were away now, but it had never looked quite like this before; a cold, shut-in little place between crimson snow and blood-red sky, with a drunken man who had a grudge against her locked in with her, and not a soul to hear her if she shrieked her heart out.

It was not that she was afraid of Rider, but he would be no use if she needed him. It might be madness to think she could need him, but to-day she had lost her bearings, and she was suddenly afraid.

"I'll just have to do whatever I can till the men come back," she thought. "Oh, pray they won't be long!"

But coming back was the last thing the men were thinking of. The whole length of the sheds was burning, a solid, glowing line dipping down from each edge of the basin; and each man, as he knew it was too late to save it, knew too that there were no more boards to build it afresh, and that the loss of it meant working out of doors with nothing to break the sweep of the arctic wind, endless delays with every snowfall, and about half their present output. There was no need to harry them to work now; they worked like machines, hacking down timbers, smothering the whole ditch with snow, as Atherton stood back a minute and watched them.

"Better let her burn," he yelled to Hazard. "It's too late to choke her out much. How do you suppose it caught?"

"See about that afterward," snapped Kelly, shoveling welts of snow wherever he could fling it, and stepping back to clear his face before the steam froze on it.

Hazard said nothing at all. Atherton was the only soul who had been near the mine all that day; one of Atherton's men, who had his dogs to see to, might easily have been outside the bunk-house; and if the fire had been accidental and the careless dropping of Atherton's matches, there was no accident about the wedges in the bunk-house door. Some one had done that, with art and no knocking; which was, after all, quite simple; the harder the men pushed to get out the more firmly they were shut in.

And this was Christmas!

"It looks like it," thought Hazard grimly, as at last the fire died to a mass of blackening embers, chiefly because there was nothing more to blaze. Olsen's work, that could never be done again in this country of undersized trees with not a board in one of them, was gone. "I suppose we can log her up somehow," Hazard thought, staring at the ruins, "but it just means that much time lost as far as the output goes. I was right, all right, when I said I saw my bad luck coming."

"What?" asked Atherton, with that irritating trick of his.

Hazard turned on him slowly. "I didn't speak, but I'm going to," his voice hoarse with steam and flying ashes. "What on earth were you about with your matches this morning?"

"If that's what you think, you can think it," said Atherton flippantly.

"Why don't you say it was an accident?"

Atherton shrugged his shoulders. "It wasn't one I could have prevented. I'm not running the Lastluck mine."

"Not yet. I suppose if you had been, by my taking your offer this morning, you'd have seen there wasn't any fire; and one of your men wouldn't have been conveniently outside while mine were bailed up in the bunk-house."

Atherton turned away, and turned back again. "You've insulted me three

times to-day," he said, very quietly for him. "I'm not going to waste breath in saying you'll be sorry for it, for I mean to make you damned sorry. I didn't set your sheds on fire nor lock in your men, but I know who did. Just men who're going to fight you for your claim."

Hazard looked up at the empty mountains scornfully. "This morning you said I'd have trouble from a haunt," he retorted.

"I said the men thought it was a haunt. It's a good deal worse to my mind; ghosts don't burn before they murder, if you want the plain word. You've been here five months, and I've found out in twenty-four hours more than you ever thought of—unless to-night's made you think. I can show you what you've got to fight, if you want to see it. You won't believe me if I tell you."

"I haven't time to listen," said Hazard bruskly, striding off in the dark to look for Kelly, and stumbling on him as a black huddle against a rock. "Better take the men home, there's no use in staying," he said curtly. "She's all gone up."

Kelly took out his pipe. "I guess I'll stay for a while, if you don't mind," he returned. "Olsen's kind of hunting round mourning for his burnt-up shovels, and I guess me and the men will stay out with him and observe the night." He shoved the snaky head of a revolver suddenly out of his pocket. "I hooked it from you," he observed calmly. "There's been too much talk of ghosts and things to suit me, and I seen some sort of a thing roaming round here when first I came up. I'm going to shoot a hole in it and take the men back comfortable. I don't want any more fool scares in my bunk-house to-night. Just let me get things quieted down, and I'll have the men home cool and easy inside of an hour. I ain't never cheated you, Mr. Hazard, and there's something that's past me here."

"Well," said Hazard slowly, "you can stay an hour."

As he spoke he wondered if he did not see the strange dog slipping past in the fringe of darkness, and a sudden thought smote him. If the beast were not Atherton's there might be some truth in his story of other men being at Lastluck; till he knew it was not worth while explaining gray shadows to Kelly.

He strode to where Atherton stood smoking calmly, and touched his sleeve. "Have you lost a dog lately?" he asked.

Atherton twitched his arm away. "Look for yourself," he said huffily. "You can see the teams well enough. I'm going home, if you don't want me to show you what I said about other men being here. I don't know anything about a dog, unless it's theirs."

Hazard, listening to the indifferent voice, decided it was not a thing Atherton would dare to lie about. "If you've got anything solid to show me I'll come," he said wearily. "Otherwise, I'm going back to my dinner."

"Oh, it's solid enough," with a quick viciousness like a bronco's. "It won't take long, either; I guess we can load up on the dog-sleds for part of the way, though it isn't far."

It was quite far enough to be safe for a prisoner, though, if once he got Hazard kidnaped in the wolf-man's house, with the garrison of his own men who had replaced its solitary inmate. And with Rider drunk, Sophy as easily managed as she had ever been, Atherton felt his fingers already on the Lastluck gold. He could just keep in his laughter as he turned to call up his men.

Hazard was just tired enough to have hesitated about any expedition on his own legs. He sat down on a dog-sled as Atherton muttered something to his drivers that ended in "two'll do," and flung himself on the leading sled.

Hazard supposed he had sent the others home, but Kelly would have sense enough not to let them go alone, and he sat apathetically as the teams moved off; for once in silence. They went south, where Atherton had gone that afternoon, and they went fast. It might have been at a mile's distance that Atherton stopped.

"Here's where we'd better walk," he

suggested. "That is, if you mean to come."

"I'm here," said Hazard, yawning.

"You're not there, though. There's time to go back if you think we'll have trouble."

Hazard laughed. In spite of his headlong ways Atherton had had a reputation for caution in the last place where Hazard had enjoyed his society, and he forgot that he had also had a reputation for turning like a weazel at the last pinch.

"I expect that's all right," he said easily. "Bring on your claim-jumpers—they seem to have been a blame easy sort, till to-night."

He rather hoped there was a camp of men in the gully ahead of him; once there was good, solid human trouble, he would know what Atherton meant to be at. He followed him at a walk down something that felt like a path—was a path; and his attention grew as he trod it. The man was not lying; human feet had worn the snow to a smooth thread. It wound a good deal; Hazard tried to keep the trend of it uselessly; Atherton never faltered. Suddenly he stopped short, and stood out of the way.

"There," he whispered; and Hazard really started.

There was a light ahead of him; more, in a little cleared space stood a log house. He could see the fire burning through the open door; even see miners' tools cast carelessly on the floor beside it. His eyes turned suddenly hard. There was no one to be seen, but that was not to say the place was empty. He walked up to it and looked inside, on a heterogeneous mixture of rifles and picks, and not a human soul.

"That's what I struck this morning," Atherton's voice came oddly high and careless of an litors. "Wonder I proposed I should join up with you? I guess the lot of us could stand them off, if they are the old-fashioned kind."

"You can stand them off your own claim when you get one," returned Hazard preoccupiedly. There, among the rifles, was the complete dress and mask of wolfskin that had been used against him till the ghost business panned out and the sheds were fired. It all tallied so far; he wondered if he were going to apologize to Atherton.

"You still mean," asked Atherton, "you won't have any of me in yours?"

"We threshed that out this morning," said Hazard, and turned to look into the muzzle of a gun.

"Stand still," snarled Atherton. "You wanted it plain, and you're going to have it. You're on my claim, getting out my gold that I sweated to get at last year. I couldn't—never mind why—and when I can you've struck it, with my information Ridgeway stole. There's no sense in my hanging round prospecting claims; there aren't any other claims. This one was a freak, and my freak at that. I've got no time to waste at it, either; I've good and particular reasons to get all there is out of it in a fortnight, and go; it's what I'm here for. You're here; your foreman's drunk; your girl's been engaged to me for a year; your men are stuck out on the hill looking for ghosts, and I'm not expecting Ridgeway back to help you out any. I guess you've run on your claim-jumpers all right—for I'm them! You needn't look at the path; my dog-drivers I left behind are stopping it up, and there's no other way out of this place unless you can fly down the cliff home. I've got you done."

Hazard was not looking at the path, not even behind him. His ears were good enough to tell him five men had come out from behind the house, and that he had had no dream about the second lot of dog-sleds. For reasons of his own he stood stock-still in front of Atherton, and did not even waste time in calling himself a blind fool to be there.

"Well," he began humbly—and quicker than light was on Atherton's pistol-hand, deflecting the muzzle till it went off harmlessly, nearly breaking the man's wrist as he twisted it from him.

As he fired he thought Atherton jumped aside, but he was also nearly certain he had winged some one; and had no desire to stay to see who. He had got to get back to the office before

Atherton's drivers closed in on him in front—and he could hear their feet coming up the path—and his other men behind. There might be no way out but the path he had come, but there was general direction.

He was across the clearing and in the bushes before he heard Atherton shout; he did not hear what, nor did he particularly care. The thing that worried him was the sheer drop of the cliff, impossible to descend except in the riverbed, and the memory of Atherton's low-toned order to the men he had left behind that had probably strung them out in a cordon between Hazard and Kelly even, let alone Sophy.

Hazard looked at the stars, and began to run; quietly enough at first, then recklessly, where he never could have run in daylight. Up places and down places he could not see, over rocks, with the feeling that he was taking hours to it. He did not know how late it was when at last he gained the top of a rise where there was an open gully masked by low bushes.

As he pushed through them he sat down, with anything but his own volition, and for a moment knew nothing but that he was coasting violently downhill, apparently into a solid wall of rock. He stuck out his heels to stop himself, and rolled over and over into darkness; cannoned, flying past something hard; and lay in a heap, staring. Under him was snow; over him the light of stars.

Atherton's gun—and the Lord knew why it had not gone off in the toboggan-slide he had executed—was in his hand still, and mechanically Hazard twirled the cylinder. There was not a single cartridge left in it! If he had relied on it, and stayed to do some shooting—— "Well, I've had luck, if I've had no horse sense," he muttered; and sat up with a sudden feeling of a familiar place.

"The storehouse!" he said blankly; the black bulk that loomed in front of him was home, though he could not tell how he had got there. No sound of pursuit came from behind him; he listened rather dizzily till he was sure of it; and suddenly heaved himself to his feet, for there was worse. The shots had been in front of him, up at the office. Either Atherton had turned on Sophy, or—— "Good God," muttered Hazard, "she'd never fire on her own men!"

He tore round the corner, saw a figure in the starlight by the office door, bowled it neatly in the back of the head with his empty gun; and went down under three men who sprang at him from the bunk-house door.

CHAPTER XV.

The hours had been long in the office. In the reflection from the burning sheds Sophy could see all she wanted to of her companion, which was that he slept; but as the minutes dragged by his lethargy infuriated her. She rose suddenly and shook him.

"Rider," she ordered sharply; "Rider, wake up! You've got to help me."

But there was no intelligence in the sodden face, and somehow Sophy had no desire to stir the fire to see it better. She sat down instead, and listened. But there was no sound at all, if she did not count a drunken man's breathing; and by and by something that startled her till she realized it was her watch ticking in the stillness. She felt as if she had stared at it for years by the time the hands went to midnight. It had been seven when the fire broke out, and where were the men? The shack was dark now except for the faint light off the snow; there was nothing to keep them; but there was also no one coming. And suddenly she knew there was.

It was not Hazard's step; she would have known that among a thousand others in a city street; and it did not sound like Atherton's. It was too light, too furtive—and unconsciously she laughed out with relief. The wolf-man was the only person at Lastluck who would come to her so softly and so secretly. She had been hunting him in vain all day, and she had been right to believe in him. If he were not

straight he would never have come to her now.

She slipped softly by the sleeping Rider and as softly to the keyhole, drawing out the key till she could see through.

In the dark Rider's little pig's eyes opened alertly as she did it, and behind her his face was not the face of a drunken man. But he did not move. Sophy stared through the cleared keyhole. Close to it, plain in the starlight, was a man's blanket-clad arm.

"You," she breathed, mindful of Rider. "Wait, I'll come out. Oh, how I've wanted you!" She put back the key, half-turned it—and Rider's hand came down on hers as he launched himself like a cat out of his corner and stood over her, holding her fast.

It was the third time that day he had thwarted her, and the girl could have killed him. She turned on him and spoke through her teeth. "Let me alone"—it was almost soundless—"I know what you think of me, and it's a lie! Get back if you want to save the mine."

She dropped to her knees before he could answer, but the key blocked the keyhole and she could not see. And suddenly she had no need to.

"It's only me," said a voice hastily. "Open the door!"

It was not the wolf-man, after all; it was——

"Atherton," muttered Sophy with a quick revulsion; "Atherton!"

Rider grinned as she knelt silent.

Atherton's voice rose sharply. "Open the door, will you? I want to settle with you."

"I dare say," said Sophy slowly. "Well, go to the window." She moved her hand a little on the key, and Rider's tightened on it like a vise.

"No," he growled, "I've slaved for you and your gold, and so's Hazard; and all the time you've been playing into that man's hands there. Oh, I knew! First time you met him I saw you. I guess I wasn't surprised when he turned up here flat-footed."

Sophy never even started. "So you weren't drunk?" Atherton tried the window, but Hazard's afternoon's work was good.

"I was watching you. I guessed I'd do better work here than up at the fire; and I have."

"Hush!" said the girl viciously. "What's he saying?"

Atherton was back at the door. "What's the matter with you? For Heaven's sake don't keep me here all night! I tell you it's all right, though we've had rather a bad time of it. I've a shot through my shoulder, and Hazard's——"

"Is he killed?" Sophy thought she screamed it, but her voice was quite even.

"I don't know. We couldn't find him. Let me in, and I'll tell you."

"Can't find him?"

"No! The men are looking for him."

Sophy drew a sharp breath. "Then there's only—me," she said oddly.

"Yes, and for Heaven's sake what's wrong with you? Open the door!

Sophy knelt motionless. She was suddenly thankful for Rider's distrust of her, for his mere presence; without him she would have opened the door to Atherton, thinking him the wolf-man she had kept on trusting in spite of herself; who, from all she had learned to-day, must be either dead or had deserted her. A flood of pure savagery swept over her. She and Rider could die here, but Atherton should never come in. And quite suddenly she spoke on it.

If Rider was not drunk he was not sober; for a moment his thick head could not take in what she was saying.

"If you're counting on me," she announced deliberately, "I'll never let you in here. I've known all day what you wanted, and I only pretended I didn't. I've played with you—do you hear? played with you! You see I've known you a long time; too long to wait here alone for you, either! It's not only me you've got to fight."

"The foreman's drunk," said Atherton scornfully, "I saw to that." He seemed to move from the door.

Sophy sprang to her feet and clutched Rider. "You can fight with

me afterward," she cried fiercely, "you've got to fight *for* me now. Quick, the door!"

For all answer Rider flung himself against it. He was just in time. Something that was too heavy for Atherton's shoulder crashed against its hinges. "Get a gun," he cried thickly over his shoulder.

In the dark Sophy searched wildly. "I can't find them," she cried. "I—— Oh!" her fingers had closed on one. As she groped for Rider's hand the door came in on him like a battering-ram.

Rider leaped clear of it, fired, and missed; but Atherton staggered in his spring at him. Something had hurtled through the night behind him, and caught him on the back of the head. He gulped for an instant, but he fell.

Rider shot indiscriminately into the dark of the men behind him, yelled for cartridges, and cursed as he cast his empty pistol to Sophy and fought doggedly with his fists. Some of Atherton's men were down, but the rest pressed him hard. The girl heard her own voice screaming to keep them out as she shoved in cartridges; and turned like a flash to shoot behind Rider's knees, deliberately into the face of a man who had stooped to throw him.

Rider cheered as he snatched the gun. Whether he believed in the girl or not she was playing up well. He thought dizzily that Atherton's men would have no quarter for her, and yelled to her: "Get back! Mind the window!"

Sophy obeyed instinctively. The window was broken and there was no second gun, but at least she could see any one coming against the stars; and suddenly she screamed again, but this time with a different note in it.

"Olsen," she shrieked like a wildcat at Rider. "Olsen's coming!"

For round the river turn she saw the big Swede, his ax whirling over his head as he flew along on the skis he had made so long ago and used so little. Behind him ran Kelly and the other men, yelling, but all the girl cared for was Olsen. She saw him kick off his skis as he swung out on the level, and begin to run; saw him in the same breath through the door, his ax gleaming, falling, as he fought to Rider's side; just in time, for the foreman's gun was empty.

In a Berserker rage that was a match for six men, Olsen was more than a match for Atherton's. They gave back; ran; one of them caught hold of Atherton and hauled him staggering away; two did not move, and Sophy covered her eyes. It was not the dead men she did it for; at least, not for those. One of Atherton's men had shouted something, Atherton had answered; that was all; but what they said made the girl crouch on the floor like a coward.

There was no more fighting round the door; it had, for that matter, been all over in a flash. Atherton and what was left of his men were disappearing to cover in the river valley, with Kelly firing into them as they ran.

It was all over, and the gold was safe; but Sophy thought of neither thing. Hazard was dead.

Even if Atherton had not shouted it she knew it was true. He would never have dared what he had done if Hazard had not been dead, and it was her fault. She had always thought there would be excitement in a fight, a sense of exultation when you won, a joy in the blood —and instead of that there was only a girl crouching alone in a dark house over the gold that did not weigh to her with Hazard's little finger. It was she who had killed him, by holding her tongue, as much as any one's bullet. Some one called her twice, and she did not hear. There was only one voice she wanted, and she could wait for that forever.

"Sophy," said some one almost angrily, "are you—quick, are you hurt?"

And this time she did hear, for something that was warm and alive stumbled against her, till the rough cloth of an old coat was against her cheek as a man almost fell over her.

At the touch of him Sophy turned like a child in the dark. "Paul," she said in a kind of agony, and yet as if his name belonged to her. "Oh, *Paul!*

You—Atherton said they'd killed you!" And somehow she was in his arms, lifted off her feet against him. "He told me they couldn't find you."

"Well, neither they could," said Hazard simply, "and lucky they couldn't; I hadn't a single cartridge. I got here in time, though, to knock Atherton silly with an empty gun. I didn't know what you——Oh, Sophy, I couldn't tell if you were on my side or Atherton's. I've thought all day it was Atherton's. You seemed so, so——" stammering incoherently. "At least you shut your door on you and him—and he told me you were going to marry him!"

Sophy clung to him in the empty office. "I was—once," she said. "I had to keep on pretending I was going to, and I'd no chance to tell you so. But I would have died first. Is he—are they gone?"

"Yes." If Hazard put her from him he held tight to her arm as he looked out the shattered window. They had gone for to-night, but there was no saying when they would come back again. "It just shows you," he said grimly. "I never thought Atherton would dare."

"I did; but I couldn't tell you, he was too clever for me. I've known all day he had men hiding in a hut above the mine and that he meant to rush you. Only I thought he'd wait. And I thought you knew too; you said so."

"You knew?" Taken all in all it dashed Hazard a little; but Sophy was quick.

"I knew something; not just what he meant to do. Didn't Rider tell you anything about me?"

"He began; I'd have killed him if he'd finished." He moved from her and called out the window. "Are you all right, Kelly?"

"Aw," Kelly came up sheepishly, "they shot wild; they'd ought to have cleaned us out easy, they'd a fair chance. I guess I only winged one of 'em, though; for I seen Rider with no more sense than to stand plunk in the middle of them. It was Olsen saved us. Did they get you anywhere? When I heard that skunk hollerin' you was dead I bet it didn't work the way he meant it to on me; I just got madder. Where were you at, in the first go off?"

"Oh, they got me," said Hazard calmly, "but I didn't stay got. What made you think there was anything wrong?"

"I guess it was Atherton tearing past the mine without you, yelling you'd fell off the cliff and was killed, and he was in charge of the—our gold! I guessed I didn't take no stock in either of them things, but I kind of wasted time skinning round after you before I started down here after him. It was Olsen was in time."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, him and Rider——" Kelly's voice dropped. "There was some of 'em killed; they took 'em out of her way, I guess! Young West was our only one, and he never had any judgment, anyway. Ain't we going after Atherton, Mr. Hazard?"

Hazard looked at the girl beside him. "We're going to eat," he returned succinctly, remembering the coffee and bacon he had seen Atherton conveying to Sophy. "They can't do much more to-night; the mine's too hot to play with, even for Atherton. It's not the mine we've got to watch, either, but the basin edge south of it," with a vivid remembrance of Atherton's remark about mice in a bowl. "Atherton's got a kind of a château up there behind us. By the bye, Kelly, I saw your ghost-wolf inside of it—all the outside of him; ready for some one to prance round in like they did before."

"What?" cried Sophy. "Do you mean he was lying to me?"

Hazard laughed. "Who, Atherton? Very probably!"

"Rider knows," said the girl unexpectedly; as the foreman slouched up she glanced at him.

"I don't," he returned dully; "I don't understand one thing about anything. If I had I wouldn't have played drunk and stayed here to watch you."

"You played," exploded Hazard, "when I wanted every man I had!"

"I thought you'd want one here worst. If I was wrong you can ask her," he

nodded at Sophy. "I'm not saying I was dead sober when I done it."

Sophy caught at Hazard's arm. "He was right, if I'd done what he thought," she said. "I didn't; I was only the worst kind of fool, but I nearly ruined us. I'm going to get you something to eat, then I'll tell how."

Rider followed her and put the fire together in silence in the dead chill of her shack, and suddenly began to scratch his muzzy head.

"I don't know what to think," he growled, "about you. I mean you saved the show to-night, but you might have just felt you had to, because of me being there. I'll beg your pardon for the way I've acted to you all day if you'll show me I was wrong and didn't hear you tell Atherton this morning to have patience and you'd see he got even, nor didn't see you wedge up the bunkhouse door?"

"I did both things," said Sophy coolly. She shoved some chips into the open stove, and in the sudden blaze turned and saw Hazard behind her. "I'll tell you—tell you," she stammered, and felt her heart knock against her ribs. She had never seen Hazard's face look just so. She hoped, choking, that he had not heard.

If he had he gave no sign of it. He walked to the window, pulled the shutter tight, shut the door of the stove till they could just see the meal on the table. Even to Rider there was a breathlessness in the silence, when suddenly Hazard wheeled, and looked deliberately into Sophy Ridgeway's eyes.

"First we'll eat," he said, "I need it if you don't. Then," slowly, "you can tell Rider all you want to; *I* don't care what you did; I don't need you to explain!"

"Oh!" said Sophy chokingly; and then her eyes suddenly took in Hazard as he stood in front of her, dirty, tired, and somehow more of a man than any one else in the world. "You could think all sorts of things about me," she said simply. "I've deserved you to. But you—oh, you're always so reliable!"

And perhaps only the wolf-man would have known exactly what she meant.

CHAPTER XVI.

To all appearance there had not been a sign of life in Atherton's men all day. Kelly, crouching behind the northern rim of the claim in the bitter sunset, suddenly fired through the thrown-up snow wall he had loopholed in the time-honored method of small boys making forts, and smiled as he lowered his gun. He was pretty cold, but at least he knew where Atherton's men were, and where one of them was no longer.

Rider, taking orders from Hazard in the office, put up his head at the single shot. "Seems like Kelly got one," he exclaimed. "That leaves thirteen, counting Atherton!"

Hazard frowned. "It's not numbers that's going to ail us," he remarked dryly, "it's plain no guns. And we've no cartridges but what I had, and that's no wholesale lot. There's where I'm not trying to rush Atherton."

"Wonder he hasn't rushed us," returned Rider succinctly.

"He can't, past Kelly's lot. There's no other way, that he knows of; anyhow, I don't believe he'll try it. He doesn't want the claim."

Rider gaped. "What, then?"

"He wants what we've got out already," composedly. "That was why he fired the sheds in the first place; he thought we'd all go off rebuilding them, and give him and his men a chance to load up our gold and get off. He knew he'd slipped up on that pretty soon, for Olsen told him so to his face; so it was then he thought he'd kidnap me. Otherwise he'd have lain low enough on his claim-jumpers till he was ready to rush us. He never liked trouble; he tried every fool way to get round me first. I take it, somehow, that he's in a hurry to get away from here; he's not going to stay and fight us for the claim unless he's driven to it. If he is, there's a simpler way than fighting, if he thinks of it. Our only chance is that he doesn't."

Rider nodded assentingly. "If he could manage to stake fresh and get out and record ahead of us? That'd dish us all right."

"Unless we send out first, and see he doesn't get any stakes in in the meantime. See?"

Rider looked round the office, as if he regarded the grim horizon and the unbroken trail.

"All I don't see's who's to go," he returned succinctly. "You can't, for there's the girl to leave."

"Olsen's going," simply. "He and I figured it out this morning. He's got to take the lake at first; then if he strikes across into Dead River country, and down it to Bear Lake he says he can make Macleod if nothing happens to him."

"Macleod? He'll never do it!"

Hazard shrugged his shoulders. "They haven't opened a recording office at Tabeak, to my knowledge; it's no good his going that way. If any one can get through, he will; he talks three kinds of Indian better than I do. And I can't go; I've got to sit on the claim."

"And I ain't to be trusted," in a sudden dull fury.

"You know best," assented Hazard; and turned as the door opened.

"Olsen's ready," said Sophy Ridgeway. She looked from one man to the other hastily. It was no time for splits in the camp, and this one was her fault. "It's not dark enough for him to start, and I want to speak to both of you, if you've time. I don't know what to think about the wolf-man."

"The *who?*" demanded Hazard.

Sophy came out with the whole story. After all, she had only seen the man twice, and there did not seem to be much to the thing except that he had seen fit to give her back her gold and cease to interfere with the working of it, and had disappeared ever since. But Rider stood goggling.

"Do you mean it wasn't Atherton I saw with you in the snow-storm?" he gasped. "That it was just a real stranger, who owned up he'd been scaring our men?"

"Just that." Sophy's glance happened to catch Hazard's. "You don't think so?" she cried.

"Just one of Atherton's advance-guard putting you off the scent's what I think," he answered unwillingly. "I told you I saw the whole costume in the hut they've got. I don't say it wasn't clever."

Sophy shook her head flatly. "That's the wolf-man's house, where he took me the first day; and I believe they killed him to get it. I'm sure he was straight! He warned me that if ever you had to shoot here you couldn't shoot quick enough. It was about the wolf you thought you saw; he said if you didn't know what it was you'd better shoot it and see. He said you'd know what he meant."

"I might have if you'd told me," said Hazard slowly.

Sophy looked blankly at him. "I never had the sense to see he meant me to; all I remembered was I couldn't tell about him!"

"That doesn't go to show he was honest." Hazard looked at the girl, wondering if she knew the risks she had run. "I wish I knew which of Atherton's lot he was," he murmured thoughtfully.

"None of them. Look here." She held out a scrawled bit of paper. "I found that in the cave this morning, when I went to look for the wolf-man himself."

Hazard stared at the penciled words, and read them aloud: *"Look out for False River!"* The wolf-man was a one-ideaed person; Donkin was the only man he expected to trouble Lastluck, and Donkin had come in on him before by False River, a blind gully to the south. It never dawned on him that Hazard did not know there was such a gully. The simple sentence was only an enigma to him—till he decided sharply that it was meant for Atherton.

"Well," cried Sophy impatiently, "isn't that some sort of warning?"

"Depends on who it's to. What's to say it isn't to Atherton's address?"

"I don't feel it, that's all. But as you don't believe in him, and he seems to have gone away, anyhow, that's enough about the wolf-man. I want to get to yesterday. It's too long to begin on Atherton—that'll keep. But you

saw me shut my door on you yesterday?"

"I might have."

"Goodness knows I meant you to," said Sophy crossly. "I wanted to be alone with Atherton and get things out of him. I did after a while, but once he'd told me he wouldn't let me out of his sight. He made one mistake; he thought I'd do everything he wanted; and as soon as I knew it I pretended to. I got just one chance to knock at your door, but you weren't there—" Hazard looked foolish—"and I didn't know where to look for you. I thought perhaps I could get the wolf-man turned on Atherton if I couldn't get you, and I tore down to the cave to leave a signal for him—and Rider wouldn't let me near it."

"If you'd told me——" began the foreman.

"You wouldn't have believed a word I said." She shrugged her shoulders. "I was going back to wait for Mr. Hazard, and I ran on Atherton. I knew he had to be got out of the way somehow, so I started with him for the mine."

"He said you showed it to him." Even then Hazard winced.

"I was never near it," calmly. "When he saw the sheds he started off on a run, and forgot me. I don't truly know why I did it, except I wanted to know about the wolf-man, but instead of going back to you I took off my coat and cap and stuck them up so that Atherton would think I was waiting round, and slipped up by the edge of the basin, round to the wolf-man's house. It was empty; there wasn't a sign of him. I was going to run home, when I heard voices. I'd just got behind a rock when down the path you went in by last night came Atherton and fifteen men—I counted. I heard Atherton stop in front of the house, and say he 'guessed the owner wouldn't be back in a hurry,' before he went in."

Rider scratched his head. "Don't sound as if he didn't know about any wolf-man," he muttered.

"It did sound as if he were afraid of him," retorted Sophy. "From what else they said I knew they'd been nearly here the day of the big storm, and I don't see what turned them back if it wasn't the wolf-man." As it happened she was right; Atherton's men had seen Devenish, if Devenish had not seen them. "They'd an awful time somehow, I know that, and they lost that dog you thought was a wolf. I tried to get back and tell you they were in the wolf-man's cabin, but I was pretty cold; I couldn't hurry. I wanted to get home by the slide place and the cave, but I couldn't find the way. I don't see how you ever did it last night, Mr. Hazard."

"I wasn't in much time, even then," said Hazard. "I chucked my gun at Atherton, and then I thought I'd never fight through to you. Go on."

"Oh, I found myself back at the mine. I'd just got on my coat when Atherton and two men caught up to me. I don't know if he suspected anything, but he had one of the men make a shelter and a fire, and cook lunch; and I had to stay. He was back from you in no time, and I never got rid of him again. I made one break to go to you, and Rider stopped me at your door. You wouldn't look at me when you came in to dinner; you *wouldn't* understand I wanted to speak to you; so I thought I'd make one more try to find the wolf-man. Somehow I didn't believe he was really away; for all I knew, it might have suited him to leave the house empty"—remembering his aversion to all comers—"I thought he might have been waiting in the cave all day. I knew Rider would stop me going there, but I thought he was in the bunk-house. As I ran past I stuck my door wedges in the door to keep him there, and when I came back I forgot them. And that's all; except that I tried to tell you what I knew before you went to the fire and you said you knew, too. Come along and start off Olsen!"

"I guess I'll beg your pardon for a heap of things first," cried Rider, and suddenly smiled gently as he wrung her hand. "There's one good thing in the whole mean slew I've been in, though," he chuckled; "I made a sight of a hole in Atherton's whisky."

Hazard laughed as he threw on his

coat. There were a heap of things he, too, had to say to Sophy Ridgeway, when there was time. Now he only stopped her as she was following Rider out. "You believe in the wolf-man?" he asked tersely.

"I can't help it, somehow."

"Well, I don't! We've never seen anything of his Donkin that he talked of, and I think we should have if even that much had been true. But, if there is any False River, and your wolf-man meant to warn Atherton to look out for us there, we might as well have the good of it. Here's this map your father had, though it was all wrong. Think this means False River?" For north, past the big cape, was a casual scratch and two letters that might have been anything.

"I—don't know," said Sophy. There was a sound in her voice that startled Hazard, even before she caught the map from him and threw it on the ground. "I do," she said through her teeth. "I never meant to have to tell you, though! That map's not father's at all; it's one Atherton made instead of father's, and all wrong. I told you I didn't know whether to believe him or not when he said it was his map first, and father had stolen it; even when Atherton wouldn't give it back and father said I'd ruined him, and lost the only chance we ever had of buying Atherton off. I sound a fool, but when I was with father I believed him; and when I was with Atherton it was the other way. I begged Atherton for the map. He gave it back to me when I said I'd marry him. I thought I bought father off—and the very first thing Atherton did when he came was to laugh at me. He said it was all a lie. He'd never heard of Lastluck till I told him; he gave me back a wrong map and kept ours; he thought I'd think he was clever, that I'd marry him just the same. All the time father told me Atherton was holding prison and all sorts of things over him it was true; I'd promised to marry him for nothing, unless he got the gold!"

"Oh, my dearest," was the single thing Hazard said. He gathered the girl to him, and kissed her, once; she was done with shifts and being made use of, while he had blood in his body.

"You must think me such a fool!" she cried.

"I think you've been very brave," matter-of-factly. "What you've said matters, too; north's south on that map—and south's Olsen's way; past False River—if there is any False River!"

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't let him go alone! Must you?"

"He wants to; a slower man would handicap him. I'm covering him from the south all right, though, till he gets clear away. But I'll do something else now. Come on; he ought to start."

Outside the bunk-house the big Swede stood ready for the trail, his load packed on his broad back, and all of him covered from the bitter night but his eyes. Sophy's filled as she clutched his hand. Olsen might make little of it, but it was a big thing he was going to do for her and Hazard; she knew it was little enough he thought of his own share in the gold.

But there was no excitement in Olsen. "I will the best do, my *froken*," he said slowly. "I may be long gone, but the record-office they allow ten miles for each day. There is time. And I will have no seeing off; it makes noises. I just go. I think," his glance fleeted from her to Hazard, "I leave the good luck with you!" He nodded at them, and turned to go into the night, as simply as he went each day to the mine.

"Hold on," said Hazard, "I'm covering you from the south, but I don't mean you to go that way. It's not safe. Go north, and——"

Olsen laughed. "So I meant. First north; then crawl round the island so," he pointed. "Then south."

"Right," said Hazard abruptly. He watched Olsen vanish in the shadow at the lake edge, and disappeared on the double, north. It would go hard if the three men he had strung out on the south shore let any one pass them, but for all that, he meant Olsen to be covered both ways, thought it was Hazard's opinion that the False River cau-

tion had been meant for Atherton, and probably stuck all over the place for him to find it.

They would never dream of any one going out, though, and Hazard almost laughed at himself as he swarmed up the north side of the river-bed where he had come down it on the night he thought Ridgeway had stayed. In the starlight he took all the cover he could as he slipped along the edge of the cliff, and flat on his face watched the empty whiteness of the lake below him. Not a speck moved; but, of course, Olsen was hugging the shore.

From behind Hazard there came faintly a sound of shots from the claim, first dropping, then quick and hot; he wondered if he ought not to be there, instead of worrying over Olsen; and suddenly found himself getting down the cliff like a cat.

There had been four shots south of him, *down* the lake. They could not be at Olsen; he had had time to round the island and be out of range, but by the lake was the quickest way to find out what they were. Hazard landed waist-deep in snow, floundered out, and started south at a run. There was nothing anywhere, only silence and the night as he crossed Lastluck cove, and as he passed the south point of it he shouted with all his lungs.

For there was something. The starlight might be deceptive, but they were not his men who stooped over something on the ice, and he shot into the brown of them viciously as they scattered and made for—he could not tell where. They were gone, and that was all there was to it. But they had left something behind.

Some one sniped at Hazard as he stopped over it; and sniped no more. He heard a choking cry and running feet, then dead silence, as he dropped on his knees by Olsen.

"Did they get you?" he said sharply. "Olsen!"

There was no answer. Hazard groped for a minute on the Swede's tracks. He had come south, after all; straight south, where he was covered, and been shot in the back with a rifle. Only, where were the guards? Hazard looked at the ax by Olsen's side; at something else, and picked it up. He crawled ashore over the crackling ice, and came on the last man who was to cover Olsen. He was stone dead, and Hazard wasted no time on him. It rankled in him that he had not done Atherton justice; the man was clever; and still carrying something, he plumped round the corner by the storehouse on Rider hunting round to see what the shots had been.

"I guess they covered Olsen, all right," the foreman muttered, "but I don't make out why they don't come in."

"You will," said Hazard. His rage broke out of him. "Atherton got them, and Olsen, too. And I think that disposes of the wolf-man's side in the show!"

He threw down a man's hand and forearm severed at the elbow, clothed, all but the fingers, in bloody wolf skin. It had not been for nothing that Olsen carried his ax.

CHAPTER XVII.

By the morning there was no doubt that Atherton was clever; if his tactics were plain they seemed to be successful, and Hazard stood in the biting dawn that was thick with needle-points of frost and counted damages. Olsen was dead; he and Rider had brought him in, at the cost of a gash on Rider's head from a spent bullet; the three men who had been strung along the shore to cover Olsen's going were dead, shot from behind, like Olsen, and all four had been robbed of their guns.

The armament of Lastluck was reduced to Hazard's rifle; his two revolvers, of which one was given over to Kelly, and a couple of old shotguns belonging to the men—and up in the joint-stock hut of Atherton and the wolf-man were fifteen rifles, anyhow.

"It's very simple," said Hazard bitterly. Atherton had had his fill of rushing them; he was going to clear them out one by one, with precision and no

fuss, nor any one left to tell ugly tales of Lastluck claim.

Last night's arrangements had been more complete, too, than appeared on the face of them; Atherton had used his false attack on Kelly and the claim to cover a raid on the storehouse. There had not been much in it, but it was stark empty now.

And as he stood a bullet came past his ear, with the sound of a breaking banjo-string. From the south, somewhere, Atherton was commanding Lastluck camp and all there were in it. There were no telltale tracks of the retreat from Olsen's body to say where; it always snowed a little every night at Lastluck, there was never a yesterday's footprint left any morning, if Hazard had never noticed it particularly till now.

It was not his idea to be sniped from anywhere, though; he retired unostentatiously to the office, whose window commanded the whole of Lastluck clearing but the storehouse and the front of the bunk-house, and stood there waiting for another shot from the south. But the morning lay deadly still.

Rider came deviously from the bunk-house, rushed the bare clearing, and joined Hazard, a bloody bandage covering one eye and the half of his mouth that he was not using for profanity.

"Kelly's gone," he said bluntly, "a wharf-rat like him! Look," he held out a chip with painstaking marks on it. "I've had to put White up on the claim; there wasn't any of Kelly this morning but this: *'i gess i hav as Mutch sense as olsen. i Lef the Gun.'*"

"He can't do it!" said Hazard flatly. "He doesn't know the way, nor the woods, either."

"I don't know; he picked up a deal, kind of carelesslike," but Rider swore again over it. "Though I guess it don't matter; anyway he went they're sure to get him. It's one less to feed, anyhow. We haven't one damn thing to eat, Mr. Hazard, after to-day."

"Atherton doesn't own the earth yet, nor Lastluck, either."

Hazard's eye was out the window; the defection of Kelly might be with the best intentions, but it took off the best shot he had; even supposing a raw hand like Kelly ever got to Macleod. It was time to do something, if he did not want to be shot like a rat in a hole. There were moose back in the first valley, and guns at Atherton's; both had to be got. He wondered sharply where he could put Sophy while he was gone, and what line Atherton meant to take about her; and suddenly had an answer to the last thing. Something stirred in the frost glitter between him and the sun, slipped behind the bunk-house, slid out into full view, and took cover by the office in a headlong run; but not unnoticed.

"Sophy!" cried Hazard; he fired into the southern glitter where it seemed suddenly a little thicker than the air, before he heard the shot; fired again, to cover Rider as he hauled the girl in. "What on earth do you mean by going out?" he demanded fiercely. "Where were you?"

Sophy laughed breathlessly. She was pale and red-eyed; she had cried a little, not much, over Olsen, but the tear-marks made Hazard see suddenly how worn she looked. She held up the ragged skirt of her coat, and her hand was steady.

"They missed," she said calmly, "too low! That's where I come in with Atherton, Paul; it's as well to know. Look here, there's some of our stuff in the cave. It was the wolf-man stole it, and he put some of it back, but the rest's in the cave. I remembered sitting on a box there, and I went to look. It's there, I didn't wait to see what."

"If it is, he knows it," said Hazard hardly. "I wonder he hasn't led his friends down that way already. We'd better get what there is before he does."

"I know you're all wrong about him," cried Sophy with a sudden defiance. "We'd have been wiped out long ago if you were right."

"Seems to me we're on the way to being wiped out now. I've seen enough to disillusion me about the wolf-man, if you haven't."

"I'd know if you'd shown me the hand," said Sophy thickly.

"You can know now. Narrow nails, rather a clean sort of hand; the kind that doesn't give. Satisfied?"

Sophy shuddered. That had been what she noticed in the wolf-man's touch, the hard, unyielding muscles; and yet she was obstinately faithful to her belief in him. Till she saw the raw stump she would never believe it was her wolf-man's hand Olsen had cut off.

"We've enough to eat for a day or two," she said irrelevantly, "and we've more men than Atherton still. You're not going to do anything in a hurry, Paul, are you?"

"It's not men that worries me; it's guns," said Hazard carelessly. "I'm not going out to get shot, if that's what you mean."

"You're going to do something," she retorted. "I know you!"

Hazard laughed. "I'm going to get in those stores now. Think you and Rider can look after the gold? Better give him my rifle; you take my gun."

White had the other revolver and the two shotguns up at the claim; it was no use to bring him in with them, for once Atherton had the river valley they would be left without any vantage-place to pick off his men; though to do him justice, since the departure of Kelly, it seemed to be Atherton who was doing the picking off. If Hazard had dared he would have borrowed his own revolver for the next hour; but he did not dare. He turned aside instead, and shoved a knife into his belt.

Rider went out and came in placidly, with a load of wood. "We're short on it," he said simply. "I guess you'll have to lend a hand after dinner to shoot while I cut."

Hazard nodded. Sophy stared at both of them; they were making very little fuss over being besieged and shot and the rest of it. Hazard laughed as he saw her face.

"I'll take a couple of men and hoof those provisions into the bunk-house," he announced casually. "It'll be getting too clear if I don't go now. Don't shoot me in mistake for Atherton, Sophy! Can you see, all right, Rider?"

"Oh, me eye's nothing!" Rider made a step after him, and thought better of it; Hazard knew his own business.

Sophy craned from the doorway as Hazard disappeared in the bunk-house. Neither he nor the men seemed to come out again, but, of course, there was the second door; they could take the things in that way. There was dead silence to the south. In it she saw the men come round the bunk-house corner slowly, carrying things; Hazard was not with them. She supposed he was loading up in the cave. It was no use wishing she could see him; it was too far round a corner.

Rider, standing by the window, started. From up the valley by the claim came shot after shot, and he wondered uneasily how long White had cartridges to stand them off for. It seemed a long time Hazard was gone on a simple errand; it *was* a long time; the last wood he had thrown on the stove was dull coals!

Rider poked his head out of the window and howled from it to the bunk-house for a man to come over and take Miss Ridgeway's gun; he had no faith in women's shooting.

"Though if it comes to the worst and they get down on us, I might get the whole crew of them in the office and blow it up, sooner than let 'em get the gold," he reflected hopefully; and turned round to tell Sophy so. The girl was gone.

Where to, Rider could only profanely conjecture. She had not crossed the window he was staring out of to go after Hazard; she might be in her own house, but he could not go to see. He never looked into the white dazzle of the sun over the river valley, and if something had flitted across it and along the base of the cliff it was gone by now.

"All women are fools," growled Rider, and looked round him with sudden blankness. This one had taken Hazard's revolver!

She had; and she stood with it now in the cave that was empty of both

boxes and Hazard. She crawled through the archway, and knew at least where the man had gone. The trail where he had clawed up the glacier slope of snow was plain, and so was his purpose in taking it.

"Guns," said the girl slowly, "of course! And if he doesn't get them he'll want his own." She uncocked it, slipped it in her pocket, and began to climb.

Hazard, at that moment, was finding his way to the wolf-man's hut. He pulled up suddenly behind a rock, but with satisfaction. The dogs were what had really worried him most, and he was aware of them yelping steadily; not at him, but imprisonment.

"Atherton's got them corralled somewhere," he muttered. "He isn't going to take any chances about getting out of this without dogs." And with a long jump Hazard dropped into the first path of many winding ones that showed footprints to confuse his. There was dead silence round the wolf-man's, except for the wailing of dogs behind a log wall.

"The poor devils must be half-frozen," Hazard commented; which was ungrateful, since if they had been warming themselves by prowling they would have been on him.

There was no sign of a sentry anywhere, but neither was there glass in the hut window to look through, and it might or might not be empty. Hazard regarded the tracked snow, the vacant bushes, and matter-of-factly opened the door.

The heat, the smell of boiling coffee, struck him like a blow, even before the sight of half a dozen stacked rifles, and the snore of a man, who sat alone, humped over the fire. But for him, the hut was tenantless. Hazard closed the door on the cold, and stepped to the rifles. It was no time for mercy, they had had none on Olsen; but his gorge rose at stabbing a sleeping man who might only be the cook, for all he knew. If he could hook the rifles and get clear! And on the word he knew he could not.

Something had roused the sleeper; he turned, swore, and sprang. Hazard had time to see the incredulous passion in his eyes and the gun in his hand before he remembered there must be no noise. He caught him on the wrist, and the man's revolver dropped. He fought without it, like a wolf, but not for long. A stab whose reach had been too short throbbed under Hazard's arm, but even so it was better than doing for a sleeping man.

Hazard picked up the rifles, wiped his hands fastidiously before he crammed his pockets with cartridges, and stepped out with the rifles bending his back. He had not liked the job, but it was done.

Not till he was outside did he realize the man had had only one hand, and his part in the business ceased to sicken him; the wolf-man was no doubtful enemy.

Something else, too, was no longer doubtful, for where he must turn off the fresh trail that led south to get back to his cave was the beginning of a gully, and far down it he could hear voices. He had struck False River, all right, and he had no desire to see it closer: he took time to wonder how Ridgeway could have been gulled with turned-round maps of the place, and then turned to follow his own track to the slide and cave. There was no hiding his trail—but then there was no hiding the missing rifles nor the dead man.

"I *was* a fool," thought Hazard. "If I'd put him somewhere they might have thought he'd gone out and taken the guns! I wonder——" And he stopped dead in the spruces at the top of the slide, and mechanically got his back against a rock. Between him and Lastluck some one climbed, panting, through the crunching snow.

Hazard settled himself comfortably. If he was cut off it might suit him as well as anything else, and, anyhow, it should not be a cheap business for Atherton. As a hand came clutching at the level through the spruces, he put down his rifle.

Sophy looked at him without surprise. "You got them," she said coolly. "Give me one," and very suddenly she laughed. "I came to help you, but you don't

seem to need me. You're very—reliable, Paul!"

"Think so?" said Hazard trenchantly. "*I* believe I've made a fool of myself. Take the guns, one by one, can you? I've got to go back and see."

He was out of sight before she could have answered him, but Sophy was not given to questions. She unloaded her rifles, being a woman, and slid down with them; climbing painfully up, and taking time at it. There were two left when Hazard burst on her.

"I was too late." He grabbed up both rifles. "Slide, Sophy, quick! I've found False River, but they saw me. I've shown them the way down here, if they didn't know."

Sophy launched herself into space. Somehow she breathed the swift rush of air exultantly as she flew down the slope. Hazard was her man, and she was proud of him. But there was no pride in Hazard as he landed with his two rifles at the trail.

"Leg it," said he briefly, and grabbed her as she would have obeyed. There was too much noise round the office, too little up at the claim to suit him; and no sound yet of any one coming down the slide after him. "No, wait!" he breathed. He slipped out past the corner of the storehouse; and it was well that his two rifles were loaded.

Sophy's house was burning like a tar-barrel. Between it and the office door half Atherton's men were hand to hand with Rider and the remnant of the bunk-house; Atherton, standing aside, was shooting with neat precision, where it would do the most good.

Hazard fired, and could have sworn Atherton rocked back, but dared not wait to see. Rider, yelling at his men, was cutting them out of the ruck and into the office, to give Hazard a chance, while Atherton stood as if he were dazed.

"Run," barked Hazard over his shoulder to Sophy; but the girl was past him before the word was out, overweighted with a rifle in each hand, but running.

The man next Atherton dropped, the rest ran, and not up the valley. As they doubled round the bunk-house, Hazard caught up his two other rifles and was making the clearing as he had never run in his life, with but one thought in his head. He was cut off. Atherton had the bunk-house, with its three windows and two doors! Cut off! He stumbled, pitched his rifles ahead of him, and fell over the office threshold, as Atherton, a moment too late, fired through the bunk-house door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The remnant of Lastluck sat bitterly on the floor of the office. Their gold was still under them, otherwise there was not much for consolation. Atherton had crept round on White and wiped out him and his men; but for Hazard and the rifles he would have finished the job on Rider and the five men left in the bunk-house, which he had captured.

Worse still, he had all the food retrieved from the wolf-man's cave except some scant hardtack and a box of spoiled sardines, and in front of the camp's eyes Sophy Ridgeway's house still burned wastefully; which seemed the final straw to men whose last stick of wood was in their dulling stove.

Hazard sat by the window with his rifle on his knee, and spoke to Rider.

"Just as soon as the rest of Atherton's lot come in! I don't want to be caught on the flank with them."

Rider nodded, glancing at the blanket hung over Hazard's bunk. "Right! It'd be kind of tough on her to have to sleep and all with us and the men. But"—he swore suddenly—"I guess there'd be other things tougher. Who'll you take?"

"Lake and Anderson." There was not much choice among the five men who lounged on the floor, chilled and only half-asleep.

Rider grinned as suddenly as he had sworn; bad as things were, they were still sitting on the gold. "Well, when you give the word—I guess we'll do the rest! We'd not have been here to do it if you hadn't brought the guns; I hadn't a cartridge left. How did you get them?"

"Finished Miss Ridgeway's friend in the wolf skins," dryly.

Whether she heard or not, Sophy swung out the blanket over Hazard's bunk, and came over to him.

"See here," she said abruptly, "do you think it could do any good if I went and spoke to Atherton?"

"What for?" demanded Hazard.

"Only if we're not shot we'll freeze or starve," practically. "I don't care a straw about the gold now; let Atherton take the stuff and go. Can't I go and tell him so?"

"Not much," said Hazard. "What put that in your head?"

"Nothing; except being a handicap and a nuisance to you. It mightn't be any good to go, but—I could try it."

"Oh, Sophy," said the man; he put his hand over hers in the dusk, and Rider discreetly turned his back, "talk sense! Unless Atherton's society would amuse you?"

Sophy looked past him to the bunk-house with the same savage thrill that had swept her the night she had spoken to Atherton through the office door. It had been with no idea of self-sacrifice she wanted to go to him, but for a chance that a woman might get; and Hazard's revolver was still in her coat.

"You couldn't do it," said the man roughly, as if the touch of her hand had been telepathic. "Do you suppose I'd let you, if you could?"

"I know you wouldn't; that's why I said I'd make terms. Instead, what are you going to do?"

Hazard stared out the window. "We look in bad shape," said he irrelevantly, "but I don't know that we're not more even with Atherton than we've ever been. We've lost men—but so's he. We're seven to ten now, *with* guns; instead of being eleven to fifteen without them."

"Eight," said the girl fiercely. "There's me!" She had given up all hope of the wolf-man's aid now.

"Yes, there's you." His eyes seemed all for the window, but his hand tightened on hers. "Sophy, tell me, what turned you against Atherton?"

"You did! You knew he was the man I meant—when I said I didn't know what I'd do, if he came?"

"I knew! Why?"

"Only that when I saw him I did know," slowly, "for you'd taught me. But I wasn't brave enough to tell him so till I knew what he meant to do—and he meant to do everything! Tell about father, or take the gold, and *me*. So"—she looked at Hazard fleetingly—"I knew then what I'd do; I didn't do it the right way, but I did it." Suddenly she laughed. "It might have been better for you if he had got me," she said. "He'd have given me back to you about now, for the gold."

"I dare say," said Hazard. He stared hard from the window, pressed his cheek hard, for one instant, against the girl's arm, and stood up. He had seen Atherton's four missing men come out of the dusk, hang a moment, and then race for the bunk-house in response to something he could not see. "Time, oh!" he said crisply; and Lake and Anderson flung after him to the door.

"Oh," cried Sophy frantically, "what are they going to do?" But Rider cut her off half-way to the door.

"Couldn't do anything, staying in here," said he. "Not room enough in one window for shooting, and I guess no one but a fool would try to rush the bunk-house with all the windows they've got. Hazard'll get 'em out, and behind 'em's where we come in. You get in the corner till I say."

Outside, between the bunk-house and the embers of Sophy's shack, it was light as day; between the fire and the overhanging cliff toward the river, impenetrably dark in contrast. The darkness took Hazard and his men and blotted them out. Inch by inch they gained the angle of the river, and a clear sweep of the bunk-house front with all Atherton's men inside it, and no one to cut them off from behind. For one moment Hazard thought of Kelly, who was dead somewhere just when he was wanted; then his hand touched the big boulder, twice the height of a man, that cut the view of the river valley from the bunk-house.

"Come on!" he shouted.

He stepped out of the dark in the full glow of the fire and raced past the rock in full view. He knew just how it would look from the bunk-house, as if they were clearing out up the river instead of doubling round the boulder. Twice round would look as if all but one man and Sophy had cleared out. But for a moment it seemed as if no one had seen. The next, Hazard laughed.

A chip flew from the boulder, a howl of derision from the bunk-house. Atherton's men piled out neck and crop and ran for the office, broke under the fire that took them on two sides, took cover where cover was, and fought like devils—from behind the bunk-house, the office, and even from the shelter of the very cliff Hazard stood under; till he doubled back the way he had come.

Breaking for one second into the bare clearing, Hazard saw Sophy plain in the office window; saw Atherton's rifle lift full on her. He drove him furiously back to the corner of the bunk-house, had him, to all intent; and his cartridge missed fire. But Atherton did not shoot. With his finger on the trigger he wheeled and looked behind him, like a man who hears a dead man's voice.

But if voice there was, it did not reach Hazard. What did was the nicker of a Colt's automatic coming from somewhere behind Atherton, like a miniature machine-gun; then the sight of a man running, plain between the cave and the bunk-house. He had miscounted Atherton's men. As he shifted his rifle to put the count straight a whirlwind came on him from behind.

"Don't shoot!" screamed Sophy. "Look!"

Atherton had fired straight at the man, missed, flung up his arms, and dropped under a whir of bullets that drove his men into the bunk-house. After them raced a tall man in a blanket coat, who took deliberate cover in the doorway, and methodically cleared out the refugees.

"Who in hell?" gasped Hazard; for this was no reenforcement of Atherton's.

"It's he," shrieked Sophy, "it's the wolf-man! I knew him the second I saw him. I never thought you'd killed him; it was just one of Atherton's men in his things that you and Olsen got."

She broke away, and Hazard grabbed her back, just as the strange man held up his hand to stop her.

He bestowed no attention on Atherton's men running south from the back door of the bunk-house. He marched straight to Atherton, lying stretched on the snow.

"I guess I got Donkin all right that time, Miss Ridgeway," he said grimly. "He'd his warning not to meddle. His man dressed up like me that I found in my house doesn't seem to have worked, either."

"Donkin!" exclaimed Sophy. "He's Atherton! Donkin wasn't his name."

The wolf-man stared at her. "It was when you got down to bed-rock," said he, "though it never dawned on me you and I were talking of the same man. I dare say he went by others besides your 'Atherton'; but he's plain Donkin now."

Hazard said nothing at all, nor cared what Atherton was called. He was staring with a queer sense of buried memory at the wolf-man.

"Is Atherton—dead?" asked Sophy chokingly.

The wolf-man stooped callously, and touched him.

"Pretty near," he said, not unkindly. "I wonder if he'll ever know it was I."

To Sophy's sick horror Atherton stirred. She covered her eyes as he clutched at the hole in his breast.

"You!" he gasped, with his sudden viciousness. "Do you mean it was you, dressed up, that kept driving me out of here last year?"

"Just me," said the wolf-man composedly. "I'd a long score against you, Donkin."

"Look out!" roared Hazard; but his jump was late. Atherton had shot through his coat, straight upward, before his hand dropped like a stone. He was dead now, but not before he had stung.

Sophy sprang to the wolf-man's side

as he staggered, but he spoke to Hazard.

"I didn't think he'd dare come here, either as Atherton or Donkin—or I wouldn't have gone to Macleod."

"Macleod! What for?"

"Recorded for you. I——" He choked and crumpled forward on the snow. "I'm kind of done from the tramp," he muttered. "Brandy—in my pocket! Claim's—in your name, all right!"

"You went——" Hazard held the brandy to his mouth; saw it run out the corners; and incontinently cried out a name. *"Devenish!"*

The wolf-man started as under a whip; tried to sit up, and did not stir.

"I don't know you," he muttered, "except your name Sophy told me. How—d'ye know mine?"

"Eldon; five years ago," said Hazard simply.

With the man's name everything had come back to him like a photograph. One-streeted, mining Eldon had been turned into pandemonium in five minutes, when Devenish had seen fit to shoot five men in what the crowd called cold blood. To Hazard and half a dozen others, who happened to know all Devenish had against the five, it had seemed morally something else, if literally it was plain murder. The only mistake in it seemed to them that he had missed the sixth man, who happened to be Donkin. But he had had no chance for a second shot.

Hazard could see the dance-hall now, with himself and his friends fighting back in it with Devenish in the middle of them, till they got him out. He had won clear away, in spite of the price on his head, the mounted police, and the openly avowed vengeance of Donkin; but perhaps he had never seen the faces of the men who had helped him to do it, certainly he had never known their names.

And it had been at Lastluck that Devenish had taken refuge when the hue and cry was after him; it had been Devenish who had played the wolf-man there to frighten away strangers—and God knew with good reason, even if one of them had not happened to be Donkin, or Atherton, as it pleased him to be called.

It was no secret to Hazard that Donkin had sworn to get Devenish's blood-money. And Sophy, whom Hazard had secretly thought pig-headed on the subject, was the only person with sense enough not to think Devenish was on Atherton's side. Hazard pulled himself together as he bent over Devenish.

"I was with you in the trouble at Eldon," he said slowly. "Don't you remember we backed you through Harry's place, and held the door till you got clear away? And you mean to say you've been to Macleod to record for us? Good Heaven, Devenish, didn't you know you took your life in your hands when you went there? It's almost next door to Eldon, and you—you were a kind of celebrity! People wouldn't forget you in five years."

"Suppose you hold your tongue on that," interrupted Devenish significantly. "I didn't go to Macleod for you, anyway; I did it for your girl; and—to get even with Donkin. I wasn't going to let him get a claw on this gold. If you were at Eldon I guess you know why, if you didn't know his right name even. He was the kind that doesn't forget—when it's any good trailing a man for a reward, and I'd got to be a kind of a high-priced article. I had him scared blue out of here last spring; didn't think he'd dare come back or I might have done differently. I thought you were his lot at first, till your girl told me. I didn't tell her I was going in to record for you. Didn't feel"—his voice had a sudden ugly bubble—"too sure about getting back from Macleod."

"Oh, *don't* let him talk," cried Sophy. "Carry him indoors!"

Devenish smiled. "Don't trouble," he muttered. "I wouldn't get there. Don't cry, girl!"

It was true. Hazard covered Devenish with his own coat, and on a sudden impulse pushed Sophy's hand into the one that groped and fingered in the snow.

"I got Donkin cheap," gasped Devenish, at the touch.

"Don't talk!" cried Sophy. "Oh, wolf-man, *dear,* don't talk!"

"You keep that for your own man," with the old cynicism. "I didn't get hurt for you; I got hurt for despising Donkin." Devenish drew a rattling breath. "I'm kind of glad, Sophy," he added simply. "I never thought I'd die holding on to a woman's hand. My girl's dead this ten years. Ten years—till I could get even with Donkin, and keep him away from—other women."

"You kept him from me," Sophy whispered. "I didn't know he was Donkin, but you kept him from me."

"Then I'm—squarer than I knew!" It was so faint that Sophy stooped and kissed him pitifully as his eyes closed. Devenish sat up without opening them, and fought for breath. "Ten years," said he, very loud. "What's ten years, my girl?" triumphantly. *"Oh, my girl!"* He flung out both arms to the woman they could not see, and fell back.

Hazard bent over the dead man, and for the first and last time in his life lied in answer to a question of Sophy Ridgeway's.

"What did I know about him? Nothing. Just happened to help him in a row once." For none of Devenish's sins should be written on the memory Sophy had of him; Devenish had wiped that record clean.

Sophy caught Hazard round the neck and clung to him. "Oh," she sobbed. "Oh, Paul, I want to go away from here! First Olsen, and then my wolf-man died here to help me. I want to go away."

So did Hazard. Kelly was another sheer loss that rankled in him; he had grown fond of the little rat. And it was possible to go now; at least half of Atherton's dogs and dog-sleds had been abandoned in the wolf-man's house. If he heard the noise of Atherton's men getting off over the ice in the other half he would not raise a finger to stop them—and suddenly he lifted his face from Sophy's. There were teams coming; not going. Hazard seized the girl's hand, and the two tore down to the landing.

Under the stars advanced two dog-sleds, their upturned noses full on Lastluck; and from the first an unmistakable voice howled largely.

"Kelly!" shouted Hazard. "Where've you been? I thought you got shot, trying to make Macleod."

He was suddenly aware of boxes on the second dog-sled, of another man than Kelly, of Sophy calling her father's name, and was dumb with astonishment.

"Aw!" said Kelly; he hopped off his sled and grasped Hazard's hand. "I didn't give a curse for Macleod; it was grub and cartridges I wanted. I got hold of one of Atherton's men, and you bet he told me there was a trapping camp down the lake, before he pegged out!"

"But the dogs—and the stuff?" gasped Hazard. "And *Ridgeway?"*

Kelly wriggled his hands in his empty pockets.

"Aw, I just hustled out some loose gold," said he. "Them trappers coughed up well for it. Ridgeway"—he lowered his voice discreetly. "You wouldn't believe he was down with them all the time? He was; though you bet Atherton's man didn't know that! Joe and the other Indian just dumped him out of the canoe like Rider said they would, and he kind of wandered round till he struck the trappers or he'd have starved. I just had to haul him here, he seemed scared blue of Atherton; but he perked up considerable when we met Atherton's men clearing out, and he heard he'd been killed. I guess he's run some of his fat off, coming! He ain't rode all the way, not to speak of. What d'ye suppose he means to say about sneaking down there with lots to eat, and his daughter near starving?"

But Ridgeway, for once, was saying nothing. He looked up with a queer defiance as Hazard strode over to him; then his arm fell from round Sophy's waist.

"I haven't anything to say about staying away," he muttered. "I know I'm not to blame that Sophy wasn't killed here, but I couldn't know that. I couldn't help going when I did. You won't understand, but"—he looked at

Atherton lying dead in the snow, and shuddered — "I couldn't help it. I daren't face Donkin; though I wasn't sure he'd really come."

"You knew his real name, then?" Surprise jerked it out of Hazard, though it was no business of his.

"I never thought it could matter." Ridgeway shuffled, and suddenly turned on him with blazing eyes. "If I'd told her," he pointed to Sophy, "she'd have known I was in with him once, and that was how he knew things against me. Was I going to blacken myself to my own flesh and blood?"

"I wouldn't have cared what you'd done," Sophy cried, moving to him.

But Ridgeway took no notice. "Where's the gold?" said he. "Kelly said you'd enough to wade in."

Hazard nodded contemptuously toward the office. He had never had any use for Ridgeway. He could not see how he was Sophy's father.

Ridgeway walked off a step, and spoke unexpectedly over his shoulder.

"I'll give you my share of it—Sophy's told me about you and her—if you'll start for home with her to-morrow. God knows she's had enough of Lastluck."

"Great Scott, Ridgeway!" cried Hazard. "Do you suppose I wouldn't give my own share to take her?"

Sophy looked round her at the trampled, bloody snow; at Rider and Lake tenderly carrying Devenish into the office to wait for burial; at Atherton, lying stark under the stars; at the office that held the hard-kept Lastluck gold. It had been last luck for all of them; death for two, one of whom she was not sorry for, and life and money and safety for her and her father. She had loved every inch of the place, but now, in spite of the gold, she had indeed "had enough of it," and sudden tears blinded her.

"Can't we all go," she asked unsteadily, "just as soon as we're ready? We can take out most of our gold; we've plenty of dogs and sleds. And somebody ought to go up and feed Atherton's dogs at——" she could not say "the wolf-man's house."

Hazard gripped her hand understandingly. "Yes, we'll go," he said. "Some of us, anyhow."

Kelly, passing with an armful of wood to start up the bunk-house fire, stopped.

"Gee-whiz!" exclaimed he thoughtfully, "I guess I'm going to be in the 'some.' Wonder if I'll have time to get anywhere there's enough bare ground to run an automobile on, before I have to hustle back here in the spring!"

THE FATTENING OF THE OYSTER

WHETHER you have a special partiality for oyster suppers or not, probably you are unfamiliar with the process by which these shell-fish are fattened.

The oyster lives chiefly on diatoms and other microscopic marine plants. These plants require for their growth a large supply of inorganic salts in the water. The necessary plant food is supplied by putting commercial fertilizers into the water.

The fattening bed must be in shallow water, so as to have a relatively high temperature. A wall is maintained around the fattening ground so as to retain the fertilizer and diatoms. Even after the diatoms have multiplied enormously the oysters receive no benefit from them unless a current is maintained in the water to carry the food to the oysters.

Salt water is pumped in to prevent the fattening beds from becoming too fresh, and a little lime is added to the water to prevent the growth of algæ and other plants which would give a disagreeable flavor to the oysters. Too much lime, on the other hand, will destroy the food plants of the oyster.

The Yellow Peril

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Raw Gold," "A Red, Red Trail," "The Lair of the Sun-dogs," Etc.

Those who read Mr. Sinclair's "Raw Gold" in the October issue will welcome another story of life in the great Northwest. The present agitation over the inroads of the yellow man furnishes M. Sinclair with material for an amusing and interesting story, incidentally advancing some light on the characteristics of the Orientals

EVER hear Baldy McMann or Sour Dough Hoskins tell about the time they wintered with the Chinamen on Peace River? No! Well, you sure missed an interestin' piece of history. Romance, pure and simple, some folks might claim, but those two old dust-hunters ain't what you'd call imaginative—and they went north lookin' for gold, not literary material. Anyhow, the way Baldy and Sour Dough relate their experience with them slant-eyed heathen, it rings true. The feller that said: "For ways that are dark and for tricks that are vain, you can bet your money on the Chink," certainly had the sons of the Flowery Kingdom sized up correct.

Baldy and Sour Dough went into that country time of the first Klondike excitement, when the Edmonton trail was bein' boomed as a fine, smooth, overland route to the Yukon. Peace River was as far north as they ever got, for on one of its forks them would-be Klondikers got to samplin' the sand with a pan and rocker, and struck paydirt—no bonanza, you know, but enough of the yellow to look good to them. They'd got all they wanted of the Edmonton trail, anyway, and *sabed* that they'd finish in a muskeg if they tried to get to the Yukon that way.

They stayed there the rest of the summer, and time the short days come they had two fat buckskin sacks of the root of all evil. By then the bar they were workin' on was all petered out, and Baldy was beginnin' to cast anxious eyes on his wad and sigh for white man's country. But Sour Dough wouldn't stand for it.

"Why, you blamed fool," he says to Baldy, "what's the use uh goin' home with a measly couple uh thousand apiece when there's oodles uh wealth layin' in these river bars waitin' to be picked up. Yuh act just like a Judith Basin sheep-herder I knowed one time. He'd go out and herd sheep for as much as five or six months; then he'd get to worryin' about finance, and first thing anybody knew he'd be off to some jerk-water town spendin' his two or three hundred dollars like a millionaire. First thing *he* knew he'd be broke and out of a job, and he'd have to start all over again—where if he'd tended to business like other fellers I knowed he'd 'a' had sheep uh his own in two or three years.

"Blamed if yuh ain't just like him; yuh can't stand prosperity. Far as I'm concerned, I come up here to make a stake; and I'm goin' to make one trip do. It's here—all we got to do is gather it in."

Baldy growled some, but he saw where his partner was right. They had plenty of grub—flour and baking-powder, and sugar and coffee and salt. Whenever they needed meat, the woods was full of it; the Beef Trust ain't got no monopoly in *that* country, you bet! So when the river froze so they couldn't wash any more, Baldy agreed with Sour

Dough that they'd better go farther up into the mountains and build a good solid cabin to winter in; and they packed their ponies and started up-stream.

They got up on Nation River, a fork of the Peace about two hundred miles west of Fort St. John, before they struck a place that looked good to them. There they found a little valley with a good-sized stream of water and lots of long grass for the ponies to rustle in the deep snow. They built a cabin and got in shape to winter comfortable, and when they were settled they put out a line of dead-fall traps; Sour Dough's ambition was for a fruit-farm on the Sacramento, and he wasn't overlookin' no bets. That country was full of good fur.

One mornin', about the middle of December, while Sour Dough was wrasslin' with hot cakes and moose-meat at the fireplace, Baldy stepped outside after a chunk of wood. He picked up a stick, and straightened up and sniffed the air like a hound-dog. Then he kicks open the door and beckons Hosky to come out. Sour Dough set the fryin'-pan on a stump they used for a table and puts out his head.

"Say, d'yuh smell anythin' queer?"

Sour Dough stepped clear of the cabin, with his nose in the air. "Hol-*ee* smokes!" he grunts. "Do I smell anythin'? Well, I should remark. Sounds to me like a mild odor of skunk."

"Maybe it is skunk," says Baldy, divin' into the cabin after his coat and mitts, "but I've smelled the same thing on Jackson Street, in 'Frisco, many a time."

"Aw, come off!" says Sour Dough. "This ain't no Chinese settlement."

But Baldy was up and a-walkin', and Hosky grabbed his coat and followed.

Now, you may think it queer that on roundin' a patch of timber and climbin' a little knoll Sour Dough was forced to admit that Baldy had a good memory for smells; but if you stop to think it ain't so queer, after all. Any time you grab the idea that a Chink quits the home of his ancestors because he likes to get out in the world and wash dirty linen, you're away off.

These knights of the pigtail and chop-sticks don't migrate to this country to ease the white man's burden—not by a long shot. They're here for the coin; and wherever there's a chance to pick it up, John'll be there with both feet.

British Columbia is full of 'em. You'll find them with their little pans on every bar that shows a color, makin' wages where a white man would starve to death. Maybe they just naturally like to slop in water; anyhow, I've seen them washin' dirt that wouldn't pan a dollar a day if you worked overtime—but they kept right at it, regardless.

So it wasn't strange that there should be Chinks on Nation River. They'd probably worked up the Skeena from Port Simpson—but it wasn't how they got there that bothered Baldy and Sour Dough; it was what they were doin' there at all, and how long they aimed to stay. A Chink ain't exactly a desirable neighbor, no time, and when a bunch of him camps in your dooryard you're apt to register a kick, if you're white and self-respectin'.

Baldy and his pard resumed their breakfast operations and waited for developments. Before noon the Mongolians made it clear to them that Nation River valley was where they, likewise, intended to winter. The air was full of "Muk-a-*high*-looong's," and "Boo-yah-*oong*-oong's." Baldy said the two cabins they were building ought to be sure enough blessed abodes—they were bein' put up in the midst of a Celestial chorus.

The Chinks tended strictly to their own business, payin' no attention to Baldy and his partner, though they couldn't help seein' them, and this riled Sour Dough; for in that big, God-forsaken, lonesome country men, red, white, or yellow, are generally glad to say "Hello" when they meet on new trails. At noon, when the heathen started a dinner-fire, he says to Baldy:

"I've heard that Chinks are great on ancestor-worship, but they sure haven't got a white man's respect for the oldest inhabitant. I never did hanker for the society of a Chinaman, but we're

too far north to get up on our dignity. Let's go down and talk to 'em."

"All right," says Baldy. "I'd just as soon they were farther off; but it's a free country. I guess we can stand 'em if they don't get gay."

So they trailed down to the Chinaman's camp-fire.

The pigtail gentry took them as a matter of course, and was inclined to be sociable, but there couldn't a blamed one of them talk English. So they fell to makin' signs, and conversation was kinda slow and uncertain for a while. Then another Chink appears on the scene, draggin' the hind-quarters of a moose on a toboggan, and there was a lot of jabberin'. A bunch of Chinks just naturally can't do anythin' without a lot of jaw. Finally the new arrival wreathes his countenance in an expansive smile, and says: "H'lo."

"Hello," says Hosky. "You sabe white man talk, eh?"

"Hip sabe Inglis," says he, pretty proud. "One time wuk lestlant in Vi'tolia. Me name Ling Yoh."

Ling Yoh was a voluble cuss, and he talked enough for the whole layout. He told Baldy and Sour Dough how they'd come across the mountains lookin' for placer-diggin's. He said they'd dropped into Nation River accidental and had decided to wait there till spring, and wound up by invitin' them to have dinner. Baldy thanked him and declined on the plea that they'd just eaten.

Now, you might consider that Baldy and his partner wasn't overburdened with table luxuries, but you'd oughto seen them Chinks! All they had to eat was a pot of boiled rice and another of moose-meat, and tea. For table tools each of 'em had a butcher-knife and a tin cup. The big pots set on the fire and each jasper got him a cup of rice, cut off a chunk of meat, and speared it with a pine splinter; then he'd squat in the snow and ladle rice and moose-meat into himself to beat the band. When he got thirsty he'd clean up the rice in his cup and dip into the pot of tea. Them Chinks sure fed on the cooperative plan.

Baldy and Sour Dough wandered back to their cabin after a while, feelin' better. Nation River valley was plenty big enough for all hands, and the Chinks seemed to be a peaceable lot. You know, Chinamen, and gold-huntin' Chinamen, at that, can be pretty ugly when they run in bunches. You just pry into the history of some of them old Western placer-camps and you'll find many a page that Mongolian cussedness has reddened; and the whites weren't *always* to blame.

So they had reason to be thankful that the Chinks was inclined to be decent, seein' it would be four or five months before they could get out and hit the trail.

Everything went smooth as silk for quite a while. The Chinks kept to their cabins and their rice-pots, mostly, and Baldy and Sour Dough tended their traps and hunted moose and otherwise put in the time.

Then one day Baldy sees a Chink doin' somethin' that arouses his curiosity. Baldy had just come in from makin' the round of his traps; Sour Dough was still out. He was splitting some fire-wood at the cabin-end, when he noticed one of the Chinamen go down on the river, out to where a little riffle of rocks kept the water open. The Chink had a bucket with a rope tied to the handle, and he throwed the bucket out into the shallow water and hauled it in slow and careful, hand over hand.

There wasn't anythin' so very peculiar about that, for Chinks have their own pin-headed way of doin' things in any man's country, and if he wanted to go to all that trouble to get water it wasn't Baldy's funeral. But the Chink had no more than filled his pail and lugged it to the cabin than he was back for another, and then another. For the next two hours whenever Baldy glanced that way there was the Chink either goin' or comin' between the riffle and the shack.

That *did* look odd to Baldy. He wondered what the deuce they wanted of so much water.

The Chink had knocked off when Sour Dough blew in at dusk, but Baldy was still wonderin'.

"Now, what in thunder did them heathen do with all that water?" Baldy wanted to know, when he got through tellin' about it. "I'll bet that one geeser packed up two barrels by his lonesome."

"He was fillin' the boilers to start laundry, most likely. Or maybe preparin' for spring house-cleanin'," says Sour Dough, sarcastic as sin. He wasn't much interested in the amount of water the Chinks used. Baldy quit, at that; it did seem kinda triflin' to puzzle over.

But next day they come home together, pretty early, and the Chink was at it again—only there was two of 'em on the water-wagon this time. And they'd tramped a nice, smooth trail between their cabins and that open place in the ice.

Hosky noticed it, of course, but he didn't let on for quite a while. Finally, *his* curiosity got the best of him.

"Let's go down and call on Ling Yoh," he says to Baldy. Baldy laughed at him, but he went along.

Half-way to the Chinks' cabins the old boy out on the ice saw them coming. He turned in his tracks and called back—gabble—gabble—gabble. Whatever it was, when they reached the first cabin a Chinaman all mud-bespattered steps out and shoos them off with a lot of language. Then Ling Yoh sticks his head out of the other, and says: "Cabin hip ditty. No can come in. Make um foh plastle wall. Yo sabe? Some ulla tlime come."

"Oh, all right," says Hosky. "Plasterin', huh? Now, this is a fine season to be plasterin' a house."

Baldy just snorted, and they turned and went back to their own cabin.

That night it stormed. About noon next day the wind died down some, and when the snow scurry settled so they could see a little ways—why, there was the Chinks packin' water, as large as life.

They went outside and watched them for a while. Finally Hosky, without a word, starts for the river, and Baldy wasn't far behind. There was a Chink at the riffle. They got clear out on the ice before he spied them, but when they did bust on his vision, there was somethin' doin'. He let a squawk out of him, and the echo of it was still ki-yi-in' back from the hills when the heathen up at the cabins cut loose on Baldy and Sour Dough with a couple of guns.

They didn't rightly understand where they'd done wrong to Ling Yoh and his bunch, but there was no mistakin' their businesslike intentions; the bullets were cuttin' too close. If them Chinks had been good shots Baldy and his pard would never have got off the ice—at that, though they stepped lively, Hosky had a red streak along one side of his face and Baldy had two holes in his jacket by the time they dived into the shelter of the scrub that lined the bank.

"The measly yellow-hided shysters!" was Baldy's first words when he got his breath.

"I see where we pass a nice enjoyable winter," Sour Dough prophesies. "Blast a Chinaman, anyway! Say, what d'yuh suppose ails them, anyway?"

"Search *me*," says Baldy. "It's a cinch they don't want us prowlin' round their water-hole."

They got to the cabin quick as they could, for they remembered the two sacks of dust under the head of their bed, and they figured that if the Chinks were hostile enough to take a shot at them there was no tellin' what they might be up to next.

But the rest of the afternoon passed quiet. There was no more water-carryin'; not a Chink poked his head outdoors. Baldy and Sour Dough sat in their cabin and wondered what would come next.

By sunset the storm was whoopin' down the valley once more, whistlin' round the corners of the cabin and siftin' little powdery skifts of snow through the walls wherever there was sign of a crack. About ten o'clock Hosky knocked the ashes out of his pipe and said he reckoned they might as well go to bed.

They hadn't said much, but they'd been thinkin', and Baldy blurts out: "You go to bed and I'll watch a while.

One of us has got to keep cases, and I ain't sleepy."

Sour Dough agreed, and laid down with all his clothes on. He'd hardly hit the bunk when there comes a hellity—bang! bump! and the cabin rocked like it was a grocery-box that some careless cuss had kicked. The chinkin' tumbled out of the cracks and the dirt coverin' poured down from the roof. Sour Dough was outside at Baldy's heels while you could scratch a match.

It was dark, and the air was full of whirlin' snow, but they could see what had happened plain enough. Right against the end of the cabin was a rock half as big as the shack itself, and the only reason it hadn't brought the whole business about their ears was because it had bumped into a whoppin' big stump that turned it and broke the force of the blow just before it hit the cabin.

"D'ye mind them three big rocks that set on the hill up there?" McMann grabbed Hosky by the arm and hollered in his ear.

"Sure," said Sour Dough. "But how in blazes would they git up and roll down here themselves? Rocks don't—look out!"

There was a rattle and a scrape on the hill that sloped up from their shack, and they dodged to one side just in time. Another boulder hit the cabin and tore away a corner slick and clean, like the logs was matches instead of twelve-inch timbers, then went rumblin' and crashin' into the brush below.

"It's them Chinks, I tell yuh," says Baldy. "Let's get our guns and the dust, and move out uh here."

They didn't waste no time in that vicinity, I want to tell you. It took them a mighty short time to get what they wanted out of the cabin. And they were none too soon, for they hadn't got twenty yards when they heard a crash that told 'em another rock had hit it, and hit it plumb center.

They were out of range of rollin' rocks by that time, and Baldy turned his six-shooter toward where he thought them stones had come from, and pulled her off a couple of times for luck; and though Baldy didn't hear anything, Sour Dough swore that some one yelped on the hillside, and Baldy took his word for it.

"I knowed it was them Chinks," he said. "Darn 'em! I'd like to massacree the whole bunch."

"Same here," says Hosky. "But we ain't near numerous enough to start any race-war. First thing, we've got to get to where there's grub. We can't stay in the brush and live on moose-meat till spring. It's pretty near a cinch them Mongolians'll take us in if we go back and try to get the rest of our stuff."

"Well, what's your idea?" Baldy wanted to know.

Sour Dough never was slow about makin' up his mind. "I guess all we can do is strike for St. John. We can winter there; we got money, thank the Lord. And when it comes spring we can slip in here and get our ponies—if the Chinks don't run out of meat and eat 'em between times."

"It's a go with me," says Baldy, and they started.

When they got far enough so they thought the Chinamen couldn't find them, if they should happen to try, they got into the scrub and built a fire and waited for mornin', for it was one hell of a night.

Now, it's two hundred miles from their winter camp to Fort St. John, two hundred miles of four-foot snow and forty-below-zero weather. They couldn't get lost, because all they had to do was follow the river; but if you think it's any light undertakin' to make that trip in the clothes you stand in, eatin' straight moose and deer-meat without even salt to it, you're away off. I ain't goin' to harrow anybody's feelin's with the details. If ever you travel the Peace in mid-winter without blankets or grub, you'll sabe that it ain't a gay and festive pilgrimage. But they made it to the post.

They stumbled into St. John one afternoon, and the old "breed" hunters shook their heads over Sour Dough's feet and hands. Baldy was in better shape; some men freeze easier than others, you know. But Sour Dough was healthy, and he was game, so he

pulled through with the loss of three toes.

And sittin' around that old post waitin' for his pedal extremeties to heal up he decided that if the price of a Sacramento fruit-farm was another winter in the North, it would come too blamed high. As to puzzlin' over why the Chinks run them out of Nation River valley, that was a riddle he and Baldy aimed to read when the snow was gone.

It was the middle of May and the green grass was just beginnin' to peep, when Sour Dough was in good shape to travel again. And by chance, when they were ready to go, a Hudson Bay pack-train came through St. John pullin' west to gather the winter's trade of furs from the posts at Stuart Lakes. Their route lay through the Nation River country, and Baldy and Sour Dough throwed in with them and went along.

The outfit camped on a ridge for noon, the day they pulled in sight of the cabins on Nation River, and at Hosky's suggestion a bunch of 'em rode on ahead to see how things stacked up with Ling Yoh and his countrymen.

They didn't go down to their wrecked cabin to see if there was anything left. The sight that loomed up before 'em when they looked down into the valley was the biggest surprise that Baldy McMann and Sour Dough Hoskins had bumped into for several moons.

Up and down the river for a quarter of a mile was camp-kits and cayuses and Chinamen—they swarmed like red ants. And for every Chink that was scuttlin' around among the camp truck there was two down on the river-edge wigglin' a pan. There wasn't less than a hundred Chinamen on Nation River; and two-thirds of em' were washing gold.

One of the Hudson Bay men rode down and took a synopsis of the layout. When he come back he said the Chinks wasn't advertisin' the richness of that particular bar, but he reckoned from what he could see casual that the dust was runnin' about six bits or a dollar to the pan.

Sour Dough got out his pipe and stuffed it full of tobacco, in a meditative sort of way. Baldy looked down at the Chinks, kinda vindictive.

"Well," he finally busts out, "if we didn't get the double-cross I'd like to know what you'd call it."

Sour Dough's eyes popped, he was that hostile, but he didn't say a word; just lit his pipe and puffed strong.

Baldy went on: "I had a hunch them Chinks had found somethin', when they got so blamed exclusive all of a sudden last winter. Plasterin'! plasterin' a shack, by jiminy cripes!" Baldy said a lot of other things. He was pretty mad.

"Well," Sour Dough said at last, "I don't see where we can win anything off'n this bunch. There's too blamed many of 'em. I reckon we might as well go up the river a ways; there ought to be other bars as good as the one these Chinks have beat us out of."

Baldy hunched his shoulders. "You're the doctor," says he.

So they stayed with the Hudson Bay outfit half-way to Stuart Lakes, where they struck a piece of country that looked good to 'em and pitched their camp. They prognosticated around there for about a week. Then one day they pulled in for dinner and found their camp occupied by a yaller-hided, slant-eyed party who bore all the earmarks of a Chink, except that he was dressed white man's style and had his cue cut off.

They was some surprised—but their astonishment got a heap more acute when the jasper addressed 'em in good, plain English and otherwise makes it clear that if his hide is yaller his ways is white. They discover he don't take no stock in ancestor-worship nor in wearin' his hair in a four-foot pigtail; on account of which advanced ideas he's looked down on considerable by his feller Celestials. He don't have no more use for Chinamen of the shave-headed sort than Baldy or Sour Dough. He made himself pretty agreeable and give the two partners a lot of information about the surrounding country, which he had prospected thorough.

Sour Dough got a talkin' streak on him that afternoon and told this civilized Chink how they'd stacked up against a bunch of his countrymen and got considerable the worst of the deal. Sam Lung ripped out a string of cuss-words and immediately let it be known that *he* had had a rumpus with the very same layout and that he was kinda layin' for a chance to play even himself.

Sour Dough was an old fellow with a heap of imagination. That night by the camp-fire, while Baldy and Sam were swappin' lies, Hosky lay stretched on his back, starin' up at the sky and doin' some heavy thinkin'. All of a sudden he rolls over, fixes his eye on the Chink for a minute; then he sits up, slaps his leg emphatic, and bust rudely into their gabfest

"I got it!" he says, focusin' his gaze on Sam Lung.

"Huh." says Baldy. "If yuh got it, don't let it get away."

Whereupon Sour Dough fixes himself comfortable against a pack-saddle and elucidates a scheme for the confusion of the heathen that's workin' that dollar-a-pan bar on Nation River; it's bound to win out, he declares, if Sam'll take a hand. Baldy didn't think much of the idea, but Sam Lung embraced it enthusiastic, and when he got through laughin' to himself told Baldy to brace up; that it was a cinch.

The details of Sour Dough's scheme didn't interest Baldy much, and he beefed like sin next mornin' when he discovered that it called for breakin' camp and makin' tracks for the Hudson Bay post at Stuart Lake, for a pre'iminary. But Sour Dough was kinda the head push, and what he said went with Baldy.

They got to the Hudson Bay post, all right, but they didn't tarry there long. Sour Dough transacted all his business, which seemed to be mainly with the post doctor, in about a couple of hours, and they took to the trail again. They kept a-goin' east till they were right on top of that Chink community on Nation River. Then they got foxy as a bunch of Pinkerton detectives, and make their camp in thick timber, two or three miles back from the rim of the valley.

By that time Baldy was plumb disgusted with the whole proceedin'; but Sam Lung and Sour Dough seemed to think they had the joker up their sleeves good and strong, and they overlooked Baldy's grouchin'.

They laid in camp quiet for a day or two, till there come an afternoon when the sky was banked full of tumblin' clouds, givin' promise of a pitch-black night. And that evenin' Hosky and Sam went forth and scouted around the Chink camp, sizin' up the lay of the land from a safe distance.

When they got back and had supper, and dark come down like a stack of black cats, Sour Dough says to Baldy: "Here's where we play even with them Mongolians."

Baldy was still convinced of the general damfoolishness of the whole business, but he was willin' to take a chance and see the thing through. So they fixed up for the expedition, takin' along an ax, a good stout forty-foot picket-rope, and a saddle-horse apiece in case they had to make a fast getaway.

Sour Dough led the way straight to a point directly opposite the Chink camp, where the valley wall was a sheer, eighty-foot cliff of yellow sandstone. From the rim of this they could hear a faint jabberin' and look down on the twinklin' fires, yellow dots in the velvet black below.

But Sour Dough wasn't there to admire the night view. He and Sam got busy without delay.

Some scraggly trees grew within a few feet of the cliff-edge. Sour Dough passed one end of the long rope around Sam under the armpits, and knotted her in a bowline, hard and fast. With the other end he took two turns around a tree.

"Now," he says to Baldy, "you stand by the end and hang tight, or Sam Lung'll bust his noodle on the rocks below.

Baldy grabbed a hold and Mister Lung boosted himself over the edge, and the rope tightened. Every minute

or so, after that, Sour Dough would step back from watchin' what Sam was doin' and help Baldy pay out a foot or two of rope.

By and by he whispered to Baldy to tie his end good and solid, and come to the front. Time Baldy got that done Sam was through, and they hauled him up, hand over hand—Sam was a featherweight, which made the hoistin' an easy stunt.

Once he was free of the rope Sam chuckled malicious, and cuppin' both hands over his mouth, let a singsong yelp that knocked the spots off'n a grand-opera soprano reachin' for high Z.

"Betchu twenty dolla that fix um plenty," he whispered to Baldy and Sour Dough.

There was a squawk or two from the Mongolian settlement, followed by the biggest kind of a silence. They got on their horses and rode down the valley rim a ways, soft and easy, crossed over and come along the hill-top on the other side till they was abreast of the Chink camp again. Baldy gasped when he got sight of the face of that cliff.

It looked like a lot of magnified hen-tracks standin' out in a fiery glow—somethin' like an electric store sign viewed from a distance. It was creepy, loomin' up through that darkness you could almost cut with a knife, even to a man that knew.

"Sufferin' Moses!" says Baldy. "Ain't that a peach? What does them crazy marks mean, Sam?"

Sam kinda chuckled again. "Chinamen velly sup'stitious. Heap bad luck fo' felt-shoe boy if he stay here," says Sam. "Betchu twenty dolla in mo'nin' all gone!"

Nobody called the bet, and it developed that Sam had the right hunch. At daylight that Mongolian layout was hittin' the high places away from Nation River; and their movements wasn't what you'd call deliberate. They folded their tents and stole away, but they weren't silent—not what you could notice. They was all talkin' at once, and lookin' back over their shoulders at that sandstone cliff, like a lot of scared coyotes.

Baldy and Sour Dough never did find exactly what Sam Lung wrote on the rock with the stick of phosphorus Sour Dough got from the doctor at Stuart Lake; but whatever them fiery hen-tracks meant, it sure put the kybosh on the Chinamen.

Did the bar pan out rich? Did Sour Dough get that fruit-ranch on the Sacramento? Well, I should rise to remark! Yes, sir, and blooded horses and a gasomobile. Why, Hoskins & McMann is the biggest bugs in Sacramento County—though Sam Lung runs 'em a close second.

And you can bet your last, lone peso the sons of the Flowery Kingdom don't get no job pickin' fruit on *that* ranch.

IT HAPPENED AT ASBURY

A TALL, handsome lady, accompanied by a boy of about six years, was sitting at one end of a seat on an Asbury pier. She was evidently a widow, and a gentleman who occupied the other end of the seat could not refrain from casting admiring glances in her direction. Of these, however, she appeared entirely oblivious, being intent on replying to the prattle of the boy.

Soon the boy moved along the seat, and seemed to strike up an immediate friendship with the man.

"What's your name?" he asked.

The man gave the desired information.

"Is you married?" was his next question, to which the man replied in the negative.

The boy was silent for a moment; then, turning to the lady, he said: "Mama, what else did you tell me to ask the gentleman?"

The Mate's Romance

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "Easy Money," "Where Friendship Ceases," "The Dead One," Etc.

There is always a charm about Mr. Chisholm's writings. The present laughable tale is uncommonly good, being a narration of the happenings on board the old schooner *Morning Star*. A typical old skipper, a sentimental mate, a bewitching young lady, and her brother, a preacher—these are the principal characters herein set down

(*A Complete Story*)

THE mate of the *Morning Star* leaned against the rail of the schooner as she lay up to the wharf at Westport and felt that a dog's life, and a yellow dog's at that, was ease and luxury compared to a sailorman's. The night was dark and stifling hot and the skipper had gone ashore, leaving him in charge.

The mate sniffed disdainfully the mingled odors of sewers and salt from the breast of the bay, and his soul yearned mightily for a country road and snake fences and the smell of the soil and vegetation; also he felt that even these ideal surroundings would not be complete without the companionship of some young lady, a brunette for choice, who would lean upon his arm and whisper to him in the dusk.

Heron was sentimental at the time, and he cursed the day that he had gone down to the deep sea to labor in ships.

From for'ard came the voice of one of the crew in narration, and as the mate listened the tale reached its climax and a shout of laughter broke forth.

Heron was annoyed, sour with things in general, and cried: "Less noise there!"

"Yes, sir," came the respectful chorus, but old Bill Hingston said: "Lord, the greaser's in a wax! Wot for, I'd like to know?" and another man replied with conviction: "His innards is out of order."

Joe Heron lit his pipe and paced up and down. There was no reason why he should not have turned in if he had wished, but the heat below was unbearable, and just then he was sick of the little cubby-hole of a cabin that was the only home he knew. He envied such of his acquaintances as had the good luck to live their lives ashore. These had gardens where green things grew; trees shaded them and grass crushed under their feet; also they had wives and children, or at any rate sweethearts.

Why the devil a man went to sea and eternally trod planks and herded with ignorant shellbacks and drunken skippers, when he might just as easily live in a house with a pretty little wife and have a garden to potter in, was a problem beyond him. However, his lot was cast. He tramped the deck fuming.

It grew late, and a sound of footsteps on the wharf made him pause and listen. The footsteps were steady, and Heron therefore concluded they were not those of the skipper. In this he was wrong, for Captain Ebbs stepped down on deck from the surrounding darkness a moment afterward. The mate greeted him grudgingly.

"Had a good time?" he asked. As the captain appeared to be sober he expected nothing but a profane negative.

"Middlin'," replied the skipper; "I've been spending the evening with friends."

The mate sniffed suspiciously, but failed to detect any alcoholic evidence of the friendship alluded to.

"Friends I met at the hotel," volunteered Captain Ebbs. "Real nice people."

"Huh!" grunted the mate doubtfully. Old Ebbs! Nice people! Good Lord, what would happen next?

"Come below," said Ebbs, "and we'll have a tot and turn in."

They went below and the skipper fell upon a bottle of rum with eagerness.

"Regards," he said, as he concealed his four fingers, and the mate nodded as politeness demanded and did likewise.

"We'll get under way to-morrow, Mr. Heron," said the skipper, munching a piece of tack with enjoyment, "and on our way down the coast we'll put in at Bridgewater and land our passengers."

"Passengers!" said the mate, startled. "What passengers?"

"Didn't I tell you?" said the skipper in a surprised tone, but refusing to meet the other's eye. "They're friends of mine. Two of 'em. I've promised to land 'em at Bridgewater."

"We ain't in shape to carry passengers," said Heron.

"These will be all right, and besides I have my reasons," said the skipper darkly. "One of them is a lady, though."

"What?" cried the mate, aghast.

"And the other, "pursued the skipper with some hesitation, "is her brother. He's a sky-pilot."

The mate, who was just applying a match to his pipe, paused and stared at the skipper until the flame burned his fingers. His language, when he spoke, might have referred to the match or to the passengers.

"When they're abroad," said the skipper, "I hope you'll control your tongue. You've got what I might call a senseless habit of being profane."

"To hear you talk," said the astonished mate, "one would think you never swore, yourself."

"I may have swore occasional, under great provocation," said the skipper, with heavy dignity, due to the rum he had swallowed, "and no man ever rose to be master who couldn't tell sailormen what he thought of 'em when he had to, but it ain't a habit with me. It is with you. I overlook it because you're a good mate, but I don't encourage it. I ain't going to have my passengers' ears shocked by words which is repulsive to 'em and which I likewise disapproves of myself, so you make a note of it." And Ebbs, who was noted along the coast for the peculiar force and aptness of his extemporaneous blasphemies, poured out another heavy jolt of rum.

"This is the way of it," he observed with condescension to the sulky mate. "Me and the parson has business to talk of, and likewise he's a invalid and needs sea-air. That's all you need to know at present. Later I may tell you more."

He nodded mysteriously, winked once, and taking the bottle with him retired to his stateroom.

The mate, left alone, consumed the remainder of his rum and water and also sought his bunk. But as he kicked his boots savagely into a corner a thought occurred to him, and he stood meditating.

"I wonder," he muttered, "if the sky-pilot's sister is a good looker. I wonder how old she is?"

And having no means of finding out he threw the remainder of his garments at his one chair and went to sleep.

In the morning the mate arose and, after a critical inspection of his visage in a badly cracked mirror, searched out a razor and painfully rasped the stubble from his jaws. He then arrayed himself in his best clothes and went to breakfast, where he was presently joined by the skipper, also freshly shaven and remarkably spruce. Each surveyed the spick and span appearance of the other with surprise not unmixed with suspicion.

"I'm glad to see you trying to look as respectable as you can," said the skipper.

"Same to you," said the mate, not being able at the moment to think of a more original retort. "You're dressed more than usual yourself."

"I'm always dressed," said Captain Ebbs, with a frown.

The mate was about to reply that on several occasions the skipper had gone to his bunk fully dressed, even to his boots, but he thought better of it and consumed his food in silence.

When he reached the deck, Captain Ebbs, regarded the dirty planking and weather-beaten, flaky paint of the old *Morning Star* with disfavor. In the pitilessly clear morning light she stood revealed, a sloven, a slattern, a drabbled old sea-wench without shame.

Ebbs commanded the mate to put the men to holystoning the decks, and then ensued such a riot of sluicing water and rubbing and scouring as the poor old *Morning Star* had not experienced in the last twenty years of her long and neglected existence.

Finally there came a semblance of cleanliness and order, but nothing could be done with the dingy paint, the dingier canvas, and the rusty-looking rigging.

The house-cleaning did not, however, stop with the *Morning Star*. Captain Ebbs, staring fiercely at his crew, called to one of them.

"Barton!"

"Yes, sir," said the man addressed.

"When did you wash your face last?"

"Wot's on it, sir?" asked the puzzled seaman, passing his hand across his features and looking at the result suspiciously.

"What ain't?" said Captain Ebbs. "It's like a back lane in the spring. Go and souse it in a bucket and rub off what will loosen!"

The aggrieved and indignant seaman slouched for'ard and proceeded to bury his head in a bucket of water, from which unaccustomed element he withdrew it, half-strangled, and rubbed furiously with the piece of duck which did duty for a towel.

"The next thing as will happen," he observed with fine sarcasm to the cook, who, ignorant of the cause of his ablutions, was regarding him with unconcealed amazement, "the next thing as will happen, the Old Man will make us wear hankerchees with o-de-colony sprinkled on 'em. Wash! And me twenty years afore the mast!"

"Did he tell you to *wash?*" asked the cook in horrified tones.

"He did," said Barton. "And him beastly sober, meanin' of his words."

The cook, feeling the situation to be beyond his powers of speech, cast an apprehensive glance aft, and, retreating to the interior of the galley, closed the door as a measure of self-protection.

Captain Ebbs, meanwhile, pursued his new policy of purification with zeal.

"How long have you worn that there shirt?" he demanded of Hans Swanson, commonly called "Dutchy," a heavy, slow-moving sailorman.

Swanson, with a mighty effort, projected his mind into the past.

"Ay gat him new maybe sax mont'," he answered. "He is goot shirt, dot."

"Go for'ard and take it off," ordered Ebbs. "Ship a clean one at once. It's a wonder you ain't got the smallpox."

Dutchy's slow brain failed to understand. He craned his neck in an endeavor to behold his back, looking for possible defects in the material. Finding none, he answered:

"He is goot shirt. Ay tank ay wear him ein yahr."

"You do!" roared Ebbs. "You won't! You're dirty! Crawling! Vile! Take it off, *versteh?* Strip it off your greasy hide and burn it. Holy mackerel, you scum, if you give me any slack jaw I'll jam half your face down your throat!"

Dutchy, much impressed, rolled for'ard and, sitting on his bunk with the upper half of his body nude, entreated the loan of a shirt from somebody.

"Ay tank der captain crazy," he announced, holding the offending garment up to the dim light and scrutinizing it closely. "Dot shirt is so goot like when I buy him. Maybe besser. He is a comfort to wear.

Finally he compromised by donning

a jersey, and so made his way on deck again.

"The filth of this crew is beyond belief!" declared the skipper, catching Tommy, the ship's boy, by the ear as he sneaked past and holding him up to the scorn of men. "Look at him," he went on, addressing the mate. "Here's a state of dirtiness as would be a disgrace to a fresh-water wood-scow. Look at that there neck, where the white stops! Look at them there ears! Look at them clo'es! What d'ye mean by it, you young wharf-rat?"

"I ain't done nothing," sniveled the boy, tears beginning to trace grimy courses down his cheeks from the tweaking his ear was receiving.

"Shocking!" said the mate.

"Shocking is the word," said the skipper. "It ain't no good setting him a example, for he don't profit by it. In my young days he'd have been keelhauled, but now we has to treat him like he was a lady. Take him for'ard and strip him and start two of the men to sluice water on him with buckets."

With a final tweak of the ear he released the boy, who was taken forward to undergo sentence, and later fled to concealment half-drowned and gasping for breath, but improved as to complexion.

"I'm for a clean and happy self-respecting crew," said the skipper, surveying the result of his labors with satisfaction. "Dirt and untidiness I won't have on a ship of mine."

And there being nothing more to do by way of making ready to receive the passengers, Captain Ebbs lit his pipe and, leaning against the break of the poop, smoked the smoke of the righteous.

Shortly after, a cab drew up on the wharf and deposited two suit-cases, a pretty young lady, and a tall, pale young man dressed in clerical garb. Captain Ebbs hurried to meet them, commanding one of the men to bear a hand with the luggage. The mate, deftly inserting a cork in the bowl of his pipe, concealed it in his pocket. He decided that the girl was ahead of his expectations.

"This here is Mr. Heron, my mate," said Captain Ebbs, "and this is the Reverend Paul Wells and Miss Kate Wells."

The mate, conscious of a pair of black eyes looking into his, and a set of white teeth behind the reddest, most inviting lips in the world, expressed his unqualified pleasure at the introduction in words which he told himself afterward were entirely idiotic.

The *Morning Star* was free of the harbor and running down the coast with a beam wind before the mate's duties allowed him further speech with the passengers. But this was not the case with Captain Ebbs, who entertained them with tales of strange adventures upon the deep, in most of which the hero was himself.

The mate, approaching, heard the end of one of these from which the skipper emerged as the sole survivor of the *Martin Hackett*, barquentine, eleven hundred tons, Boston to Liverpool. He concluded the narrative somewhat hurriedly as the mate joined the group.

"Human life is a frail thing," said Mr. Wells. "You should be grateful to Providence for your preservation, captain."

"I am," said the skipper. "There ain't no sort of doubt in my mind that Providence has her reasons for taking care of me, special. I bank on her every time."

Hearing a mysterious noise, he turned his head and glared at the man at the wheel. That seaman stared straight ahead with an expressionless face, and shifted his quid nonchalantly.

"It is a pleasure to me," continued Mr. Wells, "to know that on this ship, at any rate, the spiritual welfare of the crew is not neglected. Captain Ebbs has just told us of your good influence among them, Mr. Heron."

The astounded mate, reading dumb entreaty in the skipper's eye, mumbled something that might have passed muster for a modest affirmative, and listened in disgust to further appreciative references to his good influence.

Mr. Wells drew from his pocket a bulky package of tracts and, taking the

unwilling mate by the arm, proposed an immediate distribution.

"Most of the hands can't read," objected the mate, eying the literature with disfavor. "You leave them with me, and I'll serve them out as they're needed."

But Mr. Wells was enthusiastic, and presently the crew of the *Morning Star* were the amazed recipients of a series of illustrated pamphlets dealing with the temptations and dangers popularly supposed to beset seamen.

"Wot's the good of aggrawatin' of us like this 'ere," said old Bill Hingston, gazing longingly at a representation of two jovial mariners in an advanced stage of intoxication who were apparently accumulating a deck-load at a highly ornate bar. "It makes me feel that dry I might be shipwrecked in a bloomin' desert." And the improbability of such shipwreck was quite overlooked in the general approval evoked by the sentiment.

The subsequent interview between the skipper and the mate was stormy and subversive of discipline.

"It ain't my fault," said the former apologetically. "How did I know he had tracts? I only told him you was in the habit of talking to the men about their souls, and so you are, but not in the way he took it up."

The mate's reference to the souls of the crew was scathing. "I won't be made a fool of before the hands," he concluded sulkily.

"Nobody wants you to be if you can help it," said the skipper tartly. "Business is business, and if it's business for me to have a holy ship, a holy ship I'll have; and if I choose to say you're a gospel-spreader, a gospel-spreader you'll be till further orders. I own you don't look it, but I have to do the best I can with what I've got."

"Oh, if it's business and will help you out any," said the mate sullenly, "you can say I'm John the Baptist if you like."

"He knows your name already," said the mollified skipper. "No need for you to be a Baptist. Better be a Methodist, and then so much won't be expected. And look here—me having private business to talk over with him, I'll take it as a favor if you'll keep his sister out of the way as much as you can. Women distracts men's minds from more important things." And having uttered this great truth, the skipper left his mate in considerably better humor.

That evening Heron proceeded to carry out his instructions with zeal. He guilefully proposed to Miss Wells an expedition to the bows, the better to observe the working of the headsails. They departed into the growing dusk, in the face of feeble but entirely sincere protest from the skipper, who was being mercilessly cross-examined on his sensations when dragged down by the sinking *Martin Hackett* and found a difficulty in remembering exactly what he had said a few hours before.

They established themselves by the heel of the bowsprit, and the mate, looking at the slim, graceful form of his companion and the pretty face across which a wisp of loosened hair was blowing, could hardly believe that such a wonderful being was aboard the old *Morning Star*. He feared that he would wake up the next minute in his bunk with the beat of the sea against her old timbers in his ear and the memory of a dream to add to his discontent.

"I think this is just a dear little ship," said Miss Wells, with enthusiasm.

"She's all right with you in her," blurted out the mate.

Miss Wells laughed, a low melodious laugh, and the mate detected or thought he detected a challenge in the note.

"But it would be a lot better if you were going to be here longer," he added.

"I wish I were," said the girl, with a sigh. "I love the sea and sailors—like Captain Ebbs. Haven't you had adventures, too? Didn't you ever get shipwrecked or save anybody?"

"Never got the chance," said the mate, "and don't want it."

"If we were wrecked wouldn't you save *me?*" asked Miss Wells coquettishly.

"I would," said the mate fervently;

"I'd save you if I had to swim twenty miles to shore through breakers. I'd save you," he went on, gloating over the possibility, "from the middle of sharks and cannibals and pirates."

"But you wouldn't get the chance," returned Miss Wells, "Captain Ebbs told me he would. Why, Mr. Heron!" For the proffered gallantries of the skipper had elicited the first half of a very strong word from the mate. "If you are going to swear I can't stay with you—or let you save me," she added.

The mate, in great confusion, apologized and blamed a twinge of toothache. The lady regarded him sternly—and then laughed, to his great amazement.

"Why did Captain Ebbs tell my brother that you were such a very proper young man?" she asked. "Oh, I knew it wasn't so; and when you were giving the tracts to the crew, your face——" She broke into a peal of laughter.

"He had his reasons, I s'pose," said Heron, with a shamefaced grin. "If the story of me giving tracts to the crew gets out I'll never hear the last of it. Anyway, I did it for you."

"For *me?*" said the girl. "Why, what did I care whether the crew got tracts or not?"

"Well, you see," said Heron, dubiously, "he was your brother, and so—and so——"

To his utter surprise the girl leaned forward and patted his hand.

"You're a dear—like all sailors," she said, and abruptly made her way aft, followed by the enraptured mate.

In the morning Heron paced the deck and still dreamed. The memory of that pat on the hand had rendered his watch below sleepless. So absorbed in pleasant thought was he, that when Swanson, passing aft to relieve the wheel, stumbled against him he said, "Good morning," abstractedly. Which so surprised Swanson, who had dodged instinctively, that he confided his conviction of the mate's serious illness to the man relieved.

The skipper came on deck, snuffed the air, threw a casual glance around and aloft, and greeted his mate.

"Do you know what day this is?" he asked.

"Twenty-fifth," said Heron.

"Yes," said the skipper, "but it's Sunday."

"What of it?" growled the mate indifferently. What a delicate little hand it was, to be sure. Some day he would call it his, and it would wave to him from the jetty as he drove in homeward bound on the deck of his own ship; it would slip into his big paw confidingly.

"It bein' Sunday," said the skipper, "the Reverend Wells wants to hold religions services. You warn the men to clean theirselves and make a creditable appearance when mustered aft. Let 'em look as much like Christians as they can."

"They'll have a job to do that," said Heron.

"They've got to," said the skipper fiercely. "Any man that looks otherwise or so much as spits while worshiping I'll handle myself. Pass the word that they're to look as if divine worship was as reg'lar as meals."

The mate went for'ard and almost caused a mutiny by the particularity of his instructions as to cleanliness and behavior, and the sustained vigor of his comments on the personal appearance of individuals.

"This comes of carryin' of sky-pilots an' women an' seeh," said the crew. "Wot's the skipper or the greaser know about how a Christian looks? Nothing. An' while it may be all proper for a parson to preach when he wants to, praying skippers is drunken skippers on all seas. And if Ebbs starts in to pray he qualifies immediate."

"I once knowed a skipper as held religious service reg'lar every day," said old Bill Hingston.

"Wot happened to him?" asked the crew. "He must have been a one-er."

"A barque fouled him in Halifax harbor," said Hingston, "an' carried away his jibboom, forestay an' f'topmast. He burst a blood-vessel talkin' to the master of the barque, an' died. Oh, he give

it to him good! Not a repeat from start to finish. An' bein' he died sudden, o' course he couldn't hear what the other said back, wich must ha' been a satisfaction to him."

But when the time for service arrived there was a hitch. It appeared that Mr. Wells had mislaid his Bible, and he requested the loan of the captain's.

"Heron will lend you his," said the skipper, "it's newer. Mine is all wore out from constant use."

The mate looked at him stonily.

"I lent mine to the night-watchman at the docks and it wasn't returned," he said. "I missed it last night before I turned in. I'll go below for yours if you'll tell me where to look for it."

He caught a most unsedate twinkle in Miss Wells' eye. That young lady bit her lip and, turning, stared at the Atlantic with great interest.

"I'll go for it myself," said the skipper. He glared at the mate for a moment and went below, presently calling to him from the companionway.

"Is there a Bible on this ship at all, d'ye s'pose?" he asked. "If there ain't you've ruined me with your foolishness."

"Where's that wore-out one of yours?" asked the mate innocently.

"Have some sense," said the skipper irritably. "Go and see if any of the hands has such a thing."

"Dutchy has a Bible," said the crew, in answer to an urgent demand from the mate. "Here, Dutchy, Mr. Heron wants the loan of your Bible to lead the service with." The mate glared.

Dutchy scratched his head. "Ay gat him some place," he said, and proceeded to rummage in his bag, finally producing a much-battered and discolored volume from the interior of a huge sea-boot.

When the skipper, with an air of superiority, handed the book to Mr. Wells that gentleman opened it and glanced at him in surprise.

"This is a Swedish Bible, captain, isn't it? I don't understand Swedish myself, and therefore I'll have to trouble you to translate a chapter."

Captain Ebbs, very red in the face, took the book. "This ain't mine," he said. "It must have been exchanged by mistake with a Swedish minister I had aboard a few days ago. Mr. Heron, see if the crew has any of the Bibles left that I give 'em last voyage."

"Never mind, Mr. Heron," said Miss Wells. "I believe I have your Bible in my suit-case, Paul. I remembered packing it there."

She returned with the missing book, and then all hands listened, bareheaded, to a most edifying and highly interesting discourse. For Mr. Wells talked down to his hearers. He did not deal in abstract theological propositions. His words were simple and direct, and the men felt that he knew life itself, which is greater and more interesting and more complex than book and creed. In spite of the tracts their opinion of him rose, for the man spoke to men without pretense, clearly and convincingly.

"He may be a reg'lar parson," said Barton, the washed, doubtfully, "though my opinion is as he ain't, for he's too clear in his talk. I hears certified skypilots expound and shew wherein before, but I never rightly understands their courses nor bearings, nor how a sailorman is to pick 'em up when wanted."

"That's so," said the crew. "He talks too plain to amount to much as a parson, but it were a treat to listen to him."

The remainder of that Sabbath was a period of unalloyed bliss to Heron. He had the pleasure of Miss Wells' company, with very brief intervals, throughout the day, and he made the most of it. There was something unreal in the presence of any woman on the *Morning Star*, and when that woman was a very pretty one, young, with big, dark eyes that looked trustingly into his, the sense of unreality deepened. Therefore, he lost no time.

The mate was by way of falling in love, suddenly and desperately, and if he was any reader of signs feminine Miss Wells knew it and was not at all displeased. He blessed the darkness

when it came, and again suggested the bows as a place where they could talk undisturbed.

"We'll be at Bridgewater to-morrow if the wind holds," he said, when they were comfortably seated forward, "and then I suppose we won't see each other again."

"No," said Miss Wells. "It's a pity, isn't it? You have taken such pains to make this little trip pleasant for me."

"Why shouldn't we see more of each other?" asked the mate. "I've only known you two days, but they've been the happiest I've had since I went to sea."

"I have been happy, too," said Miss Wells softly.

"I'm a poor devil of a sailor," pursued the mate, with determination, "and you're different from any girl I ever met. Maybe this is the last chance I'll have to talk to you alone. Do you—that is, do you think you could—after a while, I mean—could you?"

"Mr. Heron!"

"I've loved you ever since I saw you—two whole days," continued the mate, with enthusiasm, gathering courage as he went on. "I always will love you. Do you care for me at all?"

"A—a little," said Miss Wells, apparently carried away by the vigor of his wooing; and the two forms merged in the friendly darkness. "Oh, you mustn't! Well—just one!" And then there was an interval.

"I'll speak to your brother first thing in the morning," said Heron. "Can't we get him to marry us then? He's a preacher."

Miss Wells gave a little scream.

"My goodness, no! We can't be married for a long time, and you mustn't say a word to him yet. He hopes I'll marry some one else—but *you* know I won't. I'll tell him myself after we get ashore." And with that Heron had to be satisfied.

"Joe—dear," said the young lady after a very long good night which for obvious reasons took place in the bows, "will you do something for me?"

"Will I?" said Heron. "Will I! Well, I guess!"

"It's not a nice thing to ask," said Miss Wells, "but I want you to cash a check for me. I've run out of pocket-money and I do hate having to go to banks and be identified."

"If it's not too large," said Heron. "You see I haven't very much cash."

"Fifty?"

"Yes, I can do that," said Heron. And when she had gone he paced the deck entirely indifferent to the rules of the road and the rights of other vessels, creating a heaven for himself after the manner of men under like conditions.

When the old *Morning Star* rasped her fenders against the Bridgewater wharf-facings the mate was annoyed. He had prayed for calms all night, but the wind had held. He said good-by, holding Miss Wells' hand overlong and looking into her eyes in a way that caused the crew to grin and nudge each other, and brought some confusion to that young lady as well as a most unchristian look to her brother's face. He watched the two passengers, accompanied by Captain Ebbs, disappear, and then turned to the business of hoisting in more cargo.

When the skipper returned it was late afternoon, and he was drunk. Also he was very happy.

"Come below," he said to the mate in a hoarse whisper. "I've got something to tell you!"

He lurched down the companion and going to his stateroom returned with a bottle of rum.

"Now I'll drink free an' open as a Christian seaman should," he announced. "I've got it, Heron, my boy; I've got it in black an' white!"

"You've got all you can carry," said the mate in disgust, rescuing the bottle which the skipper was waving aloft to emphasize his remarks. "What d'ye mean?"

"I outreached him an' I outweathered on him," said the skipper triumphantly. "He come to my terms because he had to. Look a-here!" He drew a folded paper from his pocket and passed it over.

Heron read it. It was a formal instrument, signed by Mr. Wells, conferring on Ebbs the command of the missionary shooner *Glad Tidings* at most exorbitant wages.

"Before I would give a sou markee to his blasted missions I made a bargain with him," the skipper continued hoarsely. "'You know me,' I said to him, 'an' likewise I know you. You're in need of a sober Christian skipper to navigate this gospel-ship. Very well. I'm your man—none better; an' I can get you Heron for a mate or a friend of his, John or Johnson, that's a strong Baptist, an' a thorough seaman. You give me the command of her at my terms an' I'll subscribe liberal to your scheme.' An' he done so, an' I done so, an' all's well. An', Joe, you can have the command of the *Morning Star* or come as my mate. I choose my own officers, by cripes!" He groped for the rum and filled a glass.

"How much did you subscribe?" asked the mate doubtfully.

"Only twenty-five dollars," said the skipper, in triumph, "an' for that I get a craft an' a easy berth with double the pay I ever had. Can you beat that, my lad? It takes a real seaman with experience of shippers and customs officers to go to weather of a sky-pilot!"

"Two gents on deck to see you, sir," said Tommy, shoving his head inside and withdrawing it with the haste bred of much experience of his captain.

"Who wants me can find me," said Ebbs in dignified tones.

He got to his feet with the support of the table, paused a moment to fix his course, and made unsteadily for the deck.

Heron followed. He was somewhat startled to see a blue-coated policeman, and with him a clean-shaven, wiry man with very cold gray eyes and a curt, incisive manner.

"What's this?" demanded the skipper. "Has any of my scum of a crew got drunk an' disgraced theirselves?"

"What we want, captain," said the plain-clothes man, "is some information about two passengers you landed here this morning."

"How should I know?" said the skipper. "Gone!" He waved a hand at North America, generally. "Gone on bus'ness, collectin' money for worthy objects. We'll drink to the reverend gent!"

"Reverend nothing," said the plain-clothes man. "You've had 'Pious Bill' Hicks aboard, the smoothest swindler in the business, and Polly Mulqueen, the woman who works the game with him. Here, you—— What the devil do you mean?"

For Heron had taken him by the throat and was proceeding to throttle him in a most businesslike way. When the indignant mate was dragged off by the combined efforts of the policeman and the crew and forced to listen to reason, he apologized and felt sick, for his brief love-dream had been knocked into a cocked hat. There was no doubt at all about the fact of identity, and he listened savagely.

"Oh, shut up!" he said to the skipper, who was pouring out a torrent of words from the fulness of a vivid and rum-heightened imagination. "You only lose twenty-five dollars, any way!"

"Twenty-five?" bellowed Ebbs. "Twenty-five! What's twenty-five? Didn't I go to the bank with the swine and identify him and endorse his check for five hundred? Didn't I—say? Oh, I did! And didn't I do the same for a hundred for the girl? Tell me to shut up—on my own deck!"

And the wronged and indignant skipper then and there slugged the mate, who, taken unprepared, measured his length on the deck and, rising, went for his superior without a word. They were separated by the scandalized seamen.

Two hours later the *Morning Star* was running to sea, her crew jumping with alacrity for halyards, sheets, and outhauls, while an exceedingly sad and drunken skipper listened approvingly to a leather-lunged mate with a black eye, who was promising them the worst time in their lives in language which commanded their prompt obedience and respectful admiration.

The Man With the Tiger

By Albert Dorrington

A man-eating tiger is a risky creature to have on board a ship like the *Havelock* even if the brute be restrained by iron bars. A jewel like the Red Star Ruby, valued at three hundred thousand dollars is also a risky proposition, as its possession usually engenders unheard of schemes and concoctions, frequently with dire results

"I'LL allow him ten minutes to come aboard," said Captain Hayes; "and thirty seconds to dump his cage and beast under the fo'c's'le awning."

Hundreds of lights flared between Howrah Bridge and Reuter Wharf. A Singapore-bound steamer hooted her way from buoy to light-ship like a thing in dread of the ever-shifting sand-bars.

Captain Hayes wolfed the edges of a cigar fretfully as he spied a tarpaulin-covered wagon backing on to the wharf. A moment later a frock-coated Hindu alighted from a hansom and passed gingerly between the piles of jute bags and wharf lumber until he arrived at the steamer's gangway.

Hayes watched him somewhat impatiently as he dawdled on the plank, and his impatience quickened when the Hindu paused elaborately to light a cigarette.

"Excuse me, Mr. Sundra, we're fifty minutes late." Hayes leaned over the rail and his sun-blackened fists strayed casually into the pockets of bis white twill coat. "I guess we'll shake up our fires when your illustrious feet are ready to bring you aboard, sir." In acidulous moments the voice of Hayes grew smooth and pliable.

The Hindu glanced up in surprise at the big white man on the bridge. "I am sorry to make you wait, capateen. I experience trouble in the Strand Road with Nana Sahib."

"Nana Sahib! Is that the name of your pet tiger, Mr. Sundra?" Hayes stared at the long-faced Hindu incredulously.

"Nana Sahib is a good name, eh, you think?" The Hindu smiled serenely; his jeweled fingers caressed the cigarette with feminine deliberation. "The Hambourg show people want him delivered in healthy condition. We must take care of heem, capateen."

The wagon backed close to the steamer's side. A couple of wharf-hands drew away the tarpaulin, revealing a square, heavily barred cage that seemed to have done service in a traveling menagerie. A flat, wicked head grew suddenly visible in the flickering light of the wharf-lamp; a striped body and a pair of flaming eyes seemed to fade stealthily into the dark recess.

"Great Jerusalem!" Hayes drew back sharply; his half-lit cigar slipped from his fingers as he regarded the greasy iron cage and its occupant. "These Indian and Burma tigers are as big as cart-horses, and shifty as snakes."

A derrick swung the cage to the steamer's deck. Stonaway, the mate, stooped near the bars to unfasten the derrick chain, and leaped aside with a cry of fear. A huge paw smote the air within an inch of his body.

The Hindu hurried forward, protesting sharply.

"Do not touch the cage with your hands. Nana does not care for strange men."

Hayes laughed as the mate sideshipped toward the hatch, but his man-

ner changed swiftly as he caught sight of a well-dressed Englishman crossing the wharf toward the steamer.

"You'd better not come aboard, sir!" he shouted. "We're casting off."

The newcomer crossed the gangway briskly and heaved a small portmanteau to the deck. "Many pardons, Captain Hayes, but my business is more pressing than tides or sand-bars. I have a letter from Reuter & Co., your agents. They informed me, an hour ago, that I would find a cabin berth aboard the steamer *Havelock*."

"Why didn't you try a passenger-boat?" growled the captain. "This vessel wasn't built for commercial men. We've no saloon accommodation."

"I want to escape saloons and tourists, Captain Hayes. I want a rest from business worries. Your steamer fills the bill, and"—he fumbled at his breast pocket—"here's Reuter's letter, anyhow."

Hayes took the missive and scanned it hastily by the binnacle-light, and the frown on his face relaxed. "Guess you'll find things pretty musty aboard the *Havelock*, Mr. Hawler." He leaned over the bridge rail and nodded slightly to the fresh-faced Englishman. "Mr. Stonaway will berth you aft next to the gentleman who owns the tiger."

"The tiger!" Hawler glanced along the half-lit deck swiftly. "Heard something about it in the city to-day. The brute reached out with its claws for an old lady who happened to be passing the cage while it was standing at the railway-station. She was a bit shocked and is still threatening legal proceedings."

At eight o'clock a small tug hauled the *Havelock* into mid-stream. The night was insufferably hot, and the sound of the deck-hose shooting streams of water around the cage seemed to annoy the fretting brute crouching in the dark recess.

Dawn found the heavily laden cargo-tramp under full steam, the sand-heads well astern and a stiff breeze on her quarter.

The Hindu remained in his cabin part of the morning, but at midday a series of belching roars brought him on deck hurriedly.

"Looks as if he'd got to feed 'im." The cook peeped from the galley and pointed toward the empty stone drinking-trough and greasy floor of the tiger-house. "'Arf a sheep a day an' the fun of stickin' it under the bars," he added. "I'm not swappin' jobs with Mr. Sundra."

The Hindu insisted on feeding Nana Sahib with his own hands. The meat was thrust under the slide-bar with many endearing expressions and soft words uttered in the vernacular. "Eat, thou prince of the jungle. There is more when thou hast finished, my Nana. Clean drinks shalt thou have; sky-water of the gods shall be placed before thee."

For many hours the great brute sulked and lay with its flat jaw in the soft curve of its forepaw. Food failed to tempt it.

"He does not like the sea," purred the Hindu. "He has been accustomed to a rajah's courtyard, and liberty to keel his own sheep and goats. The jungle knew heem as a whelp, but he has drunk from the elephant pool under a king's window."

"D'ye mean to say they allowed that man-eater to wander about a courtyard?" gasped the cook.

The Hindu smiled and the edge of his white teeth gleamed through the rift in his beard. "Nana was the companion of a king's children. I was the tiger's keeper, you understan'." He glanced steadily at the restless cook, a sudden light gathering in his restless eyes. "I do not want you to look aftair Nana Sahib," he said briefly.

"Oh, my, ain't there some awful liars east of Aden!" chuckled the cook later. "Fancy a 'owling 'orror like that playin' with a lot of kids. I wouldn't trust 'im in the same pantomime with my dawg."

That night Hayes stumbled on Hawler investigating the iron gate at the back of the tiger-house. He drew back in surprise as the Englishman straightened himself somewhat hurriedly like one caught in a guilty act.

Hayes frowned. "Guess there's more

comfortable quarters on this vessel than at the back of a tiger's cage, sir. I'd advise you to keep clear of the brute's forearm, it's long enough to rip away the furnace-stays."

Hawler braced himself, as he emerged from the rear of the cage, like one about to make a confession. His alert eyes wandered from the bridge to the fo'c's'le head as though to make sure that none of the deck-hands were listening.

"I want to make a statement, Captain Hayes," he began slowly, "concerning Mr. Ramidar Sundra and the beast known as Nana Sahib."

Hayes wheeled round sharply, a look of mistrust in his eyes. "I guess the man and his tiger don't interest me too much," he said sourly. "I've got more time for old women and babies, sir. My emotions never keep me awake at night thinking of tigers."

The Englishman smiled curiously at the American skipper's rejoinder. "I'm fond of babies, too, Captain Hayes, but I'm certain you'd lie awake for a week if you knew the history of Mr. Sundra and his striped pet."

"Guess you can anoint me with tiger-grease if the story's worth hearing, sir. I'm simply listening."

Hawler moistened his dry lips as he glanced at Hayes. "Nana Sahib was stolen from the Royal Palace at Mandalay the morning after the Red Star Ruby was missing."

"They tell those yarns on the Iriwadi steamboats," growled Hayes. "English tourists fancy that Burma is bulging with eight-ounce rubies and peacock thrones. Did Mr. Sundra steal the tiger and the ruby?" he asked jauntily. "He don't impress me as being strong enough to steal a prawn, sir."

"Ramidar Sundra came from Mandalay on the twenty-eighth of last month." Hawler spoke as though he were reading an ordinary newspaper item aloud. "The Red Star Ruby belonged to Mindon Min, father of King Thebaw Min. A well-known European lapidarist estimates its value at three hundred thousand dollars. On the twenty-sixth of last month the palace attendants reported that the ruby had been cut from the brow of the Moon-god by one of the palace inmates."

"The hammer and chisel has blinded a lot of Hindu gods," laughed Hayes. "I tried the game myself once in a Ganges temple. I can't tell you what happened, but an old priest bit off the top of my right ear to show me that nobody was asleep."

Hawler was silent; he appeared to be listening to the guttural breathing that came from the tiger-cage.

Hayes paced the deck thoughtfully without meeting the Englishman's glance. Pausing almost sharply, he halted within a foot of the other's face.

"I guess you are a Rangoon detective, Mr. Hawler. Why"—he flung out his question with savage impatience—"why didn't you arrest Sundra at Reuter's Wharf? You'd have made it easier for me, sir."

"Steady, Captain Hayes," drawled the Englishman. "I'm in no one's service but my own. I came East with the intention of picking up a few of the gems that go begging sometimes among the impecunious rajahs and princes. I'm a jeweler's agent on the lookout for bargains."

Hayes wiped his brow. "I don't quite follow you, sir. Did Ramidar Sundra steal the ruby? Is that why he is flying to Europe?"

Hawler drew a Singapore newspaper from his coat pocket, crossed to the port light, and beckoned Hayes. Stooping over the jewel agent's shoulder, the captain was able to read a conspicuous cross-headed paragraph in the top, right-hand corner.

Since the death of King Mindon Min many atrocious acts have been committed within the royal stockade at Mandalay. The latest is one of the most daring on record. Sual Mahah, alias Ramidar Sundra, an animal keeper attached to the royal household, left Mandalay quite recently taking with him a favorite tiger that was once the most admired of King Mindon's magnificent collection of animals. Within a few hours of Sundra's departure it was discovered that the famous Red Star Ruby had been cut from the face of the Moon-god. In the matter of following up the thief, the Rangoon and Calcutta native police have shown themselves in-

efficient and untrustworthy. By allowing such evils to go unpunished the government of India and Burma is merely inviting a repetition of similar offences.

Haynes whistled softly as he tiptoed toward the stairhead and glanced below. A light was burning in the Hindu's cabin. Eight bells had been struck and the shadow of the lookout man swung across the port light.

"Now"—Hayes returned from the stairhead—"if he's got the ruby, what in thunder did he steal the tiger for?"

"The tiger may account for the ruby," chuckled the jewel-agent. "Besides, these native keepers get fairly rattled about their pet animals. Some of them can't sleep at night if they take away their cheetahs or elephants. I've seen a six-foot mahout weeping like a child because his best elephant was sick."

"But the ruby," insisted Hayes. "I'm not interested in a black man's affections."

"Listen, captain; the Calcutta police overhauled Ramidar's belongings without finding anything. The Red Star Ruby was not concealed anywhere in his baggage. Where is it? His movements were shepherded from the moment he entered India. He had only sufficient money about him to pay his passage to Europe. Now, I have an idea, Captain Hayes, that we must turn to the tiger for information. Do you follow me?"

"You are a hard man to follow," growled the other. "Surely you can't suspect the animal of having pockets?"

Hawler laughed strangely and drew Hayes into the shadow of the poop. "I've studied this affair for many reasons, and I cannot separate the tiger from the ruby. If Ramidar Sundra had concealed it about his person or forwarded it elsewhere, per medium of a friend, the native police would have recovered it long ago. The whole business baffled them completely, and they were not inclined to arrest him for stealing Nana Sahib. So we might do worse than search the tiger, Captain Hayes."

"Guess he'll bite you in half if you try, sir. And how, may I ask, could a tiger be made to carry a big flaming ruby about the world? The brute doesn't wear a collar, and you couldn't pack a stone between its claws, sir."

"A skilled veterinary surgeon or keeper could, with the aid of an anesthetic, make an incision under the animal's skin and conceal a fairly round stone until he arrived in a foreign port. I am satisfied that Ramidar Sundra came to a similar conclusion. In fact, there was no other way of bringing the ruby out of India or Burma. The average policeman does not care to overhaul a big tiger, in quest of stolen property. Besides, he isn't taught to think that way."

"You followed Ramidar aboard the *Havelock* on the chance——" Hayes glanced sharply at the jewel-agent.

"On the chance of poisoning a full-grown tiger named Nana Sahib. If you are a particular man, Captain Hayes, you'll object, perhaps. You are master here, and—and——" Hawler lit a cigarette slowly. "You'll admit I've put things in a nutshell."

"You think it was chloroformed while the Red Star Ruby was let in under the skin?" Hayes spoke with his back to the cage. "Great Scott! it must have been a hair-raising operation."

"Inserted behind the left shoulder, where the skin pouches and hangs loose," whispered the jewel-agent.

"It makes one wild to think that a spindle-legged rice-chewer like Ramidar Sundra can negotiate rubies, while better men are scrubbing the inside of a jail," growled Hayes.

Hawler shrugged his shoulders. "When we arrive at Suez Mr. Sundra will disappear with Nana Sahib. The great Burmese ruby will be on sale in Amsterdam or London a month later."

"You set a three-hundred-thousand-dollar value on it, Mr. Hawler?"

"Say two hundred and ninety thousand, and you'll leave a profit margin for the dealer. I could sell a dozen Red Stars at the price. It is one of the purest stones in Asia."

Captain Hayes pocketed both hands like one meditating deeply. He would have scorned to steal common merchan-

dise from the hold of a tramp steamer, but the thought of the precious Burmese ruby, concealed so cunningly within arm's length, affected him strangely.

Turning again toward the stairhead, he looked below in the direction of the Hindu's cabin. A slight cough from behind the deck-house caused him to whip round smartly. A pair of eyes were regarding him from the darkness beyond; the smell of perfumed clothes assailed him as the Hindu's lank face came into view. A suspicion crossed Hayes' mind that the master of Nana Sahib had been listening to the conversation.

Ramidar Sundra slouched from the deck-house shadow lazily; a half-smoked cigarette sparkled between his thin lips.

"Goot evening, Capateen Hayes. I think we have a vera fine trip," he said crisply.

Hayes faced him darkly. "Seems to me, sir, that this steamer isn't big enough for some people. It might be a fine trip, and it mightn't. I can't say that the smell of your tiger makes it brighter."

"Nana Sahib is in goot condition, Capateen Hayes. I look aftaire heem myself."

"He's giving the steamer a musty smell, sir, and the crew are complaining. You've brought him from a plague-scheduled port; I can smell the complaint in his skin. I'll swear," cried Hayes, with sudden vigor, "that your tiger is developing bubos near his shoulder. There is a swelling under the skin as big as a potato."

The effect of his random shot was immediate. The Hindu's jaw hung sullenly, he stared owlishly for a moment like one who had been struck in the dark.

Hawler stepped forward briskly as though nothing had happened.

"Come, gentlemen," he began suavely, "let us have a bottle of wine and talk business."

A savage silence seemed to leap between the three men. The throbbing of the steamer's engines measured their quickening pulses. The Hindu's toes turned in suddenly like the paws of a wolf. His shining teeth were visible through the rift in his beard. "What for you talk business to me, eh? You speak just now as though you have me in one damn trap!"

He moved past Hawler and allowed his hand to rest on the cage-front nervously. "I say that Nana is in goot health. I say that. Do you hear?" He raised the tarpaulin as though to exhibit the tiger to their gaze.

Hayes loafed across the deck, smiling at the Hindu's ferocity of manner. "If you can explain that swelling behind the tiger's shoulder I'll apologize," he said slowly. "It might be an ordinary tumor, but I've a suspicion it's bubonic plague. Unless you prove otherwise, Mr. Sundra, I'll give myself a clean certificate by dropping Nana Sahib overboard."

The Hindu's lank figure grew stiff and immovable; the dark pupils of his eyes glowed with a savage irridescence. It seemed as though his pent-up rage had transferred itself to the catlike face behind the cage bars. It rose with a short, coughing snarl, and smote the iron gate with its terrible paw.

"Be still, thou!" the Hindu snapped the words over his shoulder like one addressing an angry dog. At sound of his voice the brute half-fawned as it padded up and down the greasy cage. A long-drawn whoof came from its throat.

Turning to Hayes, Ramidar Sundra spoke in an altered voice.

"You have no right to put Nana overboard; no right, you onderstand." He crouched beside the cage now, his left hand raised to the cross-bars.

"What are you fumbling with that lock for?" Hayes slipped forward as the gate-bolt shot back. The creaking of the door hinges was smothered by the hoarse belchings of the beast inside.

"You infernal trickster!" Hayes sprang aside, seizing a belaying-pin from its socket as he ran. The big striped head of the tiger appeared in the iron doorway; a sobbing roar ran along the deck as it bounded from the open cage to the hatch. The Hindu

leaned against the gate and laughed wickedly at sight of Hawler racing up the bridge steps in front of Hayes.

"You have lost the point of view, my friends," shouted the master of Nana Sahib. "Why do you run away? I will prove beyond doubt that Nana is not seek with plague."

The two white men glared from the bridge at the flat-eared tiger sniffing catlike along the deck. Striding aft, it disappeared in a flash down the open stairs.

A sudden shout of dismay and horror came from below, drowned by a muffled roar and continuous bumping as though a body were being dragged across the floor. A fireman and two deck-hands scampered for'rd toward the bridge and scrambled, panting, over the rail beside Hawler and Hayes.

"That blamed tiger's got Morgan, the engineer!" gasped the fireman. "Dragged him from his bunk before he could shut the door."

The steamer rolled and throbbed through the almost motionless sea. A wisp of moon hung shell-like over the rim of the horizon. Occasionally the sea rose in velvet creases reflecting innumerable stars.

The mate, accompanied by a stoker, ran from the fo'c's'le and joined the others on the bridge. Hayes wiped his perspiring face and regarded the fear-stricken faces around him. "We're trapped, my lads, unless some one fetches my rifle from below."

"I'll go, cap'n." The fireman swung over the rail and dropped noiselessly to the deck. "Morgan was my mate. I shipped with him in the *Emily Burnside* from Plymouth."

A bitter silence hung over the steamer as the fireman raced for the stairhead. From Morgan's cabin came a guttural purring noise, followed by savage growls.

An uneasy look crossed the Hindu's face. He seemed to understand the importance of the fireman's task. A bullet or two from Hayes' rifle would dispose of Nana Sahib, leaving him to face an angry cabin and crew alone. With the tiger as an ally he could dictate terms to the whole ship. Kneeling on the deck, he raised his voice to a savage shout of command.

"Hi, yah, Nana! Soolya, jilda! Hi, yah!" His voice had the peculiar yapping note that is often heard among animal-tamers in big menageries. A sharp, bounding movement was heard below. Then came the fireman, with bulging eyes and terror-stricken face, racing toward the bridge. Behind him flashed a pair of eyeballs and crouching body.

"Help! cap'n, help!" The fireman leaped forward blindly, clutching with despairing hands at the bridge steps. Hayes stooped and drew him up smartly as the tiger turned with a heart-shaking roar across the deck. There were blood-drops on its chest and forepaws; it limped forward, its face upturned to the knot of men on the bridge.

"Nana! Come, thou!" The Hindu raised his hand slightly, as though about to crack a whip. The tiger slunk to his side licking its jaws. Turning again, it roared defiantly until the thunderous echoes sobbed from stern to bulkhead.

Ramidar Sundra stroked the animal's quivering body until it stretched itself beside him on the hatch. Lighting a cigarette, he lay back, his head resting against the big, white chest.

Hayes spoke to the man in the wheelhouse calmly. "Keep to your course, and don't get rattled, my lad. Old stick-in-the-mud is giving us a free circus."

"We'll have to get that rifle." Hayes spoke through his teeth as he watched the Hindu sprawl over the tiger's inert body. "He's got us dog-licked if we stay here, lads."

The mate and the fireman made no movement; the others regarded the captain dumbly. To venture along the deck now was almost certain death. The watchful beast on the hatchway seemed able to cross from fo'c's'le to stairhead at a bound.

It seemed as though Ramidar Sundra divined Hayes' thoughts. Rising gracefully, he slipped toward the companion and descended. A moment or two later he appeared with a rifle.

Hayes swore softly as he sauntered back to the hatch, his white teeth showing in the darkness.

"You people get wet up there by an' by," the Hindu said playfully. "How do you feel this time, eh?"

"Guess we're moist behind the ears already, Mr. Sundra. You played this kind of a game before at Cawnpore and Delhi with the same kind of a Nana Sahib at your heels," answered Hayes.

Ramdar Sundra waved his cigarette jauntily, and in the blue darkness of the Indian night the smoke seemed to coil in silver wreaths about the tiger's head.

"I play this game to the end, Capateen Hayes. You find me too much awake for you?"

"If I bounced this steamer on to a reef you'd feel as sick as your tiger," cried Hayes. "You keep me up here too long, and I'll put the *Havelock* under water. Savvy?"

There was no answer.

The long night came to an end. The men huddled on the bridge saw the skyline whiten until the brown belts of the dawn flushed the east. The *Havelock* appeared to wade through the slow-heaving sea. The firemen and sailors below called out from time to time, but no one among them cared to cross the deck while the flaming eyes kept ceaseless watch.

The faces of the men on the bridge grew weary in the morning light. Hayes was nonplused. He watched, with dry lips and clenched fists, the figure of the Hindu, dozing occasionally, the loaded rifle between his knees.

The *Havelock* seemed to swoon through the long, hot morning, and as the sun rose higher it beat with tropic fulness upon their unsheltered heads.

A fireman raised himself from the floor of the bridge and turned toward the water-cask at the head of the companion.

"I want a drink," he said hoarsely. "D'ye hear?" He beckoned to the black shape reclining against Nana Sahib's breathing sides. "Just say if you're going to cut off the water?"

The dozing Hindu half-opened an eye and regarded the speaker dreamily. There followed a silence that fell sharp as a murder-threat upon the listening crew. The tiger yawned until the tight-drawn skin receded from the quivering red mouth. With a deep, coughing purr it shifted, and lay with its head well in the shade of the fo'c's'le awning.

The fireman wiped his clammy face and grinned weakly. No one spoke. Hayes passed into the wheel-house and relieved the mate. The *Havelock* was held to her course.

Ten minutes later the Hindu rose and stalked aft toward the pantry, the rifle tucked leisurely under his left arm. Nana Sahib made no attempt to follow, but the ears grew flat, the jaws gaped, as one of the men leaned over the bridge rail to catch a glimpse of Sundra's movements.

There was no hurry about his actions. He squatted outside the pantry eating what was nearest to hand. Filling both hands with water from the cask, he drank greedily again and again. Then, filling the cook's bucket, he carried it to the waiting tiger.

The dry-throated men on the bridge watched the big, red tongue lapping the cool water. The fireman wiped his parched lips and leaned against the wheel-house.

Night brought small relief to the thirst-tormented watchers. Hayes grew restless and fidgety, but withal he saw a certain grim comedy in the situation. They were practically besieged and cut off from food supplies. Ramidar Sundra had not addressed them for hours. His head nodded as he sat cross-legged beside the sleeping tiger.

At seven bells his head fell forward to his knees; his grasp on the rifle slackened perceptibly.

"Now's our time!" The captain's dry lips merely framed the words. "If one of you lads could slip along the counter under the port rail and gain the stairhead you'll find my revolver and cartridges in the locker beside my berth. Fetch it, and we'll end this blamed farce."

The mate responded alertly. Slipping over the steamer's side, he crept

along the counter until he stood opposite the companion. Vaulting the rail, he vanished below.

Nana Sahib, with its head toward the steamer's stern, stretched its huge limbs lazily and lay down again. But Hayes noticed that the beast kept its eyes on the stairhead, the tip of the tale brushing the hatch with pendulumlike regularity.

A slice-bar rattled from a stoker's hand below; a pair of coal-blackened faces peeped from the engine-room anxiously. Hayes bid them, with savage gesture, to return to their work below. A moment later the sudden slamming of a cabin door seemed to shake the steamer; it was apparent that the mate in his anxiety to reach the locker had slipped and fallen. The slamming sound was intensified by the unutterable stillness of the night.

Ramidar Sundra raised his head and yawned drowsily. Then, as he glanced upward his beadlike eyes noted the altered positions of the bridge occupants. A familiar shape was missing. His lips moved as though he were counting them. In a fraction of time his attitude of dozing indifference changed to one of ferocious vigilance.

The mate's head appeared above the stairway. With a sudden bound he reached the port side, ducking as he ran.

The Hindu leaned forward, resting on one knee. A blinding flash whipped the dark alleyway, the smoke drifted back in his face as he fired again. At the second flash the mate turned with both knees on the rail and pitched down into the darkness below.

Ramidar Sundra remained kneeling, the smoking rifle half-lowered. At the first report the tiger bounded with a horrible roar across the deck, standing with its paws on the rail where the mate had vanished.

Hayes spoke to the men crouching about the wheel-house. "There's no more cartridges in the nigger's rifle. There's more below, but I guess he won't find 'em."

The Hindu glanced up at the wheel-house uncertainly. The empty rifle in his hand was now useless. He turned in the direction of the stairhead, as though contemplating another visit in quest of ammunition.

With the tiger at heel he passed swiftly under the bridge and looked up at the line of staring faces above. Hayes' arm jolted downward, a belaying-pin crashed on the Hindu's upturned brow. He fell without a cry, and rolled with knees updrawn into the scuppers.

"Good as skittles when you're in practise," said Hayes. "We'll get that rifle in a jiffy and liven things up."

The tiger prowled aft and sniffed suspiciously at the supine figure in the scuppers. With a long-drawn whoof, it returned to the fo'c's'le head.

Hayes lowered himself from the bridge and crept along the port rail stealthily. At the stairhead he looked back sharply and bounded below. Five minutes later he returned to the deck. For a moment he halted and measured the distance that separated him from the tiger in the fo'c's'le. Foot by foot he advanced, his pockets bulging with cartridges, until his hand gripped the rifle lying beside the Hindu.

A half-heard snarl reached him from the fo'c's'le head, then the heavy pad, pad of feet as the beast bounded from the hatch in his direction.

"Quick, for your life!" Hawler gesticulated frantically from above. Hayes, with the cunning of a born sailor, reached for the bridge stanchion and drew himself up. The huge, catlike body flashed after him, paw, chest, and head seeming to heap themselves over the rail.

Hayes had no time to turn; he fired over his shoulder into the hot, fetid breath, and again into the flaming eyes. The mountainous mass relaxed its hold convulsively, pitched overboard, and was gone. A stream of phosphorescent light trailed under the *Havelock's* keel.

"Gone!" A look of disgust came into the jewel-agent's eyes. "So much for the Red Star Ruby!"

Captain Hayes made no reply. Later he wandered aft, wiping his brow.

The Hemlock Avenue Mystery

By Roman Doubleday

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Percy Lyon, reporter for the Waynscott *News*, is present at a quarrel between Warren Fullerton and Arthur Lawrence, two young lawyers of Waynscott. That evening, while fulfilling an assignment, Lyon sees Lawrence coming out of a house on Hemlock Avenue, and later in the evening he sees a woman run swiftly across the street and apparently enter in the rear of the house at which Lawrence had previously called. Shortly afterward Fullerton, with his coat reversed, is found murdered—a blow on the head from some sharp instrument causing death. At the inquest a broken cane belonging to Lawrence is produced. Some boys found it in a lot near the scene of the tragedy. The knob is smashed and particles of hair found caught in the broken metal. Lawrence is arrested and refuses to explain anything to Mr. Howell, his lawyer. Lyon, at the prisoner's request, interviews Miss Wolcott—the young lady at whose house Lawrence had called, and finds her a strange young woman. Inspecting a fence in the rear of Miss Wolcott's house, Lyon finds a loose panel which opens into the yard of a Miss Elliott's school. By luck and by strategy he learns a Mrs. Woods Broughton is very ill there, from a nervous trouble dating from the evening of Fullerton's death. He interviews her and learns she knew Lawrence before and even now is sending flowers to the prisoner. To facilitate his entrée to the school he secures a letter of introduction to Miss Kitty Tayntor—a girl from his home town.

CHAPTER X.

THE first thing to do was to see Kitty Tayntor. Lyon had received, from his kind-hearted friend in Columbus, a glowing endorsement which he had mailed to Miss Elliott, with a formal request that he might be permitted to call upon Miss Tayntor. In reply he had received a polite note, authorizing him to present himself the following Wednesday. This was encouraging, but it hardly prepared him for the more than encouraging reception which awaited him when he had duly sent up his card. A tall girl, with a fluff of light hair and eyes so dazzling that he really could not tell what color they were, came down to meet him with a pretty impetuosity.

"Oh, Cousin Percy! I'm *so* glad to see you! It took you the longest time to find out I was here, didn't it? I made up my mind I would never send you word to the end of time! I just thought I'd have a good joke on you when you did come around at last."

"I—I beg your pardon——" stammered Lyon.

"Oh, I don't mind! We'll make up for lost time. I have so many things to tell you about home. When were you there last? I know you don't write often—men never do, Aunt Meg says—so I don't suppose you know that Cousin Jennie is engaged? To Doctor Whitman. Did you know him? No, I think you were in the East when he was there. We all like him very much."

"I'm afraid you are mista——" Lyon tried to put in, but she swept on with the charming hurry of a breathless little brook.

"And I want to know all about your work. It must be just awfully interesting to write for the papers. I don't see how you can think of things to say! I told Miss Elliott that maybe you would help me with my compositions."

"I should be delighted, but I must ——"

"She said that since you were my cousin," Kitty continued, with a subtle emphasis, and a momentary widening of her big eyes, "that she would be very glad to have me submit my compositions to you and get your suggestions.

It is very fortunate that you are my cousin. You know if you were not, you wouldn't have been allowed to call on me at all. That's one of the rules of the school."

"Oh!" said Lyon, with sudden illumination. "I didn't know that. I'm afraid I never mentioned our relationship to Miss Elliott. I did not know that it was necessary."

"Oh, I made it all straight. I explained it to her," Kitty said, clapping her small hands inaudibly, and fairly beaming her joyous thanks upon him.

"Would the rules of the school permit you to go out for a walk with me? If I tread on dangerous ground without knowing it, you will have to put me straight. It is a glorious day, and a brisk walk would do you a lot of good."

"I don't know," Kitty murmured. "Some time, maybe——"

"No time like to-day," said Lyon firmly. With his best air he approached the lady who, in the far end of the reception-room, had been absorbed in a volume of "British Poets." "Would there be any objection to my taking my cousin out for a walk?"

"I think not," the lady said, somewhat hesitatingly.

"Then run up and put on your hat, Kitty," said Lyon coolly. "I'll guarantee to have her back at any time you set."

"I don't quite know what Miss Elliott would say," faltered the timid lady, "but I think you'd better be back in half an hour."

Kitty threw her arms around her neck. "You're just an angel, Miss Rose!"

And she flew up to her room, while Lyon devoted himself to Miss Rose so successfully that she looked upon young men as a class more hopefully from that hour.

"Now, Cousin Kitty," said Lyon as soon as they were outside.

"You needn't keep that up," she interrupted.

"Yes, I do," he said firmly. "I mustn't get out of practise for a minute, or I might slip up some time. Now talk fast and tell me all the things that I really have to know."

She shot a shy glance at him under her lashes. "It was awfully nice of you to catch on so quickly."

"It was interesting, but difficult. But you are a courageous girl! Suppose I hadn't caught on?"

"I know! Wouldn't it have been awful? Or suppose you hadn't been—nice, you know! But I had to take some chances. You don't know how dreadful it is to stay shut up inside of walls like those, and never to go outside unless we go with one of the teachers, and never to see any callers unless they are relatives. And I haven't any relatives at all except Aunt Meg and Uncle Joe and Cousin Jennie at Columbus, so I never had the excitement of going down-stairs to see some one in the reception-room, while the girls hung over the banisters to see what he looked like when he went away." She stole a gratified glance at Lyon's straight figure and good clothes.

"I think I was in great luck," said Lyon simply.

And certainly the words were well within the limit of his feelings on the subject. He had barely hoped to establish some sort of an entrée to the school. That the Miss Kitty whose name he had selected at random from the catalogue should be so pretty, so unusually entertaining, was pure gratuity on the part of fate. And what a reckless child she was!

Modest as Lyon was, he couldn't help recognizing that it was luck for Kitty as well as for himself that it was he and not some one else who had been admitted so confidently to this fascinating intimacy. A dawning sense of responsibility for this irresponsible new cousin made him defer the real object of his inquiry to extend the field of his acquaintance with Kitty herself.

"How long have you been at school here, Kitty?"

"I came last September. Why?"

"Oh, I think I ought to know. Do you like it?"

"Oh, it's rather good fun," she said

cheerfully. "We have lots of spreads in our rooms and Miss Elliott has rules about everything, and that keeps us busy. Rules always make me want to go right to work and break them, just to see if I can."

"And can you?" he asked, with interest.

She looked demure. "Oh, maybe there might be some that I don't know about yet that I couldn't break."

"What are some of the rules of the school?" That was a point on which he particularly wished to post himself.

"Oh, everything. Miss Elliott won't ever let me go out walking with you like this again. Miss Rose is a new teacher. She has just come, and she didn't know."

"But I may come and see you?"

"Only on Wednesdays. But that will be quite exciting."

"I'm glad that's allowed," said Lyon, with an inward smile.

He was trying mentally to figure out how he was going to keep in touch with Mrs. Broughton's condition if he was only allowed to visit the school once a week. That would not suit him at all. There was now only a week or eight days before the meeting of the grand jury, and if Mrs. Broughton's information was going to do any good at all, they must have it very soon. He must try to draw Kitty into his scheme at once, while he had this opportunity.

"Kitty, I want you to help me out about something. There is a lady visiting Miss Elliott——"

"Oh, do you know her?"

"I know who she is. And I have met her once."

"Isn't she perfectly beautiful? I should rather be like her than any one else in the world."

Lyon smiled inscrutably but his tongue was discreet if his eyes were not always.

"Mrs. Broughton is very ill, and Doctor Barry says that I must not disturb her by talking business. Now, it is very urgent that I should have a chance to talk business with her just as soon as she is able to stand it—at the very earliest moment possible. I was wondering if I could find out through you how she is getting on. I am afraid to trust Doctor Barry, you see. He will want to keep me off, and it may be too late to do any good by the time he is willing. At the same time I don't want to force myself upon her before she really is strong enough to stand it. You understand?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. I'll explain it all to her, and then she can say herself when she wants you to come."

"Are you allowed to go in and see her?" asked Lyon, in surprise.

"Every evening. She likes to have me rub her head and put her to sleep."

"Oh, that's very fortunate. I thought no one was allowed to go in at all."

"No one else is. No one even goes into those halls, and we mustn't laugh or talk so that she can hear it. But the first evening when we came back after vacation I naturally wanted to know who it was in those rooms and why she was shut up with a trained nurse and why we had to keep so specially quiet for her. So I just waited around till the nurse went down to get her supper, and then I slipped in. The door wasn't locked, so it was perfectly easy. And there I found the most perfectly beautiful woman I ever saw outside of a book. You can't think how fascinated I was. I knew it was good for my education to see a lot of her, because she had such lovely manners, and I was wild to think they would come and order me out and make a rule that I must never go in again, so I just made myself as interesting to her as I possibly could. I had to hurry a lot because there wasn't much time. The nurse was liable to come back any moment."

"How interesting can you make yourself when you really give your mind to it?" asked Lyon, with lively curiosity.

"Oh—interesting *enough*. It worked all right, too, because, when the nurse came back, Mrs. Broughton just insisted that I should stay a little longer. She said it did her good, and she would be nervous if they didn't let me stay, and that she liked to have me there, and she got so excited that they got scared. I

guess, because the nurse finally said: 'Well'—like that, you know, and so I stayed, and I was good for her, too. So ever since that they let me go in for an hour in the evening, while the nurse is having her supper."

"Good! Nothing could be better. Then you can let me know the first minute that she is strong enough for me to come and see her, and particularly whether she is planning to go away. Would you be sure to know that?"

"Oh, yes. I'd see. I always see things."

"And you could send me a note?"

Kitty looked doubtful. "Miss Elliott reads all our letters, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"That wouldn't matter, because I could write it so that she wouldn't understand, although it would be perfectly plain to you, but I am not sure she would let me write to you at all. You see, you are a rather new cousin, and if you are going to come to see me every week——"

"She would think that was enough. I see. Well, then, what can we do?"

But Kitty had a plan already evolved. "I know. My room is the corner one at the back of the house—you can see it from this corner of the street. There! Do you see the two windows with the curtains clear up? Well, so long as I leave the curtain in the right-hand window up the way it is now, it means that she is too ill to be disturbed. But if I pull it down, she is getting better, and the more I pull it down, the better and stronger she is until when I pull it way down she is quite well. And the other window, the one in the corner, will tell about her going away. If I see signs of her getting ready to go, I'll pull it part-way down, and if it goes as low as the middle sash it means you must hurry if you want to see her, and when I pull it quite down, she has gone!"

"Kitty, you are a genius!"

"And you don't mind that it is breaking rules—only they aren't made into rules, because nobody thought that they would be needed? I thought just a little that you didn't quite like it a while ago!"

Lyon laughed. "You are quite right, and I mustn't be superior any more. But it is very important that I should have a chance to see Mrs. Broughton—important to other people than myself."

She gave him a demure, sidelong glance, and then dropped her eyes. "Is it about Mr. Lawrence?" she asked ingenuously.

"You amazing young lady! What do you know about Mr. Lawrence?"

"Mrs. Broughton told me about him."

"Did she?" he asked alertly. "What did she tell you?"

"Oh, she has talked about him a great deal. He was an old friend of hers before she was married, and, just think, she had seen him only the day before he was arrested."

"Did she tell you where she saw him, or what about?"

"No. But she is very grateful to him for something. She says he is like a knight of old. I think if he could know she said that, he would feel proud, don't you?"

Lyon frowned thoughtfully. "What else did she say?"

Kitty reflected. "She said that they would never, never hang Mr. Lawrence, because nobody saw him kill Mr. Fullerton, and they couldn't hang him unless somebody swore he saw him. Is that the law?"

"I don't know much about the law myself."

"And she says that it isn't so bad for him to be locked up for a little while when they will have to let him go in the end, as it would be for some one else to be hanged. I think that is true, too, don't you?"

In spite of his need to explore her mind, the words on her lips shocked him.

"Mrs. Broughton shouldn't talk to you about such things," he said impatiently.

She lifted astonished eyes to his.

"But then I should never have known anything about it! Miss Elliott doesn't allow us to read the papers ever, and I want to know life!"

"Time enough," laughed Lyon.

"Oh, I'm *not* a child. I can understand. It has been a great thing for me to know Mrs. Broughton."

"She is a beautiful woman," Lyon conceded, somewhat coldly.

Secretly he thought Kitty might have been as well off without that intimacy. But before he left the subject there was one point on which he wanted to get light, if possible, without betraying the point of his interest—Mrs. Broughton's possible acquaintance with the loose panel in the protecting wall of the school-yard.

"Do you know if Mrs. Broughton has been here before?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. She always stops here when she comes to Waynscott. She was one of Miss Elliott's first pupils."

"Then she knows the house and yard pretty well?"

"Oh, of course!"

"By the way, I notice that your back yard is fenced in. There is no way of getting in except by the front door, of course."

Kitty looked at him with observant attention.

"When you say 'of course' in that careless way, it makes me think you mean just the opposite," she said suspiciously.

He had to laugh at her penetration. "Then *is* there any other way in?" he asked.

She hesitated, and then said, with an exaggerated imitation of his own "careless" manner:

"Oh, *of course* not!"

"Does Mrs. Broughton know about it, do you think?"

She pursed up her lips and nodded her head violently.

"She belongs to the Immortal Few Society. It has always been one of the things the Immortal Fews learned at initiation."

"Has she spoken of it to you?"

"No!"

"No, she wouldn't be apt to," Lyon reflected. Then somewhat violently he changed the subject. "Come, we won't talk about her any more. Tell me about our family, so that I won't make mistakes."

She spent the rest of the time coaching him about his newly acquired relatives, and they parted at Miss Elliott's door with mutual satisfaction.

There is no game so trying to the nerves as a waiting-game. Lyon was cool by temperament and self-controlled from experience, but he found it necessary to call on both his native and acquired composure to enable him to face the situation without wanting to do something, anything, to force fate's hand. To wait, just to sit still and wait, for Mrs. Broughton to recover, while all the time Lawrence was drawing nearer and nearer to the day that would blast his career even if he escaped with his life—it was nerve-racking. And all the time Bede was working, like a mole in the dark, undermining the wall of silence which Lawrence had thrown up. Heaven knew what he might feel bound to discover for the credit of his profession! It might prove, of course, that Mrs. Broughton had nothing bearing upon the subject to tell, but until he knew, he would hold the hope that somehow, in some way, she might clear matters up. Yes, he must wait.

And then, as he was dropping off to sleep, he woke himself up to murmur quite irrelevantly:

"Anyhow, I'm glad she didn't say that she would be a sister to me!"

CHAPTER XI.

But if Lyon had fancied that fate was doing nothing merely because he had run into a blind alley himself, he soon had reason to suspect that he was mistaken. The manner in which he stumbled against some of her threads and so became more than ever entangled in her weaving, was curiously casual—but, as a matter of fact, most of the happenings of life seem casual at the time. It is only looking back that their connection comes into view, like a path on a far-off mountain, only to be seen from a distance.

Lyon had allowed himself to jubilate a little over the curtain-code which he had established with Kitty. He felt

it highly important that he should be able to see those windows very frequently. Suppose Kitty should pull down a curtain and he not know about it for hours! The idea was not to be entertained calmly. Would it be possible for him to get a room in the neighborhood? He had learned in his profession that the world belongs to him who asks for it, so, selecting a house whose back windows must, from their position, command an unobstructed view of Miss Elliott's School, he boldly rang the bell.

He had no idea who might live there. The house was on a lot adjoining Miss Wolcott's, and, like her house, it overlooked the back windows and the grounds of the school. It was in a position that suited his needs. For the rest, he trusted to the star which had more than once favored his quiet audacity.

His ring was answered by a servant of a peculiarly uncheerful cast of countenance.

"Is your mistress at home?" Lyon asked.

"There ain't no mistress," the woman protested, in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, your master, then. Will you take up my card? I want to see him on business."

She took it and departed, with that same querulous air of dissatisfaction with the world in general.

That there was no mistress in the house was very evident, even to Lyon's uninstructed masculine sense. The reception-room where he waited was dusty and musty, bearing unmistakable signs of having been closed for the summer and since untouched. There was an echoing hollowness about the halls that seemed to proclaim the house uninhabited, in spite of the servant. While Lyon was speculating upon the situation, a thin, dark, middle-aged man entered the room silently and yet with an alertness that was noticeable. He looked at Lyon with sharp inquiry—almost, it struck the intruder, with apprehension.

"Well?" he said curtly.

"I hope it won't strike you as cheeky," said Lyon, "but I called on the bare chance of your having a spare bedroom that you could rent me for a month—or even less. I think my references would be satisfactory. They are going to paper my rooms at the Grosvenor, and I've got to clear out while they are messing around, and I like this part of town, so I just thought I'd see what luck I had if I went around and asked. I'm not exacting——"

"We're not renting rooms."

"I know, but as a special matter——"

"Couldn't think of it."

"Do you happen to know any one else in the neighborhood who does?"

"Don't know any one."

"I wish you would reconsider. It would be an accommodation to me."

"Sorry, but it's impossible."

The impatience of the man's tone suggested that the interview had lasted long enough, and Lyon rose reluctantly. He hated to feel that his inspiration had failed him. At that moment, however, the portière which separated the reception-room from what appeared to be an equally musty and dusty library in the rear was pushed aside and another man entered—a man of impressive bearing and appearance, in spite of the fact that he wore a skull-cap and a long dressing-gown and that a pair of large blue goggles hid his eyes. The lower part of his face was covered with a beard, and yet Lyon felt at once that here was a man of powerful personality.

"I overheard your request from the next room," he said, in a courteous but positive tone, and bowing slightly to Lyon—who could not repress a wonder whether that position in the back room had not been taken for the express purpose of overhearing him. "I'm not sure that we cannot accommodate the young gentleman, Phillips."

Phillips looked disapproval and injury in every line of his face, but he said nothing. He had at once fallen into the attitude of a subordinate.

"You are more than kind," said Lyon eagerly. "I know it's a great deal to ask—but it would be a great accommodation, and I'd try to make no bother."

"You will have to judge for yourself whether there is a room that you could

use. I don't know much about the home. We have only just moved in ourselves. It was a furnished house, closed for the summer, and the agent let us take it for the time being. I am in town temporarily, having my eyes treated, and I wanted a place where I could be more quiet than in a hotel. My name is Olden. This is my good friend Phillips, who looks after me generally, and thinks I ought not to increase my household. I sometimes venture to differ from him, however. The servant whom you saw at the door has undertaken to keep us from starving, and she would undoubtedly be able to care for your room. Now you know the family. Would you care to look at the rooms?"

"Thank you, I should like to very much," cried Lyon gaily.

It was so much better than he had had any possible grounds for expecting that his faith in his star soared up again. This was what came of venturing! And in spite of the curious sensation of talking in the dark which Mr. Olden's goggles gave him, he liked the man. There was dignity and directness in his speech, and his voice was singularly magnetic.

Olden led the way up-stairs, moving with the swift confidence of a man of affairs and not at all as an invalid.

"There are four bedrooms on this floor," he said. "Phillips has one of them, and I have one. This large room on the front is unoccupied."

The room was large and attractive, but Lyon was not interested in the view toward Hemlock Avenue! He barely glanced at it.

"Might I see the other room?"

Olden opened the door to a back bedroom which, though clean, was small and in no wise so desirable as the other. But it looked the right way, and on going to the window Lyon saw that Kitty's curtains were both high up.

"This will suit me exactly," he said eagerly. "May I have this room?"

"You really haven't looked at it very carefully," said Olden, with just the barest hint of amusement in his voice.

"Oh, well—I—I can see that it will suit me. I sha'n't be in it very much. I'm connected with the *News,* as you know from my card. I'll be here only at night."

"Yes, it's a pleasant little room. And it has an open view. That large building is Miss Elliott's school, I am told."

"Yes, I know," laughed Lyon. "Fact is, I know one of the young ladies at the school."

"Indeed?" There was surprise and, if it had been possible to believe it, disappointment in Mr. Olden's voice. It was as though he had said: "Oh, is that it?" The blue goggles scrutinized Lyon for a moment before he said: "Well, shall we consider it settled?"

"If you please. When may I come in?"

"Whenever you like. I'll tell Sarah to make the room ready. And I hope, Mr. Lyon," he added, as they went back down-stairs, "that you will sometimes join me in a cigar before you turn in. Shut in as I am, unable to use my eyes or to see people, you will be doing me a charity if you will come in and gossip a bit. Will you do it?"

"I'll be glad to," said Lyon heartily.

"That will more than repay me, if there is any favor to you in our arrangement," the man said, with a certain emphasis. He probably was lonely, Lyon reflected, with quick sympathy.

Lyon left the house much elated. When he reached the sidewalk he remembered that he had not asked for a latch-key, and that he was apt to return late. He hurried back to the door. The lock had not caught when he came out, and the door stood just so much ajar that he saw Olden and Phillips in the hall, and heard Olden explain, with a ring of passion in his voice: "You would have thrown such a chance as that away?"

They both looked so startled when he made his presence known, that he was swiftly aware he had been the subject of what seemed to have been a heated discussion. Evidently Phillips had protested against his admission to the household. When he made his suggestion about a latch-key, Olden answered:

"Why, I only have one, but I'll let

you in myself whenever you ring. I'll be up, never fear."

Lyon had a busy afternoon—for, in spite of his mental absorption in matters relating to Lawrence, he was still reporting for the *News*, and had to keep his assignments. He therefore had no opportunity to see Howell that day, and it was nine o'clock at night when he arrived, with his bag, at his new home. Olden let him in with an alacrity that suggested he had been waiting for him. This idea was also suggested by the looks of the dining-room, where a tray, with bottles and glasses, and a box of cigars, had been arranged alluringly within sight.

"All right, I'll be down in a minute," the new lodger said gaily. "We'll make a night of it! Just wait till I put my grip in my room!"

He ran up-stairs and looked across to Miss Elliott's School. The light gleamed brightly from Kitty's windows. The curtain on the right was perceptibly lower than the other. It seemed to cut off the upper third of the window. Lyon read the message with keen interest—"Mrs. Broughton is better. She gives no signs of departure." Across the dark he blew a kiss to the unseen messenger, and hurried down-stairs where his mysterious landlord was walking restlessly up and down the long dining-room.

"Well, what shall we gossip about?" he asked gaily.

Olden had shown no signs of physical feebleness, yet Lyon felt a hurt about him that prompted him to a show of cheerfulness beyond his habit with a stranger, and the success of his curtain-code had put him into an elated mood.

"What do people gossip about?"

"Their friends, don't they? And their enemies, and the delinquencies of both."

"That's all right," said Olden quickly. "Tell me about your friends and their delinquencies."

"I haven't many here. I'm a stranger myself, comparatively. The man in Waynscott I care most for, and admire most, and am sorriest for, is Arthur Lawrence."

Olden was leaning forward in an attitude of eager listening.

"That sounds like a good beginning. Will you have something? Then take a cigar, and talk to me about Arthur Lawrence. I'm entirely a stranger in Waynscott, you know, but, of course, I have heard of the murder. I infer that you believe him innocent."

"Yes, I do."

"Yet I understand that he was unable or unwilling to give a very clear account of his movements that evening. Phillips read me the newspapers, and I thought it looked like a tight box for him, unless he could explain his movements somewhat."

"But he may explain them yet. Trial by newspaper is not final. There has been no chance for the real testimony, you know."

"Has gossip nothing to say on the subject?" persisted Olden. He had dropped into an armchair and was surrounding himself with smoke, but Lyon was aware that through the smoke and the goggles which he still wore he was bending an observant eye upon his visitor.

"Gossip says many nothings. So far, nothing relevant. The murder seems to be one of those clueless mysteries which are the most difficult for the police to unravel."

"But you—you are behind the scenes, in a fashion. Don't you know something that the public hasn't got hold of? I—I'm interested, you see."

Lyon smoked thoughtfully. The man's interest was so marked that it struck him as going beyond the bounds of ordinary curiosity. He felt that he must probe it, and so he answered, with a view to keeping the subject going.

"We hear of the mysteries that are solved, but there are many more that drop from the notice of the public because they remain mysteries forever."

"Is it not possible that there may be a woman connected with this case?" asked Olden, with a sudden hardening of his voice.

Lyon smoked deliberately a moment.

"With nothing known and everything

to guess, it is difficult to say of anything that it is not possible," he answered.

"Has Lawrence's name never been connected with a woman? Is there no gossip?"

"Of the sort you suggest, nothing, I believe." Lyon's voice was calm, if his feelings were not.

"Your Mr. Lawrence is a wonder," said Olden dryly. "I hope to meet him some day. Let us drink to his release and to the confusion of the grand jury. A man who can keep himself free from all feminine entanglements ought to get out of a little thing like an accusation for murder without any difficulty."

"You seem to have strong feelings on the subject," said Lyon. It occurred to him that all the drawing out need not be on Olden's side. Olden smoked a minute in silence, and then asked abruptly:

"Do you believe that women as a class have any sense of truth?"

"Oh, they must have some!"

"But do they have the same sense of honor that we have?"

"I don't know that we have enough to hurt. But you are thinking of some specific case. Suppose you give me an outline of it."

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, we always are when we generalize about women."

Olden smoked hard and in silence for a few minutes.

"I don't know whether you are right about that or not," he said finally. "But you are right in saying that I was thinking of a specific instance, and I'll be rather glad to give you an outline of it, because I should like to have your opinion. I think I understand men pretty well, but I never have had much to do with women. Perhaps if I—— This is the story of a friend of mine. He told me about it just before I came on."

Lyon nodded. Possibly that might be the truth, but he would keep an open mind on the subject.

"My friend is a man past middle life—a successful business man. He has made money and has knocked about the world a good deal, but he never fell in love until he was nearly fifty—never had time, I suppose. Then he was hard hit. The woman was a good deal younger than he was, beautiful, and all that. He married her just as soon as he could win her consent, and was idiotically happy. For a year he thought she was happy, too. She seemed so. Then one day she received a letter from her old home that upset her. She tried to conceal her disturbance from him, but he was too watchful of her moods to be deceived. From that moment his happiness was destroyed. His wife was concealing something from him. Other letters followed. They always had the same effect. The husband could not be blind to the fact that his wife was changed. She avoided him, withheld her confidence, and he found her more than once in tears. Perhaps it does not sound very serious, but you must remember that he was madly in love with his wife. It was serious for him."

Lyon nodded. "Did he know anything of his wife's past history—her friends or her——"

"Her lovers? No, he didn't. There was the sting. He simply didn't know anything. He could only see that something had come out of that unknown past to ruin his happiness."

"Why didn't he ask her, straight?"

"He did once, and she pretended not to know what he was talking about. After that he set himself to watch. He pretended to be called away on a sudden business-trip. She left, by the next train, for her old home, and went at once to the man with whom she had been corresponding."

"How did you—how did her husband know who the man was?"

"He had found once a letter, destroyed before it was finished, which enabled him to identify the man."

"Was it a love-letter?"

Olden dropped his head on his hand. "Not in terms. But it showed that this man possessed a confidence which she withheld from her husband. In it she spoke of her unhappiness in her married life as of something that he would understand—something that they had

acknowledged between them. Does that seem a little thing to you?"

"No, I can understand. Well, what did he do?"

"Nothing, yet. But I am afraid he may do something. If he should kill the man, would you say he was justified?"

"What would be the use?" asked Lyon lightly.

"That isn't the question, when your brain is on fire. You see only one thing. The whole world is blotted out, and only that one thing burns before your eyes. I suppose that is the way one feels when going mad. Everything else blotted out, you know, except that one thing that you can't forget night or day—awake or asleep——"

His voice was trembling with a passion that went beyond control. If Lyon had had any question that the strange man was telling his own story, he could no longer doubt it. Such sympathy is not given to the troubles of a friend.

"I understand that he has not killed the man yet?"

"No—not yet."

"Well, then I'd advise him to wait a bit, in any event, and make sure of his facts. There's no sense in hurrying these things. Tell him to count ten. Also tell him that circumstantial evidence is the very devil. The chances are that if a thing looks so and so, that's the very reason for its turning out to be the other way. Now, take this case of Lawrence's."

"Yes. What of it?" Olden had recovered himself, and he asked his question with an interest that seemed genuine, if somewhat cynical.

"The circumstantial evidence against him is pretty bad, yet you wouldn't want to have him hanged on the strength of it, would you?"

"I would not," said Olden, with a sudden laugh that sounded strange after his passion of a moment before. "I can think of nothing that I should more regret than to have your friend Lawrence hung. I drink to his speedy discharge." And he poured himself a stiff drink and drained it with a fervor that made the act seem sacrificial.

The sudden ring of the telephone in the hall cut so sharply across the silence in the house that it startled them both. Olden went to answer it, and immediately returned.

"It's some one to speak to you, Mr. Lyon—name is Howell."

"Oh, yes. I suppose he got my new address from the Grosvenor."

He went to the phone, and this is the conversation that ensued.

Howell: "Hello, Lyon. Changed your room?"

Lyon: "Yes. I followed your suggestion."

Howell: "That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I'm getting nervous about putting off that interview with Mrs. Broughton any longer. Barry tells me she is worse. I don't want to risk waiting until it is impossible."

Lyon: "Barry is bluffing, to protect his patient. She is better."

Howell: "How do you know?"

Lyon: "Miss Kitty tells me she is better."

Howell: "When was that?"

Lyon: "An hour ago."

Howell: "How did you hear from her?"

Lyon: "By signals. We have established a code."

Howell: "You seem to have been improving the time! You think I'm safe to wait, then, a day or two? I simply must see her before she gets away, you know."

Lyon: "No sign of departure, the code said."

Howell: "How will you know if she should suddenly show signs of departure?"

Lyon: "Her curtain will be lowered. Clear down means gone."

Howell: "That will be too late."

Lyon: "She isn't likely to bolt without warning, and no one would be in better position to take note than Miss Kitty."

Howell: "All right, I'll depend on that, then. But if Bede finds her first, I'll regret my humanity."

Lyon: "I think we're safe."

Howell: "Perhaps. But not sure." And he rang off.

When Lyon returned to the dining-room, he found that the door was ajar, though he had thought that he closed it after him when going to the phone. If his host had been curious enough to listen to one side of the conversation, Lyon hoped that he might have found it interesting. Intelligible it could hardly have been.

CHAPTER XII.

Lyon had carefully refrained from giving Lawrence any hint as to the new turn his suspicions had taken. He had an instinctive feeling that the masterful prisoner in the county jail would have scant patience with any unauthorized efforts to penetrate the mystery. That, to Lyon's mind, might be a very good reason for not talking about his activities, but he was the last man to abandon his own line merely out of deference to another man's prejudices. He was always more interested in getting results, however, than in getting credit, so he was content to work instead of talk.

But on his next visit to Lawrence, he took occasion to put a hypothetical question which went directly to the heart of his perplexity and for which he very much wanted an answer—though he didn't expect to get it.

"Lawrence," he said, in a casual tone, having first carefully taken a position where he had the advantage of the light in watching the other man's face, "have you considered the possibility that Miss Wolcott may, after all, have had nothing to do with that affair?"

Lawrence turned upon him with swift amazement and anger.

"What do you mean?" he demanded in a threatening undertone, with an apprehensive glance at the door.

"The guard couldn't hear me to save his ears. I mean simply—are you sure of your premises? You see, I am taking for granted that your policy of silence is to protect—oh, I won't mention her name again. But what if the facts should be that she doesn't need any protection? What if it really proves that you are making a sacrifice which is not merely heroic but is unnecessary? Suppose the woman who ran across the street was some one else?"

"Have you dared to tell—to hint ——"

"What I might dare to do is one thing, what I have actually done is another. As a matter of fact, I have neither told nor hinted—nor have I knocked you down for thinking such a thing possible."

Lawrence dropped into his chair and let his head sink on his hand.

"I beg your pardon. But it makes me wild to think how helpless I am. I can't keep Howell, for instance, from mousing around, and I can't keep Bede from peering and prying——"

"Or me from guessing or breathing. No, you can't. Of course they may not discover anything, but even the police sometimes get hold of the right clue. You are trying to keep them from a certain clue, at a tremendous risk to yourself, and yet you don't know, you only suspect, that your silence may benefit the person I do not name."

Lawrence drummed impatiently with his fingers for a minute, and then he looked up with a direct glance into Lyon's eyes.

"Lyon, you're an awfully good fellow to have any patience with what must seem sheer unreason to you, and I wish I could be quite frank with you and make you see the situation as I do. But you are certain to be put on the witness-stand yourself, so I simply can't give you any facts which you don't already know. You see that?"

"Yes—but are they facts?"

Lawrence looked at him queerly. "What explanation do you suggest for my cane being where it was?" he asked.

"You left it somewhere—perhaps at the State library—and Fullerton picked it up, carried it off, and had it in his hand when he was attacked."

Lawrence looked surprised and then he laughed in quick amusement.

"Ingenious, by Jove! I hope you've suggested that theory to Howell. It will give him something to occupy his mind. It would be difficult for him to prove it, but then, it would be difficult for the

prosecution to disprove it—*unless they should happen to discover where I actually did forget my cane.*"

"You mean——"

"You can probably work it out," said Lawrence dryly. "Supposing that I did mean that, don't you see that the one and only person who could throw any light on how my cane came to be where it was found is the one and only person who must not be questioned?"

"I see. But do you really think that the one and only person will maintain silence on such a matter at such a cost to you?"

"If things come to the worst, I fear the one and only person will not. My hope is that things will not come to the worst—that there may be a disagreement or even an acquittal. Really, you see, I don't feel so sure the prosecution holds a hand that leaves me no chance of coming out even. We are both bluffing, but I rather think I can bluff hardest if my flank isn't turned by my too zealous counsel."

"Still——"

"Still, Lyon, and yet, and nevertheless, and in spite of all, I am happier than I remember ever being before in all my life, and I shall never think of this room so long as I live without feeling again the joy of a conqueror."

"May I ask why?"

"Because the one and only person has accepted my suggestion in regard to silence so sweetly. I have made several suggestions to that person, I don't mind telling you, which have not been accepted. They have been turned down hard. It seemed to have become a habit with her and I was getting discouraged. Now, the course which I suggested in this instance would not be agreeable to her. Nothing could be more opposed to her natural instinct than to keep silence if—well, under the circumstances. She has done what must have been a thousand times harder than to make even the most public explanation, she has done it for me—because I asked her. Now do you understand why I am happy? I'm in Paradise."

Lyon grasped his hand in sympathetic silence, and left him. At least he had found out why Lawrence was so convinced in his own mind that Miss Wolcott was somewhat implicated. Evidently it was the cane that seemed to him conclusive. He had left his cane at Miss Wolcott's and he knew it. It could have come into evidence in connection with the murder of Fullerton only through Miss Wolcott's direct or indirect agency. The primary question remained, therefore, whether she really was implicated or not.

He had promised her, at their first and only interview, to call occasionally and report as to the progress of affairs, but he had deferred carrying out his promise partly because he had nothing decisive to tell her and partly because he was rather shy of encouraging a confidence which might possibly place him in possession of embarrassing information. He did not want to learn anything that would hamper him when he was called to the witness-stand, as he undoubtedly would be. But two things happened that day to make him keep his promise without further postponement.

The first was his discovery that Bede was hovering about Miss Wolcott's neighborhood. Lyon had caught a fleeting glimpse of Miss Wolcott going into a shop. A moment later he noticed Bede across the street from the shop, busily engaged in studying a display of hosiery in a shop-window. He did not connect the two events at the moment, but half an hour later he met Miss Wolcott face to face, still in the shopping-district. The look of suppressed pain in her eyes as she bowed gravely disturbed him so much that he walked on rather unobservantly for a few steps.

Then he was brought back to consciousness by a keen look that pierced him like a surgeon's probe as a quiet gray little man passed him. It was Bede. The significance of that piercing scrutiny flashed upon Lyon. Bede had seen him bow to Miss Wolcott and was sorting that little fact into the proper pigeonhole in his brain. He turned to look after the detective. Bede was pausing to turn over some second-hand

books on an exposed stall, and he lingered there until Miss Wolcott came out of a shop farther down the block. As she went on, Bede, who had never glanced in her direction, finished his inspection of the books and went on, also. Casually, he followed the same direction she had taken. Lyon, who had lingered to observe his action, walked on very thoughtfully.

That was the first thing. The second was a special-delivery letter which was brought to him that same afternoon while he was rushing to an assignment.

The urgency of the outside found no counterpart in the simple little note which it enclosed:

> DEAR MR. LYON: Could you conveniently call this evening? I shall be at home after seven. Yours sincerely,
>
> EDITH WOLCOTT.

Lyon looked at the special-delivery stamp, remembered Bede, and put the note in his pocket with some anxiety. What was up now? He perceived an urgency in the request which did not appear in the words themselves, and he looked forward to the call with some anxiety. If her nerve had broken down, and she should hurl a confession at him before he could stop her, what should he do about it?

CHAPTER XIII.

Miss Wolcott received Lyon with the same curiously cold and impersonal manner that had struck him before, but unless he deceived himself, it was a manner deliberately assumed this time to conceal some unwonted nervousness of which she herself was afraid. Her face was as quiet as ever, but there was an unevenness of tension in her voice which betrayed emotion.

"I sent for you because something curious has happened," she said abruptly, "and I don't know any one else to talk it over with. I received yesterday, by mail, this letter." And she handed him a single sheet of note-paper, on which was written, in a bold hand:

> Remember, I said living or dead.
>
> WARREN FULLERTON.

Lyon looked up at her in amaze. "You received this yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Are you familiar with Mr. Fullerton's handwriting?"

"Yes. It is his."

"Can you be positive about that?"

He thought she repressed a shudder, but her voice was calm as she answered: "I do not think I can be deceived in it. I know it very well."

"May I see the envelope?"

She handed it to him silently. It corresponded with the paper, was addressed to her in the same bold, assured hand, and the postmark was particularly plain. It had been mailed the day it was delivered. The note and envelope were both made of a thin, grayish-green paper, Oriental in appearance, with a faint perfume about it that would have been dizzying if more pronounced. Lyon held the paper up to the light. It was water-marked, but so faintly that he had to study it carefully before he made out that the design was that of a coiled serpent with hooded head. As he moved the paper to bring out the outline, the coils seemed to change and move and melt into one another. Certainly it would have been a difficult paper to duplicate.

"Was Mr. Fullerton in the habit of using this paper?"

"Yes. It was made for him. He was given to fads like that. And another thing, though a trifle. You will notice he uses two green one-cent stamps. He always mailed the letters written on that paper with green stamps."

"Does the message convey any special meaning to you?"

Miss Wolcott waited a moment before replying, as though to gather her self-control into available form.

"I was at one time engaged to be married to Mr. Fullerton. I was very young and romantic and—silly. I had not known him very long. And almost immediately I had to go East to spend three months with some friends. While I was away I wrote to Mr. Fullerton—very silly letters. After I came back something happened that made me change my mind and my feelings to-

ward him. I broke the engagement and sent him back his letters and presents. He refused to be released or to release me. It was very terrible. He said that if ever I should marry any one else, he would send my love-letters to him, to my husband—and this whether he was alive or dead."

"Ah! That explains, you think, this phrase?"

"I am sure of it."

"Did the threat make any special impression on you at the time? I mean did it influence your actions at all?"

"It made me determine never to think of marrying." Then, in answer to Lyon's look of surprise, she added impetuously: "I would rather die than have any one read those letters. I simply could not think of it. No man's love could stand such a test. To know that his wife had said such silly, silly things to another man—it would be intolerable."

"Did you ever try to recover the letters?"

"Once," she said, in a very low voice.

"And you failed?"

"Worse than failed." She threw out her hand toward the note he still held. "Did he not say, living or dead? Mere death could not interfere when he had set his will upon revenge."

"Then whoever wrote this note," said Lyon thoughtfully, "must have had knowledge of his purposes as well as access to his private desk and knowledge of his personal peculiarities in regard to stamps. Now, Miss Wolcott, you must help me. Who would be likely to know of your letters?"

"How can I tell? I have hardly seen him for four years until——" She broke off, leaving the sentence unfinished.

"Have you spoken of them yourself to any one? Any girl friend?"

"No, never."

"To your family?"

"No. I have lived alone with my grandfather since I was fifteen. You know him—I love him, but he is no confidant for a young girl. I have always been much alone."

"Then, so far as you know, no one could have learned from you of those letters?"

"Not one."

"Not Arthur Lawrence, for instance?"

She started, and looked as though he had presented a new idea.

"I never spoke of them," she said slowly.

"Did he know of your engagement to Fullerton?"

"He never referred to it, but it is probable that he had heard of it. Some one would have mentioned it, probably. I did not know Mr. Lawrence at that time."

"He had no reason then to know—or to guess—the importance which you placed upon the recovery of the letters?"

She looked distressed, but her glance was as searching as his own.

"Why do you ask that? What bearing has it on *this* letter?"

"Perhaps none. But I was trying to narrow down the possible actors. If you on your part have kept the knowledge of these letters to yourself inviolately, then the information about them must have been given out by Fullerton if at all. Do you know any one to whom he would be likely to confide such a matter—any confidant or chum?"

She shook her head helplessly. "I know nothing of his friends. My impression is that he had very few. He was a strange, solitary, secret man."

"And yet it must be clear that either he wrote this himself, or it was written on his private paper in his handwriting, by some one who had intimate knowledge of his affairs—not only of the fact that he had those letters of yours, but of the threat which he held over you in regard to them. Now, if he wrote it himself, why wasn't it mailed until yesterday? And who *did* mail it yesterday, anyhow? If some one was in his confidence and is trying to play upon your fears, we must find out who it is. May I take this letter with me?"

"I don't want to ever see it again."

"And if you receive any other letters or anything comes up in any way bear-

ing on this, will you let me know at once? I am going to try to find out about his office-help. And I will leave this letter open to the sunlight for a day. If it was written yesterday, the ink will show a change by to-morrow. If written a week ago, it probably will not. As soon as I learn anything that will interest you, I will let you know."

But as he was departing she detained him, some unspoken anxiety visibly struggling with her habit of reserve.

"You spoke, when you were here before, of the possibility of my being called as a witness. If that should happen, would I have to tell about—this?"

"I do not see how it could come up, unless they could connect Lawrence with it in some way. Of course if they were trying to establish motive—some reason for Lawrence's quarrel with Fullerton—it might seem to have a bearing. But you never discussed Fullerton with Lawrence?"

"No," she said, but her look was still troubled.

"If you are questioned," he said quietly, "you will not have to testify except so far as you have positive knowledge. You will not have to give your thoughts or theories or guesses."

"I see," she murmured, dropping her strange, guarded eyes.

With that he left her. It was too late to take any active steps in the way of investigation that night, so he turned back to his room, but his habit of keeping on his feet while thinking sent him on a long tramp before he finally arrived at the house.

At the door Olden met him.

"Well, well, well, you're late," he said testily. "What have you been doing to-day?"

"Oh, all sorts of things."

"I don't care about that. What have you been doing about the Lawrence case?"

"I don't know that I have been doing anything." Literally, he didn't know whether he had or not, and he didn't care to share his half-formed suspicions. "I have to take things as they come, you know."

"Haven't you seen Lawrence to-day?"

"No."

"Nor his lawyer, Howell?"

"No."

Olden had led his guest into the dining-room. "Where have you been this evening?"

"Calling on a young lady!"

Olden looked up sharply. "Miss Kitty?"

"No." Then, with a half-mischievous desire to play up to the other's hungry interest in the case, he added: "A young lady Lawrence knows and admires, Miss Wolcott."

The bait drew even better than he expected. Olden leaned forward with his arms on the table and his chin on his crossed arms, and Lyon felt the blaze of interest behind the goggles.

"Lawrence admires her, does he?" he said, with curious deliberation. "Particularly?"

"I think quite particularly."

"How do you know?"

"I merely guessed it, from a look I saw on his face once."

"Do people generally guess it?"

"I rather think not. Gossip hasn't mentioned it."

"And does she believe in him?"

"Well, that is a point I didn't bring into the conversation. This is only the second time I have seen her."

"I didn't mean believe in his innocence. I meant, believe in *him*—in his interest in her?"

Lyon laughed. "Really, I didn't ask her that either. But I fancy Lawrence is a man to make himself understood in that direction when he wants to."

"You mean he makes love to every pretty woman he knows?"

"Oh, no, not so bad as that. Lawrence is a gentleman. Still, he is partly Irish. There's an old Irish jingle I used to know about the slow-creeping Saxon and the amorous Celt—that's the idea. Irish eyes make love of themselves, whenever their owner is too busy about something else to keep a tight rein on them."

Lyon had talked jestingly, partly with the idea of erasing the memory of a remark which he began to think had been somewhat less than discreet. He

was not prepared for the effect of his words. Olden sprang to his feet and struck the table with his clenched hand.

"Then damn Irish eyes," he cried. "Damn the man who thinks he has the right to make love to any woman who is tender-hearted enough to listen."

"With all my heart. But Lawrence isn't that kind of a man."

Olden had dropped back in his chair and his momentary outburst had given place to a sullen gloom that Lyon guessed had more relation to his own thoughts and to the story he had told so impersonally the evening before than it had to their present conversation.

"Come, I'm going to bed. Good night, Mr. Olden."

"Good night," said Olden absently. Then he looked up, with an obvious effort to be civil. "Don't think that I have anything against your friend Lawrence or his Irish eyes," he said lightly. "I hope with all my heart that he may be set free—with all my heart."

"So do I. Good night."

Up in his own room, Lyon's first act was to walk to the window and look across the white expanse of snow to Kitty's windows. The cheerful light answered him, with something of the subtle mischief of Kitty's own solemn air. As he looked, all the lights went out. Miss Elliott's School was wrapped in innocent slumber. Lyon blew a kiss across the night, and then pulled down his own curtain.

He opened Fullerton's strange epistle, and studied it again, but the cryptic message remained as cryptic as ever. Pulling out a number of old letters from his own writing-case, he compared them with Fullerton's until he found one which corresponded closely, in the blackness of its ink, with Fullerton's. This he laid aside as a standard of comparison. Then he opened the new letter to the air, leaving it where the sun should strike it when it came into the room in the morning. The first point to determine was whether the letter had actually been written by Fullerton before his death, or whether some one still living was carrying out the dead man's sinister wishes.

CHAPTER XIV.

Fullerton, like a number of other lawyers in Waynscott, had had his office in the Equity Building, and Lyon made it convenient, in the course of his morning's tramp for news the next day, to visit the Equity. As he expected, he found Fullerton's office locked, but he hunted up the manager of the building, and persuaded him to unlock it for him. Perhaps the fact that he was a personal friend made a difference in his willingness, though he pretended to protest at what he called the morbid sensationalism of the press.

"What do you expect to get out of his empty rooms?" he asked.

"I'm working up a story," said Lyon carelessly. "I want to see what I can get in the way of personal idiosyncracies."

The suite consisted of three rooms—a large reception-room, one side of which was covered with bookcases; a private office at the back; and, adjoining this, a room for the use of a stenographer, as was evident from the typewriter beside the window. There was so little furniture in this room that Lyon saw it could be dismissed in the special inquiry which he had in mind. In the private office a large flat desk occupied the center of the room.

"Is this room the way Fullerton left it?" Lyon asked, taking the chair which was placed before the desk, and glancing about.

"Yes. No one has been here since he left."

"No stenographer or clerk?"

"He has had no clerk for some time, and when he needed a stenographer he called one in from the agency in the building. As a matter of fact, I think his business had fallen off rather seriously in the last few years. He had lost some of his old clients, and he didn't seem to get new ones. Often his office would be locked up and he would be away for days at a time."

"Bad for business, that. Was his office-rent paid?"

The manager shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "No. But I have a

lien on his library, so I guess I'm safe."

"Indeed! Then he must really have been pretty badly tied up financially?"

"He was pretty obviously going to pieces. You see, his personal tastes were expensive, and they incapacitated him for business. That cut both ways, in the matter of income."

"How about his other creditors, if you have a lien on his library? That seems to be the only valuable property here."

The manager laughed again. "If there was one man here the day after he was killed there were nineteen. They were all ready to attach his books. There was some rather deep swearing. Funny what things come out about a man after he is dead."

"It's more than funny," said Lyon, with an air of saying something worth listening to. He was automatically pulling out one drawer of the desk after another, sometimes merely glancing in, sometimes lightly turning over the contents with a careless hand. "We don't know much of the personal lives of the people about us. Things are not always what they seem."

He probably could have kept up the platitudinizing longer if necessary, but he had opened all the drawers. None were locked. There was no scrap of the curious greenish-gray paper anywhere, nor, indeed, anything but files of documents obviously legal.

It had seemed probable from the first that Fullerton would have his peculiar personal belongings at his own room rather than at his office, but Lyon had wished to eliminate the other possibility.

As he came out of the room, a strange and yet familiar figure passed down the hall toward the elevator just ahead of him—the heavy figure and white head of Mr. Olden. Lyon glanced back. Lawrence's office was farther down the hall, and Lawrence's law clerk, a young fellow named Freeman, whom Lyon knew slightly, stood in the open door looking after his departing visitor with a curious watchfulness. On the impulse, Lyon turned back.

"What scrape has my most respectable landlord been getting into, that he needs legal advice?" he asked.

"Come in," said Freeman, with evident pleasure. "I'm mighty glad to have you give the old gentleman a character. I began to wonder if there wasn't something suspicious about him."

"Why?"

"He came in a few days ago and asked for Lawrence. I explained why he couldn't see him. He fumed around a little, and finally said he wanted a will drawn up, and couldn't I do it? I thought I could, all right, so I got him to give me the items. It involved a lot of little bequests—he seemed to be a retired merchant from somewhere down the State with an interminable family connection—and I took a lot of notes and told him I would have the will drawn up in a few days. He has been in every day since to make changes and alterations, till I am all balled up. Either I got things badly mixed in my notes or he had forgotten just how his sisters and his cousins and his aunts are arranged. I'll swear he has mixed the babies."

"Well, if he pays you for your trouble," laughed Lyon.

"Yes, he made it clear that he wanted me to charge up my wasted time, but—he's queer, all the same. I almost thought to-day that the whole business of the will was a blind, and that he was here for some purpose of his own."

"That sounds serious. What made you think that?"

"I had gone into the inner room to hunt up my original notes, because he insisted that I had made a mistake, when I heard the roll top of Lawrence's desk pushed up. Lawrence never locks it, but the old man hadn't any business in there, all the same. I came out in a hurry, and there he was, hunting around in the desk. He wasn't a bit phazed by my coming back, either Said he wanted some paper to write a letter and fretted and fumed over the pen and ink as though the whole outfit belonged to him. I cleared a place for him, and left him writing, while I shifted my own chair so that I could

keep an eye on him. He wrote two or three short letters, and tossed something into the waste-basket, there. Then, when he was through, he picked up the waste-basket and began hunting through it. I supposed he wanted to recover what he had thrown in, until I saw him pick out a square envelope and put it with his own papers."

"And you think it was not his own?"

"I know it wasn't, because I know the paper he was using. As it happens, that basket hasn't been emptied since Lawrence was here. The envelope must have been something he had tossed into the basket—but I couldn't very well demand the return of an old envelope picked up from a waste-basket. Still, I couldn't help wondering whether the man was a thief or a private detective or just a little touched in the upper story."

"Has he been inquisitive about Lawrence's affairs?" Lyon asked.

"The first time he was here he asked a good many questions about him, but I thought that was natural curiosity under all the circumstances. One of his innumerable cousins had married a Lawrence and he wanted to find out if there was any connection between the families. And he really seemed to know something about him, because he insisted that Arthur Lawrence had married a Mrs. Vanderburg."

"But he didn't!"

"No, of course not. But he was a great friend of Mrs. Vanderburg's, and no one would have been surprised if he had married her. There were many who expected that to be the outcome. And when she became engaged to Broughton, whom she afterward did marry, Lawrence took it hard. There was a serious quarrel, and Lawrence wouldn't attend the wedding. I remember hearing my mother say that if Lawrence had had Broughton's money, Broughton would never have had any show."

"But she wasn't divorced at that time, was she?"

"No, but she could have had a divorce whenever she wanted it. Vanderburg had been missing for ten or twelve years."

This was surprising information for Lyon, and not a little disturbing. Was there, after all, a possibility that even if he established the identity of the fleeing woman and Mrs. Broughton, Lawrence might still be entangled? Lyon felt as though he were trying to pick his way among live wires.

"Did you tell Olden this story?" he asked, remembering the curious interest which that inquisitive person had always seemed to take in Lawrence's affairs.

"Well, he got it out of me, I guess. He knew so much that he could easily pump the balance."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing much. He kept nodding his head, as though he knew it all beforehand. What do you make of it, anyhow?"

"The curiosity of an idle mind," said Lyon lightly. "There are plenty of people who have an abnormal curiosity about anybody who is accused of crime. But I wouldn't give him too much rope."

The episode gave him something new to puzzle about. Olden's curiosity about Lawrence had been marked from the beginning, and it had not been wholly a friendly curiosity. That much had been apparent. Lyon was accustomed to the curious interest which monotonously virtuous people take in criminals, and he had set down his landlord's desire to talk about the murder-mystery to that score. He had shown no curiosity about Fullerton or interest in him. And though he was curious about Lawrence, he seemed very inadequately informed concerning him.

Lyon turned the thing in his mind without being able to make it fit in with anything else. At the same time he determined to find out something more about Mr. Olden at the earliest opportunity. For the immediate present, however, the thing to do was to get into Fullerton's rooms at the Wellington again, and see what discoveries he could make there.

CHAPTER XV.

Lyon suspected that he might have difficulty in securing admission to Fullerton's rooms in the Wellington a second time, and when he made application to Hunt, the janitor who had admitted him before, he found his fears were justified. Indeed, Hunt's dismay at the suggestion struck him as curious.

"Go in? No, *sir!* Nobody goes in. The police are responsible for that room now. I haven't anything to do with it, and I wouldn't have, not for a farm."

"You let me in before, you know, and the police didn't take it to heart."

"Eh?"

"I mean they didn't mind. Bede knew I was there."

Hunt shook his head. "Mr. Bede says to me that if I let anybody else in, he'd have me arrested for killing Fullerton."

"That's nonsense, you know. When did he say that—when I got in before?"

"No, farther back than yesterday he said that."

"Has he been around again?"

"Yes, he has." There was something nervous and dogged about the man's manner that puzzled Lyon.

"Well, see here. I'll make it worth your while to let me in for an hour. You can go along, to see I don't steal anything, if you like. I want to make sure of something I overlooked before."

"I tell you I can't, Mr. Lyon, even if I wanted to. The police have put a seal on the door. It can't be opened without their knowing."

"Then pass me in through the window."

Hunt lifted his downcast eyes and gave Lyon a long, curious look.

"You wouldn't want to, if you knew what I know."

"What's that?"

Hunt shuffled and stumbled, but perhaps at heart he was not unwilling to confess his fears in the hope of having them quenched. He looked somewhat shamefaced, however, as he asked: "Do you believe that sometimes the dead walk?"

"I don't know," Lyon answered noncommittally. He was more anxious to get at Hunt's ideas than to confess his own. "What makes you ask? Have you seen anything?"

"Well—not exactly——"

"I'd like to hear about it."

"Well, it's this way. Mr. Fullerton had a way of throwing the letters he wrote of an evening on the floor right before the door, so that I could pick them up in the morning and give them to the carrier when he came around. I always took in his breakfast-tray and his paper——"

"How did you get in?"

"He could release the lock on his door by a spring from his bedroom. There was nothing too much trouble if it was going to save him some trouble afterward."

"Go on."

"The letters were always in a certain place—just where he could toss them easily from the writing-table where he sat. They would fall on a certain mat, so that I knew just what to pick up. If I didn't, he would swear to turn a nigger white. Mr. Fullerton wasn't no saint. That's what makes it worse."

"Makes what worse?"

"Why, this that I'm going to tell you. Day before yesterday something possessed me to go into that room. I don't know what it was—I just was pestered to go in. I thought I would just look inside, and there, on the rug before the door, where they always used to be, was a letter in Mr. Fullerton's hand, stamped to be mailed."

"This is interesting," said Lyon, with sparkling eyes. "What did you do with it?"

"I didn't rightly know what to do with it at first, I was so took back. I had been in that room five or six times since—since Mr. Fullerton was killed, letting the police in, and you, and going in by myself once to make sure the windows were locked, and there wasn't no letter on the rug, or I'm blind. Now, what I want to know is, *where did that letter come from?*"

"That I can't tell yet. But what did you do with it?"

"I mailed it. It seemed that it must have been something that Mr. Fullerton wrote that last night he was home and threw down for me to mail, and that somehow, in the excitement, it must have been kicked under the edge of the rug, and then, somehow, kicked out again the last time some one was in the room. At least, I couldn't see what else it could be, so I gave it to the carrier, thinking that it ought to go to the person it was addressed to."

"I think you were quite right. To whom was it addressed?"

But Hunt was unexpectedly reticent. "Mr. Fullerton didn't like to have me talk about his affairs."

"Oh, that's all right. But I think I know about this letter. It was for Miss Wolcott, wasn't it?"

Hunt's surprised look gave confirmation, though his habit of discretion prevented a verbal assent. "That isn't all," he said hastily, returning to his story. "That was queer enough to set me wondering about it all day, and yesterday, when I went around in the morning, I opened the door just to make myself believe that it really had happened. There on the rug was another letter, just like the one the day before." His eyes sought Lyon's nervously. He seemed to be almost afraid of his own words.

"Another letter for Miss Wolcott?" gasped Lyon, in utter amaze.

"It was just like the first," Hunt persisted doggedly.

"What did you do with it? Did you mail it?"

"I wouldn't touch it. Not for money, Mr. Lyon. Where did that letter come from? That's what I want to know. I wasn't going to have any truck with it."

"But you didn't leave it lying on the rug?"

"Mr. Bede got it."

"Bede! Oh, the devil!" gasped Lyon. "How did he come to get it?"

"He came in in the morning and I told him what I had seen. I couldn't have stayed in the house without some one knowing. He went in and got the letter, and then he put a seal on the door, so that no one else should get in. He came here again this morning himself and looked into the room, but there wasn't anything on the rug. Do you suppose it was perhaps because the last one wasn't sent? Does *he* know? I know some as thinks he had truck with the devil while he was alive, all right. Say, what do you think about such things, Mr. Lyon?"

"I think you ought to have mailed that letter to Miss Wolcott. Bede has no business with her letters."

"I wasn't going to touch it," said Hunt doggedly.

"Did Bede ask you anything about her?"

"He asked if I knew whether she came here to Fullerton's room. I wouldn't know. I never saw her to know her." Hunt was evidently aggrieved over the turn things had taken generally. "Then he wanted to know particularly what that lady looked like that came to see Fullerton that last night—the one he went out with. I didn't see her, but the elevator-boy told, same as Donohue told at the inquest, that she wore a veil and a dark dress and a fur coat, short. Anybody might be dressed like that."

"Who has the apartment above?" Lyon asked abruptly.

"It's empty. The people moved out this week."

"What day?"

"Yesterday and the day before."

"Let me look at it. Perhaps I might take it. Is it furnished?"

"No, the furniture was moved out. Come up with me, sir."

Lyon knew the arrangement of the suites in the Wellington. They were all alike, in the corresponding positions. He already knew the arrangement of Fullerton's room, and his chief interest in the apartment above was in its relation to the wall outside. He leaned out of the window to examine it while Hunt was detained in the hall by a passing tenant, and when the man appeared Lyon's mind was made up.

"I'd like to take this apartment for a

week. They are making some alterations at the Grosvenor, and I want a place to stay for a few nights. You can put some furniture into the bedroom, can't you? I sha'n't need anything else. I may not be here more than a night or two."

Hunt looked shrewd. "You needn't think that being in the building makes any difference about the room below, Mr. Lyon!"

"That's all right," laughed Lyon. "Really, what I want is to keep an eye on Bede. And if Fullerton's ghost comes to carry you off because you didn't mail that letter, I'll be here to explain things and make it easy for you."

The arrangement was made without difficulty, and Lyon went away with Hunt's assurance that the bedroom would be habitable when he returned that night. It was his "night off" at the paper, and he had a mind to make the most of the freedom which that circumstance would give him.

Several important things happened before the evening came, and these must be first recounted; but it may as well be mentioned here that when Lyon did return that evening, the bag which Hunt obligingly carried up-stairs contained, with a few other things, a rope fire-escape and a glazier's diamond.

CHAPTER XVI.

The fact that Bede had put a seal on Fullerton's door indicated that the detective had not yet made the examination of the room which unquestionably it was his intention to make. That he should have deferred so important a matter for twenty-four hours could only be explained on the theory that he had some still more important project on hand which was occupying his personal attention.

Lyon intended to get into Fullerton's rooms if possible before Bede did, but the plan which he had hastily formed at the Wellington required the cover of darkness. He could do nothing along that line before night, and in the meantime he felt that he could do nothing more interesting—and possibly important—than to discover what Bede was engaged upon that was so engrossing as to make him postpone the investigation of Fullerton's rooms to another day.

Lyon figured it out like this: Bede had received from Hunt—and undoubtedly had opened and read—a letter from Fullerton addressed to Miss Wolcott. He already knew—as had appeared at their first interview—that Fullerton had at one time been engaged to Miss Wolcott. Therefore the association of her name with his was not a new idea. Yet he had been "shadowing" her yesterday afternoon. Presumably, therefore, he had suddenly come to perceive a new importance in her movements. Was his watchfulness over her the occasion of his present preoccupation? Lyon would have given much for a clairvoyant vision to tell him where Bede was at the moment. Being obliged to trust instead to his reasoning-powers, he went to Hemlock Avenue, and walked past Miss Wolcott's house.

The house wore its customary air of seclusion and there was no lounger in the street. He walked a block farther, and went into a drug-store, where, as he happened to know, there was a public telephone and a gossiping clerk.

"Has Bede been here to-day?" he asked carelessly.

"Bede who?"

"Don't you know Bede, the detective—little gray man with keen eyes and a voice that he keeps behind his teeth? I expected to find him here."

"He was here this morning—or a man like him," said the clerk. "A detective, you say. Gee!"

"What's up?"

The clerk was looking rather startled. "Well, if I had known he was a detective! He gave out that he was the credit-man for the new furniture-store around the corner, and asked about several people in the neighborhood that we have accounts with. Our old man has some stock in the furniture-concern, so I gave him all the information I could."

"What accounts did he ask about? Do you remember?"

The clerk named half a dozen. Lyon was not surprised to hear Miss Wolcott's among them. He was both surprised and startled to hear Miss Elliott's.

"What did you tell him about those two?" he asked thoughtfully.

"I let him see their accounts in the ledger."

"I wish you'd let me see those same accounts."

The clerk demurred, and Lyon, who had noticed a college-fraternity pin in the other's scarf, opened his coat. He wore the same pin.

"Oh, all right," said the easy-going clerk, with a laugh. "If I'm going to be fired for giving anything away to a detective, I'll have the satisfaction of helping a Nu Beta, anyhow. Here are the account-books. Come around here."

He opened a page with Miss Edith Wolcott's name at the top. The latest entry caught Lyon's eye at once.

Nov. 25. Sulphonal, 6 gr. .45

The date was the date of Fullerton's murder. Lyon pointed to the entry.

"Could you tell at what time of the day that sale was made?"

"That's exactly what the other man asked," the clerk exclaimed, in amaze.

"And you told him——"

"It was half-past nine in the evening. I happened to remember because I leave at half-past nine and the night-clerk comes on, and just as I was going out Miss Wolcott came in and asked if I could give her something to make her sleep. She said she was too nervous to sleep, and I noticed she seemed all of a tremble. Her hands were shaking when she took the packet."

"Did you tell Bede all that?"

"I guess I did."

"Did he ask any other questions?"

"Not about Miss Wolcott. He looked a long time at Miss Elliott's account."

"Let me see it, then."

The clerk turned the pages.

"We charge everything that is prescribed for any one at the school to Miss Elliott's account, and show on our bill who it was for," said the clerk. "That's what these names mean." He pointed to the names "Miss Jones," "Miss Beatly," etc., opposite each item.

Lyon was distinctly startled to catch the name "Miss Tayntor" at frequent intervals.

"Has she been ill?" he asked, with quick concern, and then added lamely: "She's a—sort of cousin of mine."

The clerk grinned.

"Gunther's chocolates."

"Oh!"

Lyon studied the entries assiduously for the next few moments. Among the latest were a number of charges, "For Mrs. W. B." Had that meant anything to Bede?

"Did Bede ask about any of them in particular?" he inquired by way of answering his own query.

"He wanted to know who Mrs. W. B. was."

"What did you tell him?"

"Told him those were Doctor Barry's prescriptions. They were marked that way. That's all I know."

"Remember anything else he asked about?"

"No. That's about all."

Lyon went into the telephone-booth and called up Doctor Barry.

"Hello, Barry. This is Lyon. I want to know how Mrs. W. B. is getting along."

"Now see here, Lyon, don't you think you are crowding things a little? There really hasn't been time for any radical change since noon."

"What do you mean?"

"I told you at noon that she was not to be disturbed for several days yet."

"Told *me?*"

"Well, told the boy who telephoned for you."

"I have not authorized any one to telephone for me."

"What? Why, some one telephoned in your name, and you have been such a nuisance about the case that I thought of course it was you again."

"Did you happen to mention the lady's name, or only her initials?" asked Lyon.

Barry hesitated so long in answering that Lyon could only draw the most serious conclusion.

"I can't say," Barry answered, with some constraint.

"It's important I should know, Barry." Lyon threw all his earnestness into his voice and Barry yielded a reluctant:

"It is possible that I did. I thought it was your message."

"Did he ask anything else in particular?"

"No. Excuse me, I'm very busy." And the phone shut off.

Lyon walked out and back up Hemlock Avenue. He was breathing quickly as though he had been running.

"If I were Bede I think I should be rather proud of myself, making two such hauls as that in one morning. At this rate, Bede will soon know all that I know and a little more," he said to himself. "Is it possible that he will attach any significance to Miss Wolcott's purchase of a soporific on the fatal 25th? Good Lord, I wish she had stayed at home that evening! That visit to the druggist at half-past nine brings her very close to the scene of the murder. Is it possible, after all——" He shook his head impatiently at his own suggestion.

"At any rate, I must let Howell know at once that Bede has discovered Mrs. Broughton. I suspect we'll have to defy dear Doctor Barry. He deserves it."

He was within half a block of Olden's. He determined to go there to telephone. It was the nearest place and incidentally it would enable him to get Kitty's latest report on Mrs. Broughton's condition.

As he entered the hall, Olden met him—if indeed this wild-eyed man, whose goggles lay crushed on the floor and whose white wig sat askew upon his own black hair could be the sedate and decorous Olden. He fairly hurled himself at Lyon, crushed his arm with an iron grasp.

"The curtain is down—have you seen? What does it mean? Where is she? Has she gone away? Can't you speak? What do you know about it? *Where* has she gone?" His questions piled one upon another unintelligibly.

"What in the world do you mean?" gasped Lyon. "The curtain——" He tore himself away and rushed up-stairs to his window. Kitty's curtain was down to the very bottom in the left-hand window. "Gone!" he exclaimed, in blank bewilderment.

Olden had followed close.

"She pulled the curtain down just now—just before you came in. I was watching—I have been watching all the time—I saw her come and pull it down."

"How did you know about the curtains?" asked Lyon, realizing for the first time that Olden was betraying knowledge that he was not supposed to have.

"I heard what you said at the phone. I knew what you came here for, of course—that's why I let you come—you were to help me watch without knowing it—and now she has gone—slipped away before our very eyes——"

"Who are you?"

"Woods Broughton." He pronounced the name with careless impatience, as though he had never tried to keep it a secret. "What are you going to do? We must find her."

"Come down-stairs!" said Lyon, adjusting himself to the new situation. "We must telephone to Howell."

Howell was not an imaginative man, and it took some time to make him grasp the double idea that Mrs. Broughton had disappeared and that Lyon's landlord had suddenly turned out to be Broughton himself. The whole thing was irregular, and he felt himself confused and embarrassed. But he agreed that he must come at once for a consultation.

"I think we will get along better if we are quite frank," said Lyon, while they were waiting for Howell. "Will you explain your object in disguising yourself, so that we may know just where we stand in relation to each other?"

"To find out what her secret was," Broughton answered passionately. He clenched his hands till the knuckles were

white, and his heavy-featured face, shaped by half a century of business life into lines of impassive self-control, was wrenched by emotion that was half-pitiful, half-ludicrous. "To find out what hold this man Lawrence has upon her—to kill him, perhaps——"

"Lawrence? Good Heavens, what nonsense!" cried Lyon. "What made you connect her with Lawrence in any way?"

"I told you that it was a letter from Waynscott that first upset her. She had been happy before that. I swear it. She was happy and content as my wife. Then his letters came——"

"What made you think they were from him? Did you see any of them?"

"I found one, partly burned, in the fireplace in her bedroom. I could make out the signature plainly—it was Arthur Lawrence."

"You could read nothing else?"

"No, but I found her unfinished answer in her writing-desk."

"What did she say?" asked Lyon calmly.

Broughton struggled to keep his voice steady. "She said that she was the most unhappy woman in the world—God, I had been so happy—that he had been right in warning her against marrying me, and that she must see him. I had no chance to read more, for she was coming, and I could not let her suspect I had seen anything. But I made my plans from that moment. I told her that I was called away on a sudden business-trip. As I expected, as soon as I was off she started for Waynscott. I followed her, in this disguise. She went at once to Lawrence's office——"

"His law office, in the Equity Building?"

"Yes. Then she went to Miss Elliott's. That was on a Monday. Monday night, you will remember, Lawrence killed Fullerton, and was arrested. That stopped their plans, whatever they were. She has kept her room at Miss Elliott's, and I took this house, which happened to be vacant, so that I could keep a close watch on her. She has never gone out. Doctor Barry has been to see her, as you know. I have had Phillips get a daily report from Barry, under color of wiring to me. Then you came along, Mr. Lyon. I had seen and heard enough to know that you were a friend of Lawrence's, so I took you in, because I wanted to know everything about him that I could. And I knew that for some reason you were watching Grace. I could do nothing but wait until Lawrence was released—as Grace was waiting over there for his release! You needn't pretend to be surprised—you know yourself the connection between them—that's why you have been keeping a watch on her—I saw that from the room you selected——"

"You are quite right as to that, though I think you are quite wrong as to other things."

"What other things?"

"About Lawrence. He isn't that sort of a man. If any one had a hold upon Mrs. Broughton, it would seem to have been Fullerton."

"Fullerton!"

"You have been very frank, Mr. Broughton, and it is only fair that I should be equally frank. We have been very anxious to have an interview with Mrs. Broughton as soon as her health would permit, Howard and I, because we have reason to believe that she may be able to throw some light upon the Fullerton murder. She may be wanted as a witness."

"You are mad—utterly mad," gasped Broughton. "What could she possibly know about that?"

"She was with Fullerton when he left the Wellington at eight o'clock."

"I don't believe it!"

"I don't think there can be much question about that. She had obviously been to consult him on some legal matters. But, frankly, we only know enough to make it very important we should know more. And we have been very anxious to avoid publicity, if possible, for her own sake and possibly for Lawrence's."

Poor Broughton looked dazed. "I don't understand. Fullerton was her lawyer——"

"Yes."

"And you think she was with him when Lawrence killed him?"

"We are in hopes that she may be able to explain what did actually happen. She certainly was with Fullerton earlier in the evening. Beyond that we don't *know* anything, and we really haven't even a coherent theory."

"But it was Lawrence with whom she was corresponding—it was Lawrence who had wanted to marry her and who would not go to her wedding—it was Lawrence she came to see as soon as my back was turned!"

Lyon shook his head. "You don't know what lies under all that. Fullerton may have had some hold on her, and Lawrence may have been acting as her friend merely. Ah, here is Howell. He will tell us what to do now."

Howell had had time to adjust his mind to the facts Lyon had telephoned, and when he came in he seemed more curious regarding the personality of the famous man before him than any other fact. Lyon explained briefly what he had told Broughton about the situation.

"Well, now, Mr. Broughton, you know as much as we do," said Howell. "You see that it is highly important we should get at Mrs. Broughton's testimony. Barry has been keeping me off, so this young man evolved a somewhat fantastic plan of getting inside information as to her condition. I hope the code has missed fire, somehow, for it would be exceedingly unfortunate if the prosecution should get hold of her before we do. It is quite on the cards, Mr. Broughton, that we may want you to take your wife away—quite out of reach as a witness. It depends on what she has to tell us—and that we must find out as soon as possible."

"How—if she is gone?"

"That is the first thing for us to find out. Lyon, you must take me over to Miss Elliott's School at once. We want to find out all we can, and immediately. If I may make a suggestion, Mr. Broughton, you will await our return here instead of accompanying us. It may possibly prove that your disguise should not be disclosed at this juncture."

Broughton did not demur. He was obviously too much overwhelmed by the uncertainties of the situation to take the initiative in any direction.

"Don't be long," he said, with a wistfulness that sat strangely on his heavy features. "If she has really gone, I must know. I must have the police search the town for her at once."

Howell and Lyon left him standing in the doorway, and looking after them in helpless impotence.

"That complicates things," said Howell.

Lyon nodded.

"If there is any connection between Lawrence and Mrs. Broughton——"

"There isn't, of the sort he thinks."

"If there is *any* connection, it may supply the motive for the assault on Fullerton. I'm afraid we aren't going to get much help for our side from this interview, but I'd rather know the worst than to be tied up in ignorance."

"If Mrs. Broughton will talk!"

"Well, we shall soon see," said Howell, as he rang Miss Elliott's bell.

CHAPTER XVII.

There was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement about the place that struck Lyon as soon as they were admitted to Miss Elliott's. There was a sound of voices, of shutting doors, that was like the buzz of an excited hive. The maid who took their cards for Mrs. Broughton looked startled and hesitating, but departed on her errand without remark.

"She's gone, all right," murmured Lyon to his companion.

In a moment Miss Elliott appeared, severe and formal and angular as ever, but with a nervous flutter in her voice that told its own story to Lyon's quick ear.

"It is impossible for Mrs. Broughton to receive visitors," she said. "The maid brought your cards to me, but I am authorized to say that Mrs. Broughton cannot see any one."

"It is a matter of some importance—a legal matter," said Howell.

Miss Elliott shook her head. "I am sorry—it is impossible."

"Do you mean that she has not yet returned?" asked Lyon gently.

Miss Elliott turned to him with a start. "Do you mean that you have seen her? Oh, where was she? When was it? Why did she go?"

"I have not seen her. I heard that she had been able to go out, and so hoped that she might be strong enough to grant us an interview. She had asked me to call in regard to a certain matter in which she was interested. Do I understand she is out this afternoon?"

Miss Elliott threw out her hands with a gesture of despair. "I do not know where she is—where she went or when. She has simply gone without a word. And she was hardly able to walk across the room alone."

"When did she go?" asked Lyon. "You may count on us to help you in any possible way, Miss Elliott. Give us all the information that you can about her departure."

"I went out myself this afternoon at two o'clock. The maid says that a man called to see Mrs. Broughton about half an hour later. He sent a note to her, but no card. She asked to have him come to her private sitting-room, and he was there perhaps fifteen minutes. Then he left. When I came home, at four o'clock, I went at once to her room, and found it empty. She has not left her room before since she came—she has been too ill. She is not in the house. I have myself gone all through it. She must have dressed and gone out some time during the afternoon, when no one happened to be in the hall. But I cannot understand it. And I don't know what to do."

"Do nothing at present, madam. And say nothing to any one about it. I will have a search instituted quietly, so that if she should not return of her own accord, we shall soon know, at any rate, where she is," said Howell. "Can you give us any information about the man who called?"

"None."

"No one saw him?"

"No one but the maid, and she is not observing. I have questioned her. She could give no description of him."

"Well, we must do the best we can without it. I shall take pleasure in letting you know as soon as we have anything to report," said Howell, rising to depart.

Lyon had left his hat and gloves on the hat-rack in the hall. As he took up his gloves, he felt something crinkle inside one of them, and he knew instantly that Kitty had sent him a message.

"That girl is a born intrigante," he laughed to himself, with a sudden thrill that was curiously tender, for all his amusement. As soon as they were outside he unfolded the little note.

> The man who came to see her was small and thin, and wore an old dark-blue coat. He had a bald spot on the top of his head, and a wart on his nose. He walks on tiptoe. I hate a man who walks on tiptoe. She went away in a hurry, for she didn't take her comb or brush or anything. Oh, I'm just wild to know what is happening. Is it anything mysterious?

Lyon read the note to Howell.

"That man was Bede," he said seriously.

"No question about that. Now, why did she go? Because Bede persuaded *her to hide, or because he frightened her* into hiding on her own account? And is Bede going to produce her, or isn't he? I never ran up against so many blind alleys in one case in my life. There were apparently just three people who knew what happened that night—Fullerton, Lawrence, and Mrs. Broughton. Fullerton is dead, Mrs. Broughton is lost, and Lawrence will not talk. I wonder if this will unseal his tongue? I think I will have to see him at once."

"We'll have to report to Broughton first. That poor man is on my mind."

"Very well, we'll go there first. I want you to come with me to see Lawrence."

They walked around the block to Broughton's home, and found him waiting for them. He fairly went wild when he heard their report. He was telephoning the police, printing post-

ers, sending a town crier around to make proclamation — anything and everything, and all at once. His wife was lost, and the resources of the universe must be requisitioned to get her back.

"Go slow," said Lyon. "Mrs. Broughton is not a child. She hasn't been kidnaped and she isn't lost. She is in hiding somewhere. She had money and she is accustomed to traveling. I think you may feel reasonably sure that she is safe. Speaking for Lawrence, we are anxious to find her, but speaking for her, it may be just as well that she should not be found until after the grand jury has adjourned."

"What do you mean?" demanded Broughton fiercely.

"She knows more about the Fullerton murder than it would be agreeable for any woman to tell in court."

"You are mad," gasped Broughton.

"Why does she disappear as soon as she knows that Bede has connected her with the affairs of that night?"

Broughton walked the floor. Then he stopped abruptly before Howell.

"I wish that you would call up the county jail and find out if she has been there to see Lawrence. You can find out hypothetically, without giving names, you know."

"That isn't a bad idea," said Howell. He went to the telephone and inquired whether any one had been admitted to see Lawrence that afternoon. The answer, when he repeated it to the others, seemed significant.

"A woman tried to see him a little after five, but when she found that she would have to give her name and submit to search, she went away without disclosing her identity. She wore a heavy veil, a short sealskin coat, and a dark dress. General appearance of a lady."

Broughton dropped his eyes to the floor, and a look of sullen anger displaced the anxiety that had racked his features.

"I shall have an account to settle with Mr. Lawrence when he is out of jail," he muttered savagely.

"In the meantime, our efforts are all directed to getting him out," said Howell. "And since I cannot use Mrs. Broughton as a witness, I am as well content that she is out of Bede's reach, also. I will go down to see Lawrence at once, and if I can get any information from him that will interest you in this connection, I shall let you know. I think that is all that we can do tonight."

"I'd like to go with you, when you visit Lawrence," said Lyon quietly.

Howell considered a moment, and then nodded. Perhaps he was curious to see whether another influence would be more successful than his own in unlocking the confidence of his client.

Lawrence tossed aside the book which he had been reading, and rose to greet them with all of his old light-hearted self-possession.

"Delighted to see you! I've been reading Persian love-poems till my brains are whirling around like the song of a tipsy bulbul, so I am particularly in need of some intelligent conversation. Howell, you look as glum as though you were attorney for a wretched fellow who had no chance of escaping the gallows. I'm glad you have Lyon associated with you. I've more faith in his abilities than in yours." And he shot a dancing glance at Lyon which was not wholly mockery."

"My abilities are at least equal to the facts that have been given them to work up," said Howell dryly. "I came to ask you what you can tell me about Mrs. Broughton's visit to Waynscott."

Lawrence's eyes widened with surprise. "Mrs. Broughton! What in the name of wonder are you bringing her in for?"

"She visited your office that day."

"Yes."

"What for?"

Lawrence shook his head. "It was a professional visit. I can't discuss the matter."

"I rather expected you to say that. But the matter comes up in this way. Lyon, here, has identified Mrs. Brough-

ton with the woman who was seen with Fullerton that evening. He may be wrong, of course. But if he is right, it may be helpful to know what she wanted, first from you and then from him."

Lawrence did not look at Lyon this time. His eyes, swept clear of all expression, were fixed upon Howell in calm attention.

"Why not ask her?" he said.

"She has been ill—too ill to be disturbed, Doctor Barry has insisted. This afternoon she disappeared. Bede had been to see her a short time before. Now, what bearing, so far as you know, does this have upon the case?"

Lawrence dropped his eyes, which had been fixed intently upon the speaker, and remained silent for some moments. Lyon, watching him, felt perfectly satisfied that the facts presented were all new to him, and that his mind was now trying to fit them into the theory of the crime which he had before entertained, and that his hesitation in answering was due to his caution. At last he said:

"I cannot throw any light on the subject. I did not see Mrs. Broughton after she left my office in the morning."

"Was her business of such a nature that she would have been likely to consult Fullerton about it?"

Lawrence frowned. "She might have done so. Women never keep to the rules of the game."

"You had warned her not to consult him personally?"

Lawrence smiled satirically into Howell's eyes. "What are you trying to find out?"

"Whether her business with Fullerton was of a nature to rouse her to desperation, if she failed."

"Nonsense!" Lawrence exclaimed. Then, more slowly and thoughtfully: "Out of the question. Mrs. Broughton is a shy and timid woman, and anything like desperation in her case would react upon herself, not on any one else. You are clear off the track, Howell."

"You admit, however, that she might have been made desperate?"

"I admit nothing whatsoever. If I knew anything I wouldn't admit it. Or I'll admit that I don't know anything, if that will pacify you."

"Where would she be likely to go? You know her friends."

Lawrence shook his head. "If she was bent on hiding herself, she would not be likely to go to the likely places."

And with that Howell had to depart. As usual, his client had given him no information that would be of the slightest value in conducting the defense.

Lyon lingered when Howell had departed.

"There is another matter I want to tell you about," he said. "I had an interview with Miss Wolcott yesterday."

The flash of Lawrence's eye was electric. "Out with it, you tongue-tied wretch," he cried. "Lord, that such privileges should fall to a man who doesn't know better than to waste time in wordy preambles. Tell me every syllable she said, every look that she didn't put into syllables."

Lyon began, and told all of his tale. Lawrence listened with an attentiveness that seemed to meet the words half-way and drag them out into expression. He had forgotten himself entirely, and his anger at her distress, his rage at Fullerton, his amazed and awed wonder when he heard that it was merely shame over her girlish folly in writing her heart out to a man unworthy of it, that had made her deaf to all other wooing, were as plainly revealed as though he had put them into his most voluble English. At the end he dropped his face upon his folded arms on the table.

When Lyon came out the early night had already fallen and shadows lay heavy in the corners beyond the reach of the street-lamps. Lyon glanced at the sky, and then, instead of going to Hemlock Avenue, he took his way to the Wellington.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The Weapons of Women

By Kenilworth Egerton

Author of "The Adventures in the Petticoat Maze," "The Perfume of Madness," Etc.

"Popular" readers are always delighted with the unusual perspicacity and discerning powers of Tommy Williams, artist, hypnotist and detective. The more profound and complicated the plot he unravels, the better pleased we are. The mystery surrounding Cleo de Wynt was so baffling, no one but Tommy could make any headway in solving it. The story will be concluded in the January number.

(***In Two Parts—Part I.***)

FOR several weeks our life in Paris had been a quiet and uneventful one, for my friend Mr. Thomas Williams, the artist whose studio apartment on the Boulevard St. Germain I shared, had been devoting himself closely to his profession and I had found sufficient and congenial occupation in studying the language and people of the world's most fascinating city.

Tommy's circle of acquaintances was a large one, for he was a man of many interests outside of his chosen profession; but he was too busy to have many intimate friends. Le Garde, the chief of the French secret police, had, through a curious chain of circumstances, apparently become one of that small number, and was a daily visitor to the studio, where he appreciatively smoked our smuggled Egyptians without asking their origin, and held long discussions with my friend as he worked at his easel.

I realized, however, that they were attracted to one another because each regarded the other as an interesting study, and when I mentioned this conclusion to Tommy he laughingly acknowledged that, so far as he was concerned, at least, it was correct. We were dining at Voisin's and he made a comprehensive gesture which included all of the guests at the adjoining tables.

"And why not?" he asked half-seriously. "We are not dining here entirely for the sake of the excellent food, for we could have as good or better at home with far less trouble and incidentally at far less expense. It is the companionship of our fellows which we crave; the possibility that some one of the many people we encounter casually may possess an interest—which they usually don't. We are told that the proper study of mankind is man, a proposition which a Frenchman would probably modify by substituting *la femme*, and, for instance, any man with eyes in his head would be glad to make a study of our fair countrywoman who is dining with her father at the second table there."

"It is apparently a simple problem, for you have already reached two very definite conclusions regarding her," I answered banteringly, and Tommy laughed.

"That she is an American and that her escort stands in the paternal relationship—yes, they are simple enough,"

he answered good-naturedly. "If you take the trouble to look at her dress and hat you will be quickly convinced that she is our countrywoman. I think that you will acknowledge that she is the best-dressed woman in the room, which is definite proof that she is not English. On the other hand, it is not her dress which would first attract your attention and it is only when you come to analyze her that you find how perfect it is—an equally positive indication that she is not French; for ladies of that nationality make you conscious every minute that their clothes are to be admired. Now add to that that Voisin himself, who labors under the delusion that he speaks English, is trying to help the old boy in ordering his dinner, and it clinches the nationality. My boy, your powers of observation and deduction are wool-gathering unless you can follow such plain indications."

"We'll grant that she's American—and I'm proud of it—but I can't see any resemblance between her face and his ugly mug which denotes blood relationship," I answered.

Tommy shrugged his shoulders. "No, and yet if there is anything in the law of averages it leads to another conclusion; that her mother must have been a mighty good-looking woman," he said. "It isn't a question of resemblance, but of their attitude toward each other. He hasn't at all the manner of the old Lothario and he's trying to get his dinner served and eaten as if it were a necessary duty to be gone through with. He isn't searching the bill of fare for delicacies to tempt her appetite and there is none of the solicitude to please and entertain her which would be evident if the relationship were not one which precludes uncertainty. The girl's remarkably taper finger is not encircled by a wedding-ring, so it leaves but one possible conclusion open."

"And I should say made it an absolute certainty that you will get your head punched for impertinence," I said warningly, for Tommy had become so interested in demonstrating his theory that he had dropped all pretense of examining the menu and was staring at the young woman in open and wide-eyed admiration.

"I imagine that she's accustomed to admiration, and a man who attempted to assault every one who admires such a beautiful companion would lead a strenuous life," he protested. "That girl, in face and figure, realizes the ideal of the old Greek sculptors, and no one has a right to take exception if the eye of an artist appreciates it."

Tommy's admiration was truly justified by fact, for never had a more beautiful creature come in our range of vision. Her clear pink-and-white complexion accentuated the rouge and powder which was liberally used by most of the other women in the great restaurant, and her mass of golden-reddish hair, parted and simply dressed in smooth rolls at the side and gathered into a large knot at the back of her neck, made the elaborate coiffure of the others seem doubly artificial. Her profile was classic in line and proportion; the shapely head gracefully poised on a perfectly proportioned neck and shoulders. I noticed when they entered that she was remarkably graceful.

Tommy, in turn, recalled me from unconscious rudeness in staring at her by remarking that I was the next delegate for chastisement if the older man who accompanied her took exception to open admiration, and I acknowledged the fault, but likewise pleaded justification.

"I am only sorry that this may be our last chance to study her," he said regretfully. "The old boy is of the nervous temperament which can never be satisfied with a place for longer than the time required to see the lions, and I'll wager that he's already homesick for the click of the ticker. I'd give a nice red apple to know 'em."

The opportunity offered a moment later. The man, who had fidgeted through several courses, protested when his bill was presented to him; and Voisin, whose English at the best was erratic, became helpless with excitement. The guest, flushing angrily at some supposed imposition, raised his voice and his words were plainly audible.

"Confound you and your explana-

tions!" he exclaimed. "If you could understand United States I'd waste my time telling you what I think of you; but I'm blamed if I'll pay for what I haven't had. I never even saw 'em on the bill of fare and I certainly didn't see 'em on the table and won't pay for 'em."

The girl sat back in her chair with an amused smile on her face; this sort of thing was apparently an old story to her and had ceased to embarrass her, while Voisin looked about helplessly; but seeing Tommy, begged him to come over and explain to monsieur that he was not a robber.

"All right; I'm glad that there's some one here who can tell 'em for me what I think of 'em," said the American when Tommy asked if he might be of service. "I take it you're an American; so am I; my name's Fanshawe and I hail from Chicago. Just look at that bill; I'm not kicking on the charges, although they are double what I'd have to pay at the Auditorium during a Presidential convention; but I'm not giving up more than ten per cent. on plain robbery without a holler."

"Perhaps it is all a misunderstanding," suggested Tommy, as he glanced over the check. "I dine here frequently and I find them very fair in their charges."

"Do please, Mr. Williams, convince papa to be reasonable," said the girl, smiling. "He has these rows nearly every night and he is always wrong."

"But I'm all right this trip, and don't you forget it," fumed Fanshawe. "Two crame de laytoo, that's all right; that's that green soup; two tornadoes—those were the beef tenderloins, I reckon. Those other things; the vegetables, salad and ices are all right, too; and the bottle of fizz; but I never ordered any *couverts*—I don't even know what they look like and I'll be hanged if I'll pay for them."

It took Tommy some time to convince the irate Chicagoan that those two items included the table-charge for bread, butter, and napkins, which is entirely customary, and he finally paid the account and as an acknowledgment of Tommy's service invited us to go with them to the Café de la Paix for coffee and liqueurs, an invitation which Tommy was quick to accept for both of us.

The altercation had attracted the attention of every one in the restaurant; but the girl was not one whit embarrassed at being the cynosure of all eyes as we made our way to the door; and accepted complacenty the open admiration of the boulevardiers who stared as they passed the table where we sat outside of the café.

"You see, the trouble is that papa absolutely refuses to learn French," she explained laughingly, after Tommy had saved chance of possible further complication by giving the order for the coffee himself. "He says that it would just be waste of time, because the whole world is bound to speak English sooner or later, and he raves at these people who don't understand a word he is talking about, and we are in constant hot water."

Fanshawe nodded assent and his expression challenged contradiction.

"Confound 'em, they keep me hot under the collar all the time," he said irritably. "No one on this side of the pond seems to realize that time is money and it's like pulling teeth for 'em to hustle. If I'd spent my time learning all the fool languages it would have been necessary for me to speak in traveling since we struck the Continent, we wouldn't be here; for I'd be working for some one at ten dollars per and you'd be pounding a typewriter and making your own dresses, instead of spending your spare time and cash at Paquins. They've got to do it and it would save 'em time and money if they'd get a hustle on and learn to speak a civilized language right now."

Fanshawe was of the not uncommon type of American to whom European travel means only one continuous protest; a grumble at the luggage-system, a resigned tolerance of the legalized robbery of tipping, and an all-comprising criticism of any and everything differing from the accustomed luxury and conveniences of their own country. Under ordinary circumstances we

should have avoided him, but the attraction of the girl was overpowering; and inside of ten minutes we were suggesting excursions and amusements which implied being much in his company.

With the breezy frankness of the West he soon told us about himself; the enviable position in the financial world to which he had risen from a humble beginning, his house on Michigan Avenue, which he referred to as a "mansion," and of the bank of which he was president.

"Old Doc Burton made me cut loose for a while, though," he concluded regretfully. "Told me I'd have bats in my belfry or something of that kind if I didn't take a few months off, try a rest cure and lead the simple life; so I brought Jo along and we've been doing about twenty churches and a hundred miles of paintings a day. Maybe it would be restful if these geezers didn't keep me scrapping all the time; but I think it's twice as hard work as engineering a corner in wheat or organizing a steel trust. Hello:—say, boys; there's some one I want to speak to. Just look after Jo for a minute, will you?"

Without waiting for a reply, he jumped up and rushed along the boulevard and Tommy raised his eyebrows a trifle as we saw that the object of his pursuit was a woman; for the members of the fair sex who pass the Café de la Paix, unescorted at night, are not usually recognized by a man who is in the company of a lady.

"You mustn't mind papa," said the girl, laughing. "He does the most dreadfully improper things from the best of motives and in perfect ignorance. Last night he was going to take me to a place they call the Moulin Rouge and when the hotel porter told him it would be improper he fussed and fumed for an hour. I suppose that the woman who just passed and whom he has run after is some very improper person; but she understands English and that would be a guaranty of character to him over here. She traveled in the same compartment with us from Trieste to Venice and listened patiently while papa explained how much better everything was in America and how much money he thought he could make if he could get a concession to substitute electric launches for the gondolas on the Grand Canal."

"And did you converse with her, too?" asked Tommy, looking at her curiously.

The girl laughed. "My dear Mr. Willians, after being with us for ten minutes haven't you discovered that no one but himself does any conversing in his company?" she asked. "I suppose that it is a symptom of his very nervous condition; for he was not such a chatterbox at home; and it offers the explanation for his running after that woman. We met her again just as we were leaving for Paris, and she was greatly upset because she had missed some one who had promised to convey some valuable papers here for her. He talked so incessantly in offering his services and telling her how glad an American always was of any opportunity to serve a lady that he got the address where he was to deliver them all mixed up, and when we arrived here he found that there was no such street in Paris as the one he thought she mentioned. Consequently, he could not deliver them, and he has been dreadfully worried for fear she would think he had stolen them. I suppose that that is why he left us so abruptly and ran after her; imposing upon your good nature by leaving me in your charge."

Tommy made the obvious reply, concluding with the wish that his absence might be prolonged; a wish which was to be fulfilled in a manner he had not bargained for. Miss Josephine Fanshawe was as charming to talk to as she was good to look at, for she had a keen sense of humor, in which her father was wofully lacking, and was exceptionally well informed; so that time passed rapidly.

But after an hour had passed with no sign of his return, she began to be distrait and to watch the people strolling past uneasily. She said nothing about his prolonged absence, however, until

another hour had gone by, and then Tommy volunteered to search for him.

"I'll look in at the American bars around the corner; he has probably met some old friend and has been ungallant enough to forget you in his eagerness for home news," he said reassuringly; but the girl shook her head.

"That wouldn't be a bit like him—he has me terribly on his mind over here," she said doubtfully. "You don't think anything could have happened to him, do you?"

"Nothing very serious, surely; unless he has been arrested for trying to convince a gendarme that a Chicago policeman with a night-stick could put him and his sword out of business," he said, smiling, but his kindly meant banter could not banish the expression of apprehension from the girl's beautiful eyes.

"Do, please go; and hurry back, won't you?" she said appealingly, and Tommy quickly obeyed.

He returned alone, telling his cabman to wait, and answered her anxious questioning with a negative gesture.

"Don't be worried, though, Miss Fanshawe; he'll turn up all right, and the chances are that we'll find him at your hotel. Just wait until I leave word for him to go there in case he should return here, and then we'll take you home. Where are you stopping?"

"At the Ritz," she answered; and when he had spoken for a moment with the head waiter, we drove rapidly to that hotel.

The concierge had not seen monsieur return—no; but it was quite possible that he was in his apartment—should he send to inquire? Miss Fanshawe brushed past him and motioned for us to follow.

"The elevator is a constant irritation to papa; it goes so slowly," she said, as we were sedately hoisted to the fourth floor. "He always runs up the stairs, so it's of no use questioning the boy about him."

A moment later she gave an exclamation of relief as she saw the light shining through the partly opened door of their sitting-room; but it was succeeded by a cry of alarm when we entered and saw the condition of the apartment. The sitting-room and their respective bedrooms, which opened into it, had been thoroughly ransacked and the desk and bureau drawers broken open; the locks of every piece of luggage forced. Fanshawe's clothing was scattered all over the room, his trunks had been turned out, and the fact that the searchers had cut through the leather of his traveling-bag instead of taking time to force the lock indicated that their work had been hurried.

Miss Fanshawe's room was even more upset, or else the frillies of feminine apparel made it appear to be, for everything was in confusion. Dresses and smaller articles of feminine adornment were in rumpled heaps all over the place, and a half-dozen trunks and hat-boxes yawned empty with broken locks. The girl looked at the wreckage and confusion in amazement and then turned inquiringly to Tommy.

"We have evidently been robbed, but I don't care about that—I want to find papa," she said hurriedly.

Tommy walked to her dressing-table and pointed to a heap of jewels of no mean value which had been turned out of her jewel-box and lay in plain sight.

"This is not the work of ordinary thieves; they don't leave loot of this kind behind them, Miss Fanshawe," he said seriously. "If we knew who had done this we could make a pretty close guess as to your father's whereabouts; for he has evidently been detained on some pretext to allow opportunity for your effects to be searched. I will help you to find him; but you, in turn, must help me by giving me all the information you can."

Josephine Fanshawe was an effective young woman. She was not of the temperament which indulges in hysterics, and she sat down quietly, evidently impressed by Tommy's words and confident that he could help her.

"First, tell me if you know of anything which your father had in his possession which it would be important for any one to take from him?" he asked, and the girl shook her head.

"I don't believe that he had," she answered. "The doctor was very strict in ordering him to forget business absolutely, and he was alarmed enough about himself to obey. I do not believe that he had a single thing of importance with him, for everything was left in charge of his partners or in his safe-deposit vault."

"But he might have picked up something over here—that packet of papers intrusted to him in Venice, for instance?"

"But, Mr. Williams, he was endeavoring to return those very papers to their owner when he ran away from us," she protested. "Why should any one go to all this trouble to obtain a thing which he was only too anxious to deliver?"

"He had the packet with him, then—it was small enough to carry in his pocket?" asked Tommy eagerly.

"Papa's pockets are very elastic; he always carries a lot of things in them; but that was about the limit," she answered. "It was a long and very fat envelope, fastened with tape and three large red seals."

"Tell me all about it, please; just what it looked like, where he carried it, and what steps he took to deliver it after you reached Paris," said Tommy earnestly.

"I told you how he happened to take it—to oblige that woman in Venice," she answered. "There was not a word of writing on the envelope, and she gave him no written address. Each of the seals was a coat of arms and cipher, and they were all different. We arrived in Paris three days ago, early in the morning, from Venice via the St. Gothard and Geneva. He is so nervous that little things worry him, as you noticed, and he started at once to deliver the packet. He spent the entire day trying to find the address, which he remembered as 169A Rue Hélène; but there is no such street in Paris."

"Wait a moment, there is an Impasse Hélène, on the right bank," interrupted Tommy, who knew the French capital as he did his pocket.

"Yes, we tried that; but the numbers stop at 32, and none of the houses looked as if they contained people who would expect valuable papers to be delivered to them," she answered. "He finally gave it up in despair, and said that he would deposit the packet with his bankers for safe-keeping until he heard from the woman, to whom he had given his name and his Paris address."

"Then I suppose that we may assume that he did deposit it with them—who are your Paris bankers, Miss Fanshawe?"

"Our mail comes to Monroe & Company; but he has been to others on business, too. Morgan, Harjes & Company, the Crédit Lyonnaise, and Cooks' that I know of," she answered, and Tommy made note of them.

"It won't take long to inquire at all of them in the morning," he said. "I strongly suspect that the packet is the cause of your apartment being ransacked, and that it is connected with your father's absence. I saw only the back of the woman whom he followed—can you give me a description of her?"

"Yes, for I am sure it is the one with whom we traveled and for whom he undertook this service which has brought so much trouble. She is a young woman: certainly not more than thirty; about my height, and with large brown eyes and brown hair. She is pretty, and has a good figure. I remember particularly that she had very pretty teeth, white and regular, except for one defect. The eye-tooth on the right side had been broken and about half of it was missing."

"And her nationality?"

"That I can't tell you; for I know nothing but English, and I could not tell whether she spoke German and Italian well or not. She had a strong accent when she spoke English—so far as I could judge from the little that poor papa gave her opportunity to say."

Tommy rose to go, and looked about the disordered apartment dubiously.

"It would be foolish to minimize the seriousness of this affair, Miss Fanshawe," he said kindly. "You are a sensible young woman, and I shall not try to hoodwink you; but you can rest

assured that everything possible will be done to find your father speedily, and I happen to be in a position where I can do as much as any one. My chief anxiety is for you—have you friends in Paris?"

"With the exception of my father and you two gentlemen, who have been so kind to me, I don't know a soul," she answered forlornly. "This is awful for me, Mr. Williams, and you *will* help me, won't you? Please don't spare expense—papa is a very rich man, and I know that something has happened to him or he would never have remained away from me like this."

"You can count upon all the help we can give you, and we'll find him, never fear," he answered encouragingly. "I am trying to think of what I can do with you in the meantime."

"Please don't bother about me!" she protested hastily. "I shall be all right here in the hotel, unless you will let me go with you."

"I am afraid I can't do that," he answered kindly. "If you will stay here and not venture out alone, I shall ask at the office to have one of the maids sleep in the adjoining room, and you will be perfectly safe. I don't believe that the people who did this will be apt to return."

"And if they do they will get a warm reception," she answered, taking up a tiny silver-plated revolver carrying a bullet which would hardly stun a fly. "You needn't mind about sending a maid; my own is in the hotel, and I shall have her sleep here. She is a perfect dragon; so you need not have me on your mind; but do please hurry to find papa."

"All right! I imagine that you can look out for yourself, and I shall feel very secure about you if you will promise one thing—that under no circumstances will you leave the hotel except with one of us as escort," said Tommy, smiling into the beautiful eyes which met him so confidently, and she readily assented.

The smile left his face, which became very Mephistophelean in expression as we walked through the hallway, however, and I asked him if he really expected to locate Fanshawe.

"We'll find him safe enough; but whether dead or alive, I don't know," he said grimly. "There's no bigger fool in the world than the man who thinks he knows it all, and that's one of the diseases with which he was afflicted. A man who was raised in Chicago, which has a moral atmosphere that makes Paris seem like a Sunday school, ought to be able to take care of himself; but I'm not taking any chances where that girl's happiness is concerned, and we'll have Le Garde's help in this as soon as we can get to him."

II.

The great French detective greeted us cordially when we were ushered into his office, where he was busily employed in going through a heap of documents and reports. The approaching visit of foreign royalty to Paris had imposed a tremendous amount of extra work upon him; for anarchists are at such times a constant nightmare to the European directors of police; but he never seemed too busy to talk with Tommy.

"I know that you are up to your ears in work, and I should not interrupt you without good reason," said Tommy apologetically. "I have come to ask your assistance in locating one of our compatriots who has disappeared under rather unusual circumstances."

"And would it be indiscreet to ask the lady's name?" asked Le Garde, smiling at him over his joined finger-tips, and Tommy laughed.

"Oh, of course, there's one in it; but if I knew her name and address I should not have bothered you," he answered. "I can tell you only this much about her. She is about five feet eight inches tall;"—Le Garde busied himself with a pencil, turning the awkward English measurement into centimeters—"weighs a hundred and fifty to sixty pounds; has brown hair, large brown eyes, and is acknowledged to be pretty by another member of her sex. She speaks German and Italian, and English with a decided foreign accent. Her teeth are, I

believe, very pretty, with only one visible defect; the right eye-tooth is broken."

The Frenchman had been looking at the ceiling, apparently trying to conjure up a mental likeness to fit the meager description; but when Tommy mentioned the dental defect, he glanced at him sharply.

"You have seen this woman—here in Paris, lately, Mr. Williams?" he asked eagerly.

Tommy shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps—but if I did it was only a back view after she had passed the Café de la Paix this evening and the description which I give you is second-hand. I had it from a remarkably intelligent person, though; so I believe I can guaranty its correctness."

"And she is connected with the disappearance of your friend?"

"Of the man whom I am looking for—he is hardly more than an acquaintance—yes," answered Tommy.

Le Garde smiled. "But there is some one else—perhaps the remarkably intelligent person is also a woman?" he said interrogatively.

Tommy flushed. "Yes, his daughter, and I regret that I have to bring her name into it," he said hastily. "The father left her in our care when he chased up the Boulevard des Capucines after the other one and never came back to claim her."

"And if 'the other one' is the person whom I suspect, there is a very fair chance that he won't come back," said Le Garde, as he touched a button on his desk. "If my suspicion is correct, I have been badly served, Mr. Williams. Will you be good enough to give me the full details?"

This Tommy proceeded to do, briefly but adequately, and Le Garde listened attentively. When he had finished he turned to the assistant who had answered his summons and curtly ordered him to bring the papers concerning Cleo de Wynt.

It was a voluminous package which was handed to him, and contained at least a dozen photographs which he passed to us while he examined the latest notation on the papers.

"Is this the last report—this one from Venice last week?" he asked sharply, and his assistant nodded. "Then telegraph at once to Venice and ask our agent for an immediate reply concerning her movements. Tell Vibert, with my compliments, that he or some of the men under him must have been asleep; for I have suffered the humiliation of learning from others that she is in Paris, and unless I have a full report of her movements and present address by nine to-morrow morning he is to proceed at once to Martinique, where the chief inspector will assign him to duty at Fort de France."

"I suppose that is equivalent to a transfer from the Tenderloin to chasing goats in Harlem?" asked Tommy, smiling, but Le Garde was very serious.

"It means the end of an officer's career; but I must maintain discipline," he said sternly. "Your description exactly fits the woman whose photographs you are examining, and she is one of the most dangerous people I have had to contend with in a life which has been passed in protecting society. Every officer at the frontier and at the stations is instructed to watch for her, and with the visit of the King of Spain so near at hand I shall know no rest until she is under observation or across the frontier."

"She is an anarchist, then?" said Tommy interrogatively, examining the photographs with renewed interest.

Le Garde opened his hands expressively.

"One never knows, for the moment, what she is; but it is always safe to say that she is playing a rôle which makes her troublesome and dangerous to those whose duty it is to protect others," he said irritably. "To my knowledge she has been concerned in every plot of consequence in Europe for the past ten years. She has been a Carlist in Spain, the agent of those who hope to see the temporal power of the pope restored in Rome, the agent of Bonapartists and Royalists, in turn, in France; besides taking part in I know not how many of

the incessant intrigues of the Balkan States. She is a consummate actress, an adept at disguise, and lives on excitement. I don't believe that she has played any part from conviction or for monetary reward. She has a dozen personalities and as many aliases; but she is always dangerous, and more than one of her intrigues has ended in tragedy for others. That is why I tell you that your friend Fanshawe is in serious danger if he has fallen into her toils."

We looked over the photographs together, each of them showing the woman in a different pose and costume. Except for the general contour of the face, they might have been taken for a different woman, and they varied in apparent age from the ingénue in a simple organdie dress to a decrepit old woman in hood and shawl. The face was always interesting, however, and always in character, which spoke volumes for the thoroughness with which she entered into the different parts; for they were all snap shots, taken without her knowledge.

Le Garde smiled when Tommy complimented him on the collection.

"That art-gallery has cost the republic a pretty penny," he acknowledged. "I endeavor to keep her under constant observation, and my agents have instructions to photograph her whenever possible. In spite of that, she has visited Paris frequently and slipped through our fingers, and Vibert will be the fourth of my most trusted officers to earn banishment from her escapades. She is shrewd enough always to do the unexpected thing, and I never know what she is up to until it is too late to put my hands on her. Her presence here will entail redoubled vigilance to protect the Spanish king."

"You suspect that she is looking for excitement in anarchism?" asked Tommy.

Le Garde was very thoughtful for a moment.

"As I told you, she always does the unexpected thing; so perhaps that is the explanation," he answered slowly. "I apprehend no danger from known anarchists; I have them all under strict observation and always receive a full report of their secret meetings as soon as they disperse. It is the recruits, the enthusiasts, who are dangerous, and Cleo de Wynt is of the temperament which would make her enter into it from the pure love of excitement. And now, gentlemen, I fear that I must disturb the slumbers of 'the remarkably intelligent person' at the Ritz to obtain further details—do you care to accompany me?"

Tommy entered strong protest against intruding upon her at that unseemly hour, but Le Garde checked him.

"Remember that Cleo de Wynt is not a woman who sleeps when there is work to be done, and this girl's father has fallen into her clutches," he said gravely. "I should get the President himself out of bed, if it were necessary; but I shall cause the young lady the least possible inconvenience."

His tone and manner silenced further protest.

Miss Josephine Fanshawe was, if anything, more charming in the dishabille, in which she received us after keeping us waiting the briefest of time, than in the more elaborate costume she had worn when we made her acquaintance; but the expression of hopeful expectation died from her large eyes and was replaced by a look of apprehension when Tommy introduced Le Garde and explained his position and his errand.

"Believe me, it distresses me to disturb you, but it may lead to the quicker restoration of your father," said the Frenchman kindly. "Mr. Williams has given me the outlines of your story; but I need more details. Will you tell me all you can remember about the packet of papers and the woman who gave them to your father?"

The girl repeated the story she had told to us and Le Garde's questioning only brought out the further fact that when the woman met her father and told him the story which made him volunteer to serve her it was on the covered bridge which connects the two portions of the Grand Hotel and that there was no one else about.

"I wonder if you would recognize

any of these coats of arms as the impressions of the seals?" he said, rapidly sketching the bees of the Bonapartes surmounted by the imperial crown, the fleur-de-lis of Orleans, and others with which I was not familiar.

She examined the sketches carefully and shook her pretty head.

"No, it was none of those," she said positively. "I know nothing about heraldry, but I admired them because they were pretty. One of them, I remember, bore a very complicated design; there were a lot of crosses and three towers on it and a poor little sheep was shown underneath suspended by a rope about its body. I remember it particularly, because I called papa's attention to it and he remarked that you couldn't expect any one in Europe to hang mutton the way they do in Chicago."

"Heraldry takes strange liberties—that is the insignia of the order of the Golden Fleece," answered Le Garde, smiling. "Three castles are part of the arms of Spain—is this the blazonry?" He had sketched another shield, and when she examined it she nodded.

"That is the one—it was the central and largest one on the envelope," she said.

Le Garde rose and looked about the apartment.

"I imagine that you have been putting things to rights here. Did you find anything which might identify the vandals who rumpled your pretty frocks?" he asked.

"Nothing whatever, and, so far as we have found, nothing was taken," she answered.

"Your father undoubtedly carried his keys in his pocket—am I not right?" he asked, examining the marks about the broken locks, and she nodded assent.

He went through the three rooms casually, humming a tune and apparently making only a cursory examination; but I knew that his sharp eyes missed nothing from the disordered pile of wearing-apparel on the floor of Fanshawe's room to the grim and forbidding visage of the girl's maid, who was trying to restore order in chaos.

"Thank you very much—and I shall not intrude upon you further to-night," he said courteously, when he had finished. "You may rest assured that we shall make diligent search for your father, and I can only endorse the advice which I believe Mr. Williams has already given to you—don't leave the hotel except under proper escort, and be especially careful if you are approached by this woman, or any one who resembles her."

He handed one of Cleo de Wynt's likenesses to her and she gave a little exclamation of surprise.

"Why, that is the woman who gave him the papers! You know her and her name?"

"I believe she was known as the Baroness Hohenstein when that picture was taken," he answered. "She has borne so many that I can hardly remember them all; but no matter what she calls herself, you would not find her a desirable companion."

"I should like to run across her, just the same—I don't believe that she could hoodwink me as she apparently has poor papa," she answered, with flashing eyes; and Le Garde looked at her admiringly as her pretty teeth clicked together and her red lips settled into firm, determined lines.

"My dear young lady, I, too, should like to find her; but you can judge how sincere my warning is when I tell you that if that time ever comes, I trust that I shall not be without assistance."

"You can count upon mine, if I am within call," she answered, forcing a smile, and the Frenchman bowed his acknowledgment. He promised to let her know immediately if he found any trace of her father, and we left her to return to her interrupted repose.

"Can you make anything out of it?" asked Tommy eagerly, when we were once more in the street.

Le Garde shook his head. "Nothing very satisfactory—except that it is one of those cases where a well-meaning innocent person gives us more trouble than a designing rogue," he said, a little irritably. "It is of course plain that

Cleo de Wynt used Fanshawe as a tool to carry dangerous documents of some description across the frontier, and it is another indication of the woman's shrewdness. She knows that of all people the Americans are given the least attention by the police, for they never mix themselves up in the European conspiracies. I have no doubt that she knew all about him; that he was a trustworthy person, and would carry them faithfully; the fact of the muddling of the address was an accident which she could not foresee. It is thoroughly characteristic of her that she gave him no scrap of her own writing, and I'll wager that if I ever find the papers there will be nothing in them which will in any way implicate her. I have arrested dozens of her accomplices and tools at one time and another; several of them have betrayed her secrets to me; but none of them has ever been able to support his statements by the production of a scrap of her writing. That much is self-evident; but now there are contradictions which it is difficult to reconcile. Fanshawe chases her to return the papers voluntarily; but he does not return. Let us assume that there was some difficulty between them; we must still believe that he is detained by her. That does not fit in with the theory that she detained him that his rooms might be searched; for it took no little time to force those locks, and they could have easily taken his keys from him and saved time and noise."

"Have you any suspicion as to the nature of the papers?" asked Tommy quickly.

Le Garde smiled. "A suspicion only, and, as you suggest, it may have been important to more than one person to get possession of them," he said. "We know that they were sealed with the arms of Spain, and that Fanshawe received them in Venice, where Don Carlos, the pretender to that throne, lives. Also, that Cleo de Wynt has been concerned in former Carlist conspiracies. Of course, I know nothing; but the fact that King Alphonso is to be the guest of France, and that I am responsible for his safety from the time he crosses the frontier, makes it imperative that I locate the woman who may be plotting against him. I shall be busy with the routine methods; but you can depend upon it that I shall not neglect the incidental search for Fanshawe, and I recommend his most charming daughter to the care of you gentlemen. Remember that Cleo de Wynt always does the unexpected things."

"I suppose that this is a tacit refusal of my assistance," said Tommy, in a tone of disappointment; but Le Garde was quick to reassure him.

"I am not so ungrateful," he protested. "I am in the dark myself, and all that I can do is to work the ordinary police channels. I shall probably remain quietly in my office, where I shall always be glad to see you; but I should prefer that you did nothing actively which might disturb the feeling of security of those whom we wish to discover. If I may count upon finding you at home, I shall send you the first news I have."

"Which would mean that we cooled our heels in what patience we could, while he made the running," grumbled Tommy, when he had left us. "That is not the habit of your Uncle Thomas Williams, who is now going to sleep over this dime-novel complication."

III.

Tommy's face bore unmistakable traces of a restless night when I found him dressed in pajamas, sipping his morning coffee and going through the papers in the studio. The counsels of the night had evidently been profitless in suggesting any explanation of Fanshawe's mysterious absence, and when I entered he threw the papers on the floor and acknowledged my salutation with a curt nod.

"No, there's not a word about it in any of the papers," he said, in answer to my question. "They're full of the accounts of the proposed reception and entertainment of King Alphonso. Just about like Le Garde's head, I reckon. He'll be so busy guarding that royal puppet that he won't be able to spare

a thought for the affair we are interested in. Perhaps when he has dry-nursed him across the frontier and received the customary scarf-pin or a pink ribbon to wear in his buttonhole, he may remember that there's an American girl eating her heart out in anxiety at the Ritz, and try to dig the old man up."

"Unless his amateur rival, Mr. Thomas Williams, has made it unnecessary by restoring him to the bosom of his family and claimed—what shall we say?—for a reward," I said, and Tommy acknowledged my attempt at pleasantry by a grunt of disapproval.

"I'll have to be a lot busier than I've been so far to earn anything," he said, after he finished his coffee. "By the way, I wonder what his family consists of; it isn't important, but I entirely forgot to ask."

"I believe that it's considered bad form in Chicago to be inquisitive about a man's family, and I don't remember that she volunteered much information," I answered. "She did say something about wishing her brother Billy had come with them while you were chasing around the American bars; but I didn't pay much attention to it."

"I wish that he, or somebody else who could look after her would appear," said Tommy thoughtfully. "It's a disagreeable position for her to be in; practically alone in Paris. I am almost ashamed to face her this morning, for I feel that I haven't made good. Confound the loquacious old fool! Why couldn't he have minded his own business instead of letting that woman make a monkey of him?"

As the answer to that question would have been as difficult as the solution of the larger problem, I made no reply, and Tommy went to his room to dress. It struck me that he took rather longer than usual at that operation, and when he reappeared I noticed that his clothes, linen and tie, had been selected with unusual regard to harmonious effect; but he was in no mood for persiflage, and I made no comment.

"I feel like a four-flusher when I think that I haven't an encouraging thing to report to that poor girl," he said as he carefully flicked a bit of dust from his hat and selected a fresh pair of gloves.

"Do you care to go with me, or would you rather wait on the chance that there may be some word from Le Garde?"

In spite of the interrogatory form of the sentence, I recognized the intimation that he preferred to go alone, and told him that I should not play gooseberry.

"Don't be a fool!" he said, as he turned to go, but there was a little flush on his face in spite of the grin which accompanied his words.

It was luncheon-time before he returned, and although he had recovered his customary good humor as a result of his visit he acknowledged that he had nothing to report in the way of progress.

"Not a sign of the old boy and no message from him; but the girl is a brick," he said. "The only trouble I had with her was to induce her to remain quietly at the hotel; for she wants to enter into the search herself. I haven't been quite fair to Le Garde, though; his men are swarming around all the banks, and he was considerate enough to send a noncommittal but encouraging message to her the first thing this morning."

"While Mr. Williams had the pleasanter duty of giving encouragement in person," spoke the familiar voice of the Frenchman; and, turning, we saw that he had entered, without knocking, the door which Tommy had left open. "I am true to my promise, gentlemen," he continued. "I haven't discovered the whereabouts of your missing friend; but if these slips are in his handwriting it is fair to assume that he is alive, and I hope to see him before nightfall."

He held out four papers, and their contents were identical, except that each was addressed to a different banker.

Please deliver to bearer the package bearing my endorsement which I deposited with you on the 18th. F. L. FANSHAWE.

"These were all delivered to the respective bankers whose name they bear

this morning," he explained. "I assume that the signature is genuine, for they assure me that it is, and they have all had business with him; but none of the orders were honored, for the very simple reason that Mr. Fanshawe had never deposited any packet with any one of them."

"But you have detained the men who presented them?" asked Tommy quickly.

Le Garde shook his head.

"My dear sir, why should I be so foolish as to content myself with minnows and let the whales escape?" he said, shrugging his shoulders. "Each of them is under surveillance, and will be arrested at the proper time; but that will not be until they have reported to their employers. Some place, safely hidden in the background, I am sure that we shall find Cleo de Wynt; and Fanshawe will not be far off."

"But what do you make of these papers; has Fanshawe developed paresis and started drawing on imaginary accounts?" asked Tommy, who was examining them with a glass in the hope that they would afford a clue.

"On the contrary, I should say that they indicated that he was shrewdly playing for time and counting upon the fact that they might bring him assistance," answered Le Garde. "He was giving up nothing; for none of the bankers had the papers, and he has hidden them away in some other place. If he possesses the shrewdness with which I credit him—for it is not an evidence of stupidity that a man is taken in by so pretty and clever a woman as Cleo de Wynt—he will realize that his surest chance for safety lies in not giving them up. Conspirators are very apt to be misled by the fallacious saying that 'Dead men tell no tales'; and when once they have the papers he would be quietly disposed of. The women of your country are beautiful and the men resourceful."

"And this particular specimen is impatient," said Tommy irritably. "I take it for granted that your men have made all the routine inquiries, and unless I can find something to do which may be useful I shall not be able to look Miss Fanshawe in the face when we dine with her to-night."

"Which would most assuredly be a great deprivation," answered Le Garde, smiling. "My dear sir, Fanshawe is only a pawn in this great game. Every conspiracy—and there is no question about his having become involved in one—is like a cobweb. Threads radiate out in every direction, and it does little good to cut or destroy them. It is far better to cultivate patience and trace them to the center, where the fat spider who spins them will be found. Let me find the person who sent those four men with orders to the banks this morning and within an hour I shall deliver Fanshawe to his hotel, and there will be no reason why you cannot feast your eyes upon the beauty of his daughter. As soon as I have the reports from my men, I shall let you know. In the meantime, here are tickets for seats at a window on the boulevard from which you can see the royal entry this afternoon. I suggest that you ask Miss Fanshawe to accompany you, and then I shall know where to communicate with you if there is any news. It will be an interesting pageant."

Miss Fanshawe was in no mood to be amused; but she welcomed anything which relieved the inaction of sitting quietly at home and waiting for news. Her distress of mind did not prevent due regard to her personal appearance; and although she was a trifle pale and the circles about her eyes indicated that she had passed a sleepless and anxious night, she was radiantly beautiful when she rose to greet us.

"I am wondering if I should leave the hotel, after all," she said doubtfully. "If it were to search for papa it would be different; but I am so afraid that some message may come from him in my absence, and that Marie will not be able to make her way through the crowds to bring it to me."

"Have no fear, mademoiselle; should any word come I shall get to you if I have to fly," said the maid, as she handed her a parasol. "It is far better that mademoiselle finds distraction."

"And I think from the expression of

Marie's face that a little thing like a crowd won't stop her," said Tommy, smiling, as we walked to our cab—a conclusion with which I agreed, for the grim look of determination, the square, firm chin and resolute eyes of the maid's face indicated firmness of purpose.

A crowd is always interesting if one can watch it from a vantage-point, and a Parisian one especially so. Thanks to Le Garde's kindness we had an excellent post of observation in a bay window of the first floor which commanded a clear view of the boulevard in both directions.

The military display was simply complimentary and formal; for the citizens had come to see, to admire, and to welcome; but the sharp-eyed police officers who patrolled among them, scrutinizing their faces carefully and casting sharp glances at the spectators in windows and balconies, were watchful for the wolves in sheep's clothing; the dreaded anarchists whose hands are against all constituted authority.

"By Jove, there's our old friend the cabman—that fellow who seems to be helping himself to the picture post-card seller's stock!" exclaimed Tommy, and I saw the disguised detective pass his hand deftly under the oilcloth cover of the hawker's pack.

A moment later he had called the attention of two uniformed officers to him with a quiet gesture, and they closed in on either side and quietly hustled the hawker into a side street. We saw them rapidly search his pack and draw out several round objects which looked suspicious, and a moment later he was thrown into a cab and with an officer on either side driven rapidly away.

"Bombs, by all that's holy, and discovered not a moment too soon!" exclaimed Tommy quickly. "Here comes the king!"

A fanfare of trumpets, the rattling of arms as the soldiers came to present and a ripple of cheers down the sidewalks on either side greeted the royal guest of republican France as he approached; the carriage in which he was seated drawn by four horses preceded and surrounded by a mounted guard of honor. A deafening cheer went up from the great crowd below us as the first of the cavalcade approached; but it was not loud enough to drown the cry of alarm and surprise from the lips of the girl who was sitting between us.

"Look! There—at the opposite window—the woman!" she cried, grasping our arms in her excitement.

Standing at a great window, which we had noticed before because it was vacant while every other was crowded, were a man and a woman. The man was ghastly white in spite of his swarthy skin, and the woman turned to him with a contemptuous smile on her lips. There was no mistaking her; it was the face of all of Le Garde's photographs, and the smile revealed the broken tooth!

We gave a cry of warning, but it was too late; for stung into action by the woman's look of contempt, her companion raised his hand and hurled a round object the size of an orange at the pavement. His moment of cowardice had been a fortunate one for the Spanish king; for it had caused just the few seconds of delay which allowed his carriage to pass.

The bomb exploded directly behind it, tearing a great hole in the wooden pavement, shattering the back of the royal coach and bringing down a half-dozen troopers of the escort. The boulevard was a shambles and the cheering changed to screams of terror from the crowd and cries for mercy as the maddened troopers charged in all directions with drawn sabers.

All eyes had been fixed upon the king, and probably no one but ourselves had seen the bomb thrown or knew its source of origin; but when we raised our eyes to the window it was again empty. The king himself seemed to be the only man in that great crowd who had not lost his head, and jumping from the carriage, he hurried back to where the dead and wounded soldiers were lying in the roadway.

"Blood tells!" exclaimed Tommy admiringly, jumping to his feet. "There's Le Garde, and I must see him at once.

Take Miss Fanshawe back to the hotel and then meet me over there; for it will take an hour to search that house."

He was off like a shot, leaving me alone with the girl who was watching the uproar below us with horror-stricken eyes.

"And it is a wretch like that who has my poor papa in her power," she said with a shudder as I drew her gently from the window. "Oh, if I could have got to her across that boulevard!"

Feeling the firm grasp of the muscular little hand on my arm and looking at her blazing eyes, I knew that had she been within reach that fatal bomb would never have been thrown; but I also knew that we had no time to waste and hurried her along. As soon as the police could regain control of things, all of the neighboring buildings would be closed and their occupants placed under arrest and I had no mind to pass the night in a cell.

Fortunately, there was a side entrance to the building and we escaped through it and reached the Ritz in safety, in spite of the excited crowds. Arrests were made on all sides of us and more than once we were stopped by suspicious officials, but the fact that we were Americans gained us immunity from detention.

I left her without ceremony at the door of the hotel, and ten minutes later was again at the scene of the tragedy, which was surrounded by a strong cordon of police and troops. I should have been unable to pass through it except as a prisoner, but one of Le Garde's agents, who had carried me before him under arrest when I made his acquaintance, recognized me and accompanied me to the house from which the bomb had been thrown.

Tommy had evidently reached Le Garde and given him the information, for it was swarming with police and surrounded by a regiment of infantry. The officers at the door seized me as I entered, but the detective explained that I was not a prisoner and had information to give.

"If it's about the whereabouts of the woman, he will be welcome," said one of them grimly. "Have you heard—it was a man and a——"

My companion did not wait to hear the end, but hurried me through a broad hallway in which a line of trembling prisoners were waiting and into the very room from which the bomb had been thrown. A commissary of police was questioning a prisoner, an attractive-looking woman whom we had seen at an adjoining window, and after taking her name and address looked at Tommy, who was standing at the fatal window with Le Garde, and at a nod from him dismissed her.

Lying in the middle room was the body of a man; the face blackened with powder and smeared with blood, but still recognizable as the bomb-thrower.

"The woman escaped; but that carrion was here when we broke in," said Tommy curtly. "You have done your part?"

"I left her at the Ritz," I answered, and he gave a sigh of relief.

"We were the only ones who saw the thing done, so that she devil had plenty of opportunity to get away," he said bitterly. "I am helping them identify the innocent spectators at the other windows; for they have arrested every one in sight."

I, too, was pressed into that service and our identifications undoubtedly spared much unnecessary discomfort to many people; but it was a tedious afternoon for us. Le Garde, with infinite patience, listened to the examination of each of a long line of prisoners, receiving whispered reports and giving curt directions to subordinates who hurried in and out; and while his precautions had been ineffectual he was apparently not in the least disturbed.

"I think that I can give you encouragement about your part of this search," he said when the last of the prisoners had been dismissed or sent to the prefecture for further questioning. "I have received the reports of my men who are watching those who presented the orders. They have all reported at the same place; a house which I shall have the pleasure of searching to-night."

"Great Scott, what are you waiting

for?" asked Tommy impatiently. "They'll do for the old man any minute, and this afternoon has shown that they are desperate."

"But there is more than the life of Fanshawe at stake, my dear sir," answered the Frenchman calmly. "You forget that the house is probably the refuge of the woman who enticed him away. I am giving her the opportunity to return and then I think my net will be full. In an hour from now I shall call for you at the Ritz and you may assist in the search and have all of the glory of returning him to his daughter." His tone and manner did not invite discussion nor permit of protest, and unwillingly we accepted the dismissal.

"I don't care a hang about catching that other woman; it's an affair for Le Garde himself, but he might recognize the service we have done him and repay it by giving us that address," grumbled Tommy as we walked to the hotel. "After all, the king escaped and France has troopers to spare; but Miss Fanshawe has only one father."

Tommy fumed until we reached the hotel and inquired for Miss Fanshawe, but his face grew white when we were told that she had left hastily soon after I brought her back, in response to a note which was awaiting her.

"Alone—she did not take her maid with her?" asked Tommy eagerly.

"But no, not alone, sir," answered the concierge. "She made the departure with the man who brought the note and who waited for her? An hour later her father has returned?"

"What?" yelled Tommy. "Her father—here in the hotel—where is he?"

"I believe that you will find monsieur in his bed," answered the concierge, smiling knowingly. "For the first time he availed himself of the *ascenseur;* for he was very drunk."

We neither of us used that staid convenience in reaching the fourth floor and we were breathless when we rushed into the Fanshawe apartment. The sitting-room was empty and the door of the girl's room stood wide open and we saw that it, too, was unoccupied. On the bed in the other room lay Fanshawe, his clothing disordered, his face flushed, and snoring in a drunken stupor.

"The drunken hog!" exclaimed Tommy in disgust, shaking his fist at the unconscious man. "Leaving his daughter with strangers while he goes on a debauch."

He was too angry to go near him, but something in his labored breathing struck me as peculiar and I bent over the bed.

"Hold on, Tommy," I exclaimed. "This man isn't drunk. There is not the slightest odor of liquor about him and it's dollars to doughnuts that he has had knock-out drops."

For five minutes we worked over him, shaking him, dashing water in his face and doing everything we could think of to revive him, but he remained dead to the world.

"This is beyond us," said Tommy hopelessly. "We must send for physicians and get him roused up; for I cannot explain his daughter's absence until I know something about where he has been."

He walked to the hall to summon assistance, and an open letter on the table attracted his attention.

"I don't know that I have the right, but I'll take the liberty," he said as he picked it up. "Hello!—what's this—signed with my name!"

I read it over his shoulder, a hasty scrawl in lead-pencil.

DEAR MISS FANSHAWE: I have found your father. He was injured by the explosion of a bomb thrown at the King of Spain, and has been carried to the house where the bearer will escort you. Come at once, as his injuries are very serious. Hastily,

T. WILLIAMS.

"And my name has been used to betray her into the power of that she devil!" he exclaimed bitterly as the forged note fell to the floor. "They have exchanged prisoners and she will be the more valuable hostage!"

TO BE CONCLUDED.

Touch-down Norton

By Harold C. Barr

A realistic bit of college life, involving room-mates who are aspirants for the same girl and the same position on the team. The climax comes as a surprise, and there is a snap and vigor to the story that will make it remembered for a long time

THE girl in peacock-blue frowned. It was awkward to have him stare so rudely, and annoying to find Charley away. To relieve an impossible situation, she said something about calling again. The admiring Mr. Selwyn, caught without the veneer of conventionality and good breeding, was bowing profoundly. But extenuating circumstances saved him from complete rout. She was decidedly too pretty to be overlooked.

Having attained the full limit of his bending capacity, Billy Selwyn reversed the process, and ventured a peek in the general direction of the hem of the lady's garment. Only a barren expanse of cheerless carpet came within his range of vision. He blinked and straightened. The girl was gone.

A moment of stupid perplexity and he raced over to the window. She was descending the stone steps, and he watched her as she started off across the campus, her blue raincoat whipping behind her in the damp wind. Long after she had vanished he recalled the long lashes and the cool, wet brown of her eyes. Billy had a strain of romance in his make-up. To him the shadows cast by the moon were only shadows, and the little blind god was merely a naughty undressed boy. But a living, breathing woman——

Of course she had knocked. It had transpired after an awkward stage wait she wanted to see Norton, his roommate. He was out. Then she had frowned her displeasure. So Norton knew her! The rascal!

Selwyn went to the window again and looked out. It was clearing. The stone walks were still wet and dark from the rain, the grass vividly green. He flung high the sash, and the early evening breeze was cool and full of the smell of clean leaves. Vacation was over. His eyes traveled lovingly over the outlines of the university buildings near at hand. Over the way a fellow lit the gas in his room. The light burned yellow, and Selwyn could see him moving about. His heart warmed. It was good to be alive, good to be back at Princeton.

A man in a rubber hat and oilskins came around the corner of Old North. Billy Selwyn craned his person halfway out of the window, and made a funnel of his hands.

"Oh, Charley! Charley Norton!" he bellowed. "Somebody looking for you."

Norton waved his hand and changed his course. "Who is he?" he called up, when he was near enough.

"It was a girl, you gay dog. She's gone." Selwyn grinned. "Devilish pretty, Spuds."

The young man below was forceful. "Shut up! Tell me her name."

"The lady didn't leave any. But she wanted you badly."

"Don't blame her. Wait a minute, I'm getting a pain in my neck."

Charley Norton, nicknamed Spuds on account of the clinking coins he sowed broadcast, vanished, and the next minute his roommate heard him on

the stairs. Another minute and Selwyn was essaying to describe her.

And the light of understanding came to Norton. "It must have been Queenie Renrick," he mused. "She wired she was coming."

"Some fairy out West, I suppose?" insinuated Billy.

Norton was getting out of his oil-skins, his back toward Selwyn. "Miss Renrick," he said slowly, soberly, "is the girl I'm going to marry."

"Thunder!" gasped Billy. "Let's—let's get drunk." He saw Charley staring blankly. "To celebrate," he hedged adroitly.

That evening Norton took him over to the inn and introduced him. She came swishing into their presence through some portières, smiling a little doubtfully when she saw Selwyn. But that wonderfully clever young person had his back uncompromisingly turned, and was absorbed in a careful survey of nothing. He heard a varied assortment of mumbles, splashed by some rather badly suppressed giggles. Then Norton called him.

Miss Renrick looked her best. To be sure, the blue raincoat was missing, but in its stead was a wine-colored affair of changeable silk. The deep sea-green of the curtains behind her made a splendid background. The olive of her cheek reddened a little, and her eyes laughed a little, and her lips curved a little in a smile of welcome to Charley's friend.

He didn't stay long, although the lady was very gracious, expressing it as her opinion she would see him again. She would be in Princeton until after the Yale game, and was awfully glad to have met him—she had heard so much about him from Charley. Billy laughed, and said conventional things, and took his departure.

On the way back to his room he arrived at a certain specific conclusion—he was lonely, and suddenly the world was revolving upside down. Later, while undressing, he paused, one leg suspended in midair, his sock rolled down around his ankle, a garter dangling aimlessly in his hand. She certainly had a deucedly nice way of looking right into a fellow when he talked. It was going to be hard to play the man, after all.

Selwyn played football on the varsity eleven. He was a good man and a stayer, and the papers called him the fastest end down the field under kicks Princeton had turned out in a decade. Norton had been his understudy the year before, but Billy was tough, and all season refused to get hurt. The disgusted sub moped around the side-lines in a ridiculous, flapping blanket, and beseeched the gods in vain his roommate might be maimed or otherwise humanely disposed of.

The team opened its season Wednesday. And when Selwyn was jammed, hauled, pushed, and yanked across the line for the first touch-down, he arose, in due course, plastered with dirt and panting, and glanced toward that part of the bleachers back of the thirty-yard line. A girl was standing there waving a flag and looking toward him. The dowager in frowning black who bulked beside her, he guessed was her mother.

October passed serenely by. The team developed according to the Tiger code. Coaches came and went, driving the men, swearing and beseeching, sneering and taunting. Princeton tradition must be lived up to, the eleven whipped into championship form. Billy Selwyn toiled hard, tried to please, and remained unhurt.

Norton waxed mournful. "You've got a tough hide," he would wail expressively. "Can anything short of a spile-driver dent you?"

"One of these days, Spuds," Billy would say, "they'll get me. Then you'll bound into the breach, receive an amiable kick in the head, and wake up famous with an orange-and-black taste in your mouth and your picture in the *Princetonian*."

Naturally Selwyn saw a good deal of Queenie Renrick. Once he had a long talk with her on a certain afternoon she came out to see the varsity squad perform.

"Won't those horrid coaching persons ever give Charley a chance?" she asked plaintively. Womanlike, her technical

terms were crude. "The poor boy's simply wild to play in a big game. Can't you do something, Mr. Selwyn?"

She was so innocent and eager it was a shame to disillusion her. They were leaning on the picket-fence across from the entrance, she on one side, he on the other. He explained how the coaches were little tin gods, how it was he couldn't interfere. The lady's velvet brown eyes were very near to his own, and the perfume of her hair threatened to wreck his good resolve. If he could only flirt with her!

They played at West Point on Saturday. Selwyn, a strip of broad white linen around his forehead, ran through signals, one eye on the formations and the other roving about the side-lines for a raincoat of peacock-blue—a raincoat because it was cloudy. She wasn't there.

The teams were spreading out over the checker-board for the kick-off. Over yonder loyal Princetonians were making up in vocal outcry what was lacking in mere numbers, whooping out the locomotive cheer with amazing Jersey zeal.

Captain Cross came running up to Billy. "Look out for Muggins, Selwyn. He's a bad man. Put him out if he gets nasty.'

Selwyn nodded. Where was she? She had said she was coming. He took his place at the extreme end of the Orange-and-Black line, his arms swinging. A whistle shrilled; the ball was booted end-over-end clear to the cadet-line. Billy raced down the rim of the gridiron, every nerve strained and taut. A black-jerseyed foeman made the catch, and was coming darting back, dodging as he gained speed. Selwyn dove head foremost and tackled hard. He heard the fellows cheering him when the heap untangled, and didn't care.

There was a hurried line-up. Billy crouched on his outpost and glared at the aggressive Muggins, never seeing him. And she had promised! He made himself believe he was sorry for Charley's sake. Then, of a sudden, he saw her living presence. She was walking alone back of the west goal. The special had arrived late.

Selwyn heard a shout in his ears, and came back to the work at hand with a guilty start. West Point was sending a play wheeling around his end, headed by Muggins, his facial expression strained and desperate. Billy braced.

"Smear it!" yelled Cross, darting over.

Selwyn bored past the interference and smashed the formation to flinders for no gain.

Cross yanked him erect. "That-a-boy, Billy!" he shouted, and was gone, slapping his men on their backs. "Get 'em low and hard," he admonished. "Dig in, fellows; dig in now!"

Princeton's game in the first half was safe and sure. It was early in the last period that disaster overtook the Jerseymen. The Nassau machine was hammering its way to a touch-down when somebody snarled the signals. Henderson fumbled, and it was all over in a minute. The Army had the touch-down, and reaped an easy goal.

The slumbering demon in the Orange-and-Black team was awakened now. Failing to gain, West Point kicked. Then and there began another march goalward. But on the ten-yard line the bugaboo of the coaches cropped out again—the almighty fumble.

Darkness was coming on, and it started in to rain; a fine, sifting rain. The bandage on Selwyn's head was saturated crimson on one side. One of the cadets was laid out, pending repairs, and there was a delay. Billy was standing beside his captain, staring at the enemy's goal. Suddenly he grinned foolishly.

"See the naked little boy turn handsprings!" he giggled aloud. "Cupid on the goal-posts—well! Why, she loves me! Whenever you see——" His index-finger wobbled in the semi-gloom, his voice trailed off and died. Cross was gone.

Trainer Nat Richardson, arrayed in a sweater and armed with a water-bottle and a reeking sponge, was washing

the face and drenching the knees of his winded charges. Cross took him by the arm.

"Billy's bughouse," he said. "Better take him out."

Richardson understood. They had to carry Selwyn off bodily, he kicking and begging and fighting, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Where's Norton?" shouted Cross.

Charley shed his blanket and raced into the darkening radius of the suspended fray. The shadowy, moving group of men clustered around the blood-stained ball but awaited his coming to resume the mad scramble. Norton never heard them cheering him. His whole mind, his whole soul, was absorbed in the ball—the ball! To cross that last thin line of white painted on the grass, to go over twice to victory—he would have given his arm for that.

But the game has become history long ago. Norton has been posing in his special niche in the mythical hall of Princeton's pigskin heroes some two years. Go down to the New Jersey university and learn for yourself the whole of the glory-covered story.

You'll hear how Charley became a cursing, fighting human machine, dead to pain, one eye blackened, his mouth bloody; you'll hear how the Tiger rooters sang and waved their hats in the dark and rain. To the bodies of the slaving, toiling men came a second wind, and their limbs took on a new strength. Five minutes before the whistle Henderson was hurled over for a touch-down, crashing against the uprights in his blind fury to score. The ball went astray in the dark and the goal was missed.

And then came the last great card—Norton's seventy-yard drag. He emerged from the ruck of a scrimmage, his arms locked around the stumbling Bannard's waist, and clung fast, hauling like a maniac. West Point swarmed and pounced, but Norton refused to go down. Zigzagging ahead and reeling, ten yards moved beneath them—twenty, thirty. The pressure was awful, the dragging enemy clinging to him, tugging at him, making his strides short and labored. The muscles on his neck stood out hard as iron, and his bursting veins purpled. Pains shot into his very vitals and out again. But he swamped every sensation and clenched his teeth. He must win! Princeton must win! He must haul and haul and haul until his brain burst and his body stiffened. Once he plunged to his knees only to rise, shaking his head the way a great rangy dog shakes his. Idea of distance was gone. He wobbled, went blind and sick, and pitched headlong, to rise no more. But he had done the impossible. Princeton had won.

Selwyn wasn't badly hurt. A cold shower and a sound sleep restored his reason, and he was able to proceed to New York in the morning and thence to Princeton. Crossing to Jersey City on the ferry-boat, he caught sight of a girl out on deck. Her back was toward him, but he would have known the peacock raincoat in Kalamazoo. He came up behind her.

"Good morning," he said, and bowed. "Was it a good game?"

"Why, Mr. Selwyn!" her eyes big as saucers. "It *was* glorious, wasn't it? But you were hurt," she went on gravely.

"Nothing to speak of—sound as a drum," he assured her.

"Isn't that perfectly fine! You didn't see the finish, though. I could just hug every fellow on the team."

He choked back his wholly artificial cough too late.

The girl puckered her forehead. "You're not eligible," she decided seriously. "You weren't playing—then."

"You mustn't try and flirt with me."

"Do you consider it very brazen?" contemplating him thoughtfully.

"Yes, very."

"Why?"

"Because you're engaged, you know."

"Suppose I'm not engaged," she teased. "What then, Mr. Selwyn?"

"But you are."

"But I'm not!"—stamping her foot.

Billy's head swam. The sun was hissing in the river. Not engaged!

"Charley? You've broken——?" he hesitated awkwardly, bewildered.

She was laughing at him. "Charley Norton's my brother. It was all done on a bet."

"Christopher Columbus!" exploded Mr. Selwyn.

"Out home there's a horrid person called Lawton. If ever Charley does anything worth while he calls it luck, pull." The boat was made fast to the Jersey shore, and they hurried away to their train while she talked. "One day Charley grew disgusted and lost his head. Lawton had said something mean about the name of Renrick pushing a fellow along in athletics. They were both coming to Princeton. Charley dared him to come East under an assumed name. He bet him he'd make the team before he did, and nobody know who he was. This year I begged mama, and she had to let me come. Charley pawned me off as the future Mrs. Norton. I had to be explained. Wasn't it a lark? Charley won?"

"Rather; but tell me, who's Lawton?"

"He calls himself Boggs."

"Oh, Boggs. He was discarded early—second week."

"I know it," she nodded.

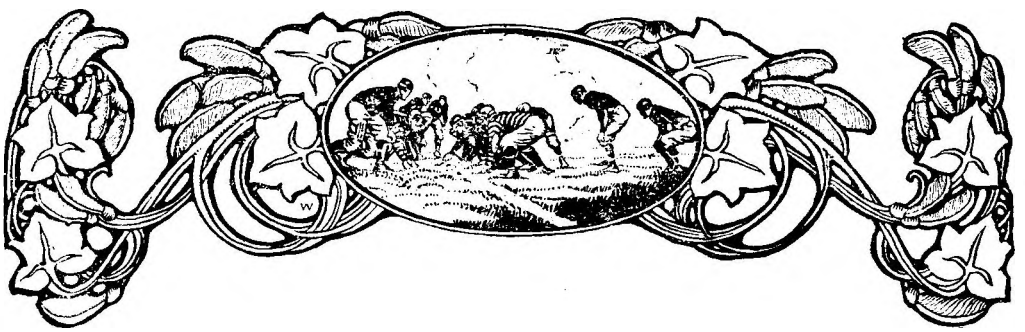
He sat a while staring out of the car-window at the sliding landscape. He was stupid with amazement, trembling with a vague, new-found hope. He saw how it was. Renrick on a cake of soap was a stamp of merit. It was a big name in Chicago. She was on the inside of the seat near the window, and he saw the round curve of her cheek. Here within easy reaching distance was the girl he loved. He fell to kicking the foot-rest.

"Shucks!" he said. "You fooled me nicely. You—I—why, hang it all, I want you," he gasped out. "I know you can't care for a big duffer like me, but I'm going to try and make you—try hard. Of course, if you won't let me, why, I'll exit, smiling. But you will, won't you, Queenie?"—anxiously. "Look at me, little girl. I love you."

"And if I never can care," said she shyly, "you can pay me alimony."

The wheels of the train were playing music. "Yale can beat us now," he whispered, his head full of treason, his heart full of love, "and I won't give a——"

"Hush!" said the girl. "You mustn't. It's naughty."



Zollenstein

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "Garrison's Finish," "Strange Cases of a Medical Free-lance," Etc.

CHAPTER XXI.—(*Continued.*)

THE office of the British consul was situated in a side street off the Königstrasse in the capital. Accepting a seat in the stuffy anteroom, I listlessly examined the various chastened prints, all eloquent of stolid British supremacy and virtue, that decorated the walls, while Parker entered the sanctum of his chief. Presently I was summoned.

The consul, Mr. Renfrew, was a slight, bald man, with calm, shrewd gray eyes. He eyed me critically as I entered.

"Mr. Mortimer, I believe? Pray be seated. My secretary has acquainted me with your remarkable statement. There must be some mistake, however. This office holds no record of such an affair as you claim."

"What?" I exclaimed. "But there must. I tell you there must. I tell you that I unintentionally killed a man in the Carlton. All London must be ringing with the affair."

He shook his head, eying me askance.

"I would have been notified; so would the police. Rest assured, my dear sir, if what you state is true, you would have been arrested long ago," he said dryly. "Are you sure it is not merely —sunstroke, Mr. Mortimer?"

I felt dazed, utterly bewildered, unstrung. I had been keyed up to the snapping point. "No, it is neither sunstroke nor insanity, Mr. Renfrew," I returned slowly. "The knowledge of such a crime is too terribly real. I have labored under it for weeks. You must be wrong. Don't—don't free me from this awful burden only to—to grind me to pieces again. See, I confess fully, willingly. I killed the man. I surrender. You have nothing to gain by this move. Tell me the truth, man to man."

Unknowingly I must have been on the verge of collapse, for the next I knew I was spread out on a chair, a glass of water at my lips, and Parker fanning me clumsily but assiduously. I felt curiously light-headed and foolish.

"There, there," assured the consul soothingly, "it is the heat. You will soon be better. One has to grow gradually acclimatized to this peculiar atmosphere——"

"I tell you it is not the heat," I cut in harshly, starting up. "You will find that I speak the truth."

Seeing that I was in earnest, and no doubt with a view to humoring me, he began to question me regarding the affair at the Carlton. Piece by piece he drew it from me, I concealing all names and the political phase of the issue.

"Without doubt, Mr. Mortimer," he said gravely, as I finished, "you have been imposed upon by some scheming brain. Either that, or you are the victim of a mistake. You have no proof of this man's death; nothing but the unsupported word of your friend, who assisted your escape. You say you left England the same night, and that you have taken no steps to verify the truth. On this man's mere word you brand yourself a murderer. Now either your friend was himself mistaken, or he made capital out of the accident. But

This story began in the June issue. The back numbers can be obtained from any newsdealer. Price fifteen cents each.

rest assured that your man recovered fully, and so quickly, in fact, that the affair even did not creep into the papers. Here are the files of the *Times*. If you still have any doubts, satisfy them."

Slowly the truth seeped into my benumbed mentality; slowly I was attaining the logical view-point; that viewpoint which the rush of affairs had swept from me. Had Von Lindowe been honestly mistaken, or had he deliberately and cruelly lied regarding Colonel Gratz's condition? Already I had proof enough showing that I had been made a catspaw. Had that affair at the Carlton been the initial move? A sudden spring seemed to have loosened itself in my brain.

Like a surging wave came fact after fact. Just Heaven, was it possible that the whole performance had been but an elaborate, diabolical farce, with myself as the master mummer? Had Colonel Gratz and Von Lindowe cooked the job between them? Had they foisted dishonor upon me, forced the fight, accepted the blow, and feigned death—all for the purpose of getting me away from England and in their power? Had the chancellor's iron hand reached so far? Was it possible that my acquaintance with Von Lindowe had not been so accidental as I fondly supposed; that all the time *I* had been the game, not he? That he had seen and learned that I possessed the necessary characteristics, both mental and physical, to fill the rôle of puppet; that I had been chosen carefully, and been made the victim of a cruelly ingenious plot?

All this ran riot through my mind. What a fool I had been not to see it before. It explained everything; Gratz's simulated hatred; Von Lindowe's simulated friendship. Yes, it explained everything. It was humiliating, deadening. But above and beyond everything was the stimulating, uplifting thought that I was guiltless; innocent in the sight of God and man. Thankfulness to the Almighty possessed me. I am not particularly devout, but some prayer, some measure of praise to the Almighty, crossed my lips. I arose at length, trembling.

"I cannot thank you fittingly, Mr. Renfrew, for your words. They mean a new lease of life, and one which will retrieve the other. I—I——" And then man and soldier as I was, I choked.

He shook me kindly by the hand.

"It has all been a mistake, Mr. Mortimer, and none of us are omnipotent—thank God. If we were, the world would be a very uninteresting place. I don't know what your plans are, but remember that here is your country's flag, the badge of our mother, and that her arms are ever open to her children—erring or not. Pray command me in any occasion you may have."

I expressed my thanks as best I could. "I have business at the castle," I finished, hastily forming my plans. "If you do not hear from me within a week, will you look me up? I mean—officially. The chancellor will know of my whereabouts."

He met my eyes, and nodded understandingly in silence.

And so forearmed, strong in certain vital knowledge, I set forth for the castle a free man. The power of suggestion is wonderfully potent. "A free man," I exulted. And then I was brought up, standing, by a sudden remembrance.

Until that moment I had completely forgotten about the young king. Events had swept all memory of him from me. I prayed God that Zenia had remembered, though she, too, had seemed swept away by the stress of the action. Surely—surely she had not forgotten. No, she could not forget. She would not have left without ransacking Heimruh. Yes, surely the young king had been found at last. Or perhaps Heimruh did not hold him. At all events, it was no longer any concern of mine. Von Bulowe or Hohenstauffen no longer mattered to me. Let them fight out their own feud as they pleased.

I stood cogitating. I had not forgotten that, free or not, I was still answerable to Zenia for that affair with her brother. Yes, I would first go to the

chancellor and tell him just what I thought of him; expose his dirty hand to the full; then I would go to Schillingsberg and face whatever the law might hold in store.

I had wounded Hugo in fair fight. That I could prove, if not by Boris, at least by my opponent's second, the young sous-lieutenant. After all, in the last analysis of things, I would only have to pay for breaking the strict edict against dueling. Yes, I would return to Schillingsberg. There would be certain bitter satisfaction in again seeing Zenia—even under any conditions. See her for the last time. For the heart is a stubborn, unruly member.

Here my attention was attracted by something that fell fluttering at my feet. Idly I picked it up, my thoughts busy with other things. It proved to be a small, tightly balled piece of paper. Mechanically I unrolled it, and spread its wrinkled, soiled surface to the sun. Then at once my attention was focused. The paper bore three messages, all the same, in English, German, and French:

I am held prisoner in 22 Berlin-strasse. Show this to the British consul. You will be heavily rewarded. GREYSTONE.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE END OF THE KING'S GAMBIT.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, my first step was to locate Greystone's prison. This was accomplished with little difficulty, for in fact I was standing in its very shadow. It was a gloomy, forbidding-looking house, ancient of architecture and atmosphere. Here in the busy strasse, in the very eye of the public, Greystone had been held prisoner for weeks by his abductors. It was another proof of the truth of the old paradox that patent obviousness is the best method for secrecy.

Owning no very definite aim, flushed with the discovery, I ascended the steps and hammered on the old brass knocker. I was prepared for a tardy answer, perhaps none, but to my surprise, footsteps almost instantly came echoing down the hall. A bolt grated, the door grudged a few inches and I was confronting a bald, middle-aged man in snuffy velveteens.

As his eyes met mine the skin at the back of my neck wrinkled in sudden fear. For I was face to face with none other than Colonel Gratz.

In a measure I had been prepared for a proof of my innocence, but this sudden confronting of my supposed victim, without hint or warning, in the full light of day, for a moment borrowed every vestige of nerve I owned. I could only stare in speechless silence while he, no whit embarrassed or put out, fairly met my eyes, polite inquiry in his demeanor.

"Well," I said grimly at length, in English, "you make a devilish dramatic resurrection, my friend. I think you'll favor me with an explanation of your feigned death."

I attempted to enter, but he barred my way with his bulky person.

"Pardon," he said in deformed English, "I no speak ze Anglais. Will monsieur condescend to ze French? *Oui?*"

"Why, you old hypocrite," I cried hotly, "you can speak it as well as I can. Stop your humbugging. I know who you are; you know who I am."

Still he stared at me blankly, shrugging courteous, uncomprehending shoulders. "If monsieur will but kindly state his wishes," he replied finally in French, "I will do my best to oblige. Otherwise I must shut the door, though it will make me desolate to offend monsieur's face. My name is Alphonse Dupleil and I am at monsieur's service. Yes."

"Then, Monsier Dupleil," said I grimly in the same tongue, "we will let recognitions go for the present. In the meantime, Colonel Gratz, inform Viscount Greystone that one of his friends has received his note and that he awaits him below."

The man was an abominably good actor. Not a shade passed over his face. "I do not understand, monsieur," was all he would say. "There is no gentleman of that name here. I live alone."

"That's another lie," said I. "Come, let me pass or——" Smash! went the door in my face and I was left on the steps nursing my rage and a bruised hand.

"I am sorry," came Gratz's polite, deprecating voice through the oak, "but monsieur was impolite."

"You'll find the British consul more so, my friend," I called back grimly, stamping off.

Inside of fifteen minutes I had Mr. Renfrew and a squad of police, headed by the prefect himself, at number twenty-two Berlin-strasse.

"This is a very good piece of work, Mr. Mortimer," said the consul, rubbing excited hands. "And to think he was prisoner but a half-mile from his own government! Probably held for ransom by unscrupulous rascals. How they escaped the vigilance of the police I do not know. Aside from the honor, the reward will be very large."

"I don't wish any reward," I hastened to say. "It was merely a happy accident. Any one might have found the note; any one would have informed you and been glad of the opportunity."

He pursed his lips but said nothing except: "Ah, so this is the house? Quite forbidding-looking."

Complete and elaborate failure met our venture. We searched the house from top to bottom, but no trace of Greystone was visible. Mindful of Heinrich's ugly potentiality, I led the search for secret rooms, but everything rang true. Moreover, Colonel Gratz had likewise vanished. The only occupant was an old housekeeper who, speaking a bastard Gascon dialect, assured us with much sincerity that her master was one Alphonse Dupleil, a bibliophile, who had but returned from abroad; that he had gone out and had omitted to say when to expect his return. All questioning elicited the same answer.

Then the prefect of police called into discredit the note I had received. There was no doubt the house was correct, but might not the entire affair be a hoax? Who could say the note came from this house? Public incidents always called forth an army of impromptu wits. They, the police, had been led on many a false scent owing to this peculiar turn of humor on the public's part.

"But I know this Dupleil—as he chooses to call himself," I returned angrily. "His name is Gratz. He is, or was, connected with the household cavalry."

"Monsieur makes a grave allegation," said the prefect stonily, pursing displeased lips. "It is not possible that one of such standing could be connected with such an affair. There must be some mistake in identity. As for Monsieur Dupleil, I have known him for a number of years; an honest, upright citizen. However, we will do our best. These abduction cases——" And he lapsed into a lengthy history of several of the more famous ones which had no bearing whatever on the one in question.

With this we had to be contented. Mr. Renfrew, dejected over the sudden demolition of his hopes, returned to the consulate firm in the belief, I readily saw, that the entire matter was a hoax. He might even have imagined that I had been the author of the note in order to gather notoriety.

As for me, I agreed with the prefect. It was a mistake; a sad mistake. I had seen it too late. I should have known that the mere fact of Colonel Gratz's presence in the house guaranteed that the chancellor was back of the whole affair. In a flash I saw it all. Greystone, coming to Zollenstein, had no doubt let slip some knowledge of his suspicion regarding that Carlton affair and he had been adroitly spirited away to the gloomy house on the strasse, presumably by ransomers, until the chancellor's hold over me had ceased to be of value.

This would account for the hitherto unsuccessful searches entered into. The police were in on the game, and while I hot-footed it to the consulate, Greystone and his prisoner changed their abode. To avoid international complications with England, the affair had been laid at the door of criminals and

no one could prove the government's connection with it.

Gratz need not appear in person before his one-time acquaintance. He would act as nominal jailer. And the prefect had willingly done his duty, knowing all the time that the nest would be empty. The entire machinery of state and municipality were against me and what could I hope to prove?

Nothing; not even that the note had been written by Greystone. But there were those who could. Yes, I could force the chancellor's hand. He dare not let official daylight into the matter. I deliberated whether or not to advise Mr. Renfrew of my suspicions. It would mean serious international complications and, as such, was a move only to be resorted to as the last extremity.

Finally I resolved to adhere to my original intention. I would see the chancellor, and this additional knowledge of his scheming would serve me in good stead.

The hunchback statesman received me in the council-chamber; seated as I had seen him on the night of my initial audience. I had passed Von Lindowe in the anteroom and he had saluted. I had not looked for this show of respect.

"And so, Mr. Mortimer," began Von Volke Hertz, without preamble, "you have decided on the halter? I was about to summon you. No doubt you are paroled in custody of your government? But I may as well warn you that our eyes are still interested in your career. You did not fulfil your share of the bargain—I will fulfil mine."

"You mean as regards my hanging?"

"Not necessarily," he replied. "In fact, Mr. Mortimer, I was about to let you know that we no longer require your services. Your confession was accomplished in vain."

"But you would still finger the rope, eh," I suggested dryly, "in case you might need me for any further dirty work? I came to tell you that our relations are at an end."

"Oh," said he. "Indeed?"

"And in fact," said I gently. "I have seen Colonel Gratz. And I've located Greystone. Moreover, my government knows I am here. I can't very well disappear. Once you were kind enough to say, sir," I continued, my anger rising, "that you held me there—in the hollow of your hand. You did not hesitate or scruple to foist a lie, a crime upon me; you did not hesitate to make the misfortune of a wasted life turn upon a nameless, friendless adventurer and bend him to your unscrupulous will, sir. I was your puppet, your tool. But now our positions are reversed. *I* hold *you* there—in the hollow of *my* hand. I can prove your brain in Greystone's abduction. I can prove other crimes. Now you have no longer a puppet to reckon with. You have England to face and she will know how to exact full reparation for the indignities you have put upon her greater subject, Viscount Greystone, and the injuries you have done to me, her lesser."

For a long time he stared meditatively at me across the green baize table, his fingers pressed together, his huge head sunk, vulturelike, between his massive shoulders.

"Mr. Mortimer," he said at length, coldly, "for the sake of services rendered, I will condescend to overlook your grave insult regarding my cognizance of Viscount Greystone's disappearance. I do not fully understand your charge, but I gather from your tone that you wish it to be insulting. Understand, sir, that I will not tolerate a second offense of the kind! I am not personally responsible for the kingdom's criminal class; for their actions. The necessary steps have been taken for the young gentleman's apprehension, and surely," with swift sarcasm, "if his government rests assured of Zollenstein's integrity and zeal in the matter, you can do likewise."

"I see," said I, rising, "that you wish to keep up the bluff. Very well. I know that to prove your connection with the affair will be difficult, as it will be to prove the stigma you have cast upon me. But—I'm going to do it. I am going to relate to the proper authorities of my government all the in-

trigue; every move upon the board and what it had cost. I think I can raise a big enough smell to choke you. Good morning."

As I had expected, he rose instantly, facing me, angry-eyed.

"And this is your word of honor!" he said scathingly.

"It was exacted under compulsion," I reminded calmly.

"I let down the barriers, thinking I was dealing with an honorable man!"

"Yes," I agreed dryly, "and was ever ready to pull the rope that encircled the honorable gentleman's neck. That it was imaginary did not serve to make it the less effective."

"God's truth," he said in a sudden rage, "am I not sufficiently pestered without the addition of more fleas? Come, what do you want? What is your price?"

"I'll come to that later, when I need it," I said. "In the meantime, I demand Greystone's release."

"I've already acquainted you with the fact that I am ignorant of his whereabouts," he snapped. "Still," and his eyes met mine, "I am quite certain that he will be found shortly."

"When?"

"No doubt to-day. You see, Mr. Mortimer," he continued confidentially, "you already know the kingdom's destiny and I would rather hold your support, however inactive, than your ill-will. I confess that frankly. Now I have received news that the heir apparent is alive. There is proof to that effect. You see, I would have released you from your promise had you but given me time. Come, Mr. Mortimer," he added persuasively, "at least credit me with the compulsion of circumstances in acting toward you as I have. I am ready and willing to make any reparation in my power. You know what every man stands ready to sacrifice for his country. What I did was for the welfare of Zollenstein alone. And for her I would sacrifice everything; my life as well as my honor should she but demand it. You were my puppet, granted—but I also was but a puppet. I have not forgotten the part you played. That necessity no longer exists does not cancel the obligation. Come, Mr. Mortimer, I wish your friendship, may I have it?" he concluded simply.

"I'm not one to cry over past hard knocks," I returned slowly. "Still—— Well, yes, here is my friendship and my hand."

He held it for a long moment in his, looking into my eyes, without saying a word. "There spoke the man, sir," he said at length, "and believe me, I am not unconscious of your magnanimity. You have but to command me."

"I'm not done with Zollenstein," I said at length. "I must account to her majesty, the young queen of Saxonia, for my share in her brother's death."

He nodded. "Von Lindowe told me of the sad affair. I believe your innocence. You will have my support if you wish it."

"I must decline it," I returned. "The issue is solely between her majesty and me."

"She is not one to treasure ill-will," he commented. "I think she will see the just side of the question. But remember, sorrow is a great distorter of vision."

"What about Boris?" I asked. "I'm still interested in the villain of the piece."

The chancellor fell to pacing the room. "He continues at Heimruh for the present. My hands are tied regarding him. But his right to the throne is effectually barred. When the young king returns—well, who knows what may happen? It would be a very good thing," he added meditatively, "if Boris Von Hohenstauffen should die—unofficially. If some one brought him to book for a private grudge. No public steps can be taken against him."

"But about the young king?" I questioned. "How did you discover that he was still alive?"

"My agents have at least succeeded in tracking the one who had charge of him in his youth. Boris had located her, years ago, and she had fled to the continent. The call of home became paramount and I have reason to believe that

she has been living in Zollenstein all the time."

"But how can she say that her charge is not dead?"

"Because," said the chancellor grimly, "report has it that she saw him only the other day in the streets. He disappeared before she could make herself known. He is not aware of his own identity. She has kept her own counsel because fear of Boris mastered all other considerations. And she has only lately learned of our search for her former charge and of the fact that the throne is no longer barred to him. He was lost to her, as she to him, until the day she caught a fleeting glimpse of him as he passed her window. My agents assure me that she will aid us in locating him and I expect her here any moment. She has all the necessary proofs of his royal birth; also of his appearance. The matter must be kept a profound secret, Mr. Mortimer, for should Boris become acquainted with the fact that Johann von Buelowe is tramping Zollenstein's streets, innocent of his true identity, well——" And he shrugged the moral.

"Wait!" said I excitedly. "Perhaps I can aid you. Kienert swore that the young king was a prisoner in Heimruh. Perhaps——"

"Heimruh," cut in the chancellor gravely, "was searched by the Saxonian troops under her majesty, despite Boris' interference. The statement must have been a lie; a subterfuge to gain her highness' hand. No, we will probably find the young king in some tavern. The irony of it! Zollenstein's king a nameless wanderer, adventurer perhaps, knocking from pillar to post while the kingdom eagerly awaits him with open arms and loyal heart. For the sins of the father will *not* be visited upon the children. It is decreed that Johann von Buelowe shall sit upon the throne of his fathers. God grant," he finished with a sigh, "that he turns out a credit to the royal house. But the years have been hard and he may not have battled so successfully with adversity as yourself, Mr. Mortimer."

"A queer tale," I said thoughtfully, "and one that reminds me strangely of my own life. Like the young king, I too, was cast adrift in England; I, too, had dreams of another life—but pardon personalities."

"No, no," said he jerkily, "continue if you please, Mr. Mortimer. You can see that I am distraught, nervous; waiting, waiting for the arrival of her who may terminate all these years of strife. Waiting for the crowning of my hopes. Continue if you please. I will pledge you attentive ears. Believe me, I am interested in your welfare. You have played the man under ugly conditions. I would appreciate a peep behind the scenes; an inspection of the material that went to the making of that man."

"Well," I began, his eyes upon me, "it is no very charming tale. I only hope the young king has trod a less checkered path. The white squares are few and far between."

And while the chancellor gravely listened, I sketched a brief outline of my life. Occasionally he inserted a pertinent query which I was too abstrated to measure.

"And that's all," I finished, idly strumming on the green baize cloth with nervous fingers. The picture had brought up old memories, old hopes, lost ambitions.

"All?" he echoed slowly, his eyes on my hand. Then, in a flash, it was seized in his bony grip, and, white-faced, he was staring at me across the table. I have seldom seen such a look in any one's eyes.

"How came you by that—that?" he whispered tensely, his fingers biting into my flesh. "Answer, man! How came you by that—this silver bracelet—this bracelet with the motto of the royal house; '*Toujours le Roi*'? God's truth, man——"

He choked, staring at me, his naked soul suddenly in his eyes. He pushed back his chair, struggling to trembling, deformed legs.

"It cannot be possible," he quavered, breathed. "It cannot be possible. God does not jest so cruelly! And yet—yet the night your eyes first met mine—I knew. I knew. I watched the little

characteristics of the father creep out. I saw the old blood assert itself. And yet, all the time, I would not believe. Yet you were the logical choice. You fitted the picture like a glove. And still I would not believe! I said the days of miracles are past. And now your youth, the incidents of your life, this bracelet; they tell me all—all! Man, man!" he cried harshly, suddenly stretching across the table and shaking me, fierce-eyed, "look up! look up, I say! Have you made sport of my old age? Have you taken my poor loyalty, my poor fealty and spit upon them? Have you held me up to secret ridicule for the sake of your young vanity? Answer me, boy! Look at me! Have you done this? Or have I wronged the son of the father: the father, my king, whom I loved, honored, and served? Have I trampled the blood royal in the dust? Have I been the puppet, the plaything of fate? Has God shown me that the workings of mere man are as nothing to His infinite, supreme will? Has justice at last come into her own? For God, answer me, lad! Answer me all this!"

By now I was on my feet, my face as white as his own.

"You mean," I whispered, and I laughed suddenly, "that I am Johann von Buelowe? You mean that I am the young king?"

My voice sounded as if coming from a vast distance; the room—everything had been wiped out. I saw nothing but the chancellor's eyes boring into mine. My heart had jumped to my palate and now was beating slowly, thickly.

At last I was face to face with my dream. I dared not conform it as a reality. That I, the vagabond, the wanderer, the adventurer—here my imagination became paralyzed. And still I senselessly mouthed the question over and over.

How long we two stood staring at each other I do not know. It seemed eons. The chancellor seemed as if blasted by lightning. Tongue wetting parched lips, he stared at me: he, the Frankenstein; I, the terrible creation.

Then, as we remained in the same fixed, stark attitude of paralyzed dismay, there came a knock at the great, brass-studded doors.

"Come in," whispered Von Moltke Hertz, his eyes never leaving mine. His voice sounded curiously light and squeaky; almost hysterical. I became conscious that the doors had opened. Then came Von Lindowe's soft voice.

"Your excellency, Frau Mortimer."

Frau Mortimer! Slowly my eyes turned and the chancellor's mechanically followed suit. Standing in the frame of the door, I saw a very old woman; racked with age; furrowed of cheek; scant and snowy of hair. All this meant nothing to me. But when she raised her eyes—I knew. The bridge had been spanned. Across the gap of twenty odd years—the gap filled with youth's hopes, fears, and sins—I was confronting her whom I had called "*Mutter.*"

Her eyes met mine. Then the withered bosom heaved. Not a word had been spoken. Then she was on her knees at my feet, her lips and tears covering my hand. A passionate, broken plea for forgiveness; a sobbing word of the long ago; a prayer of love for the wronged child; a pledge of fealty to her king.

Vaguely I saw Von Lindowe, lips aquiver, standing motionless, hand at the salute. Vaguely I saw the old chancellor standing riveted at the table making no attempt to keep up the tears that furrowed his gnarled, time-swept cheeks.

For the young king had come into his own.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I CRY QUITS WITH BORIS.

Evening of the same day and I was riding on my solitary way to Saxonia. For a king who has just come into his own after such a life as mine had been, I felt strangely self-possessed; strangely *myself*. I had often wondered what it felt like to wield the scepter and wear the ermine; wondered if one's

own personality was hopelessly merged, lost in the vast public welfare; wondered if one was but a titled cog in the complex machinery of state.

Yes, I had come into my own at last. I had found a royal name and ancient lineage. I had found everything; everything beyond my wildest dreams. This land I was now riding through was mine to do with as I liked. All these people I met, both high and low, proud and humble, were my subjects.

She who was to judge me for the death of her brother, was my blood—cousin. And that boy whom I had met and wounded across the naked swords, had borne the same relation. I was no longer John Mortimer, ex-soldier and adventurer, but Johann von Buelowe, last descendant of a race of kings; ruler of Zollenstein.

And still it all sat very lightly upon me. I had not yet reached a sane viewpoint. To me it was still a dream. It was so absurd, impossible. And yet as I listened in the council-chamber to the recital of my foster-mother, I marveled that I had not guessed the riddle before. Incidents that hitherto seemed trivial, commonplace, now took on definite, paramount shape; each little one dovetailing to a nicety into the general plan.

I remembered the vague home-hunger that had ever gnawed at my heart; hunger for the home and country I had never seen. I remembered the night my ears had been boxed by *"Mutter"* for saying that one day I would be king. I remember her answering me that I had a real mother somewhere, as I once had a real father. That "somewhere" was the grave. Yes, from the beginning of things I had been the logical choice. The pawn had in reality been the king.

Who else could have possessed the necessary requirements, even down to a facial resemblance, but the king's own son? I had played puppet against myself. I marveled at the irony of fate, even as I uttered a constant prayer for Him who had led me, through divers ways, after many wanderings, to my own. I remembered the words: "He works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

How accidentally I had been thrown in Von Lindowe's way; and he, searching for a puppet, had at once pounced upon me. He had not known the late king and so could not trace the resemblance. But the chancellor had recognized it—and would not believe. And Zenia, blood behind her, had recognized it. Not one had believed.

Aye, there was one; old Johann Lesser, mine host of the "Toison d'Or." He had not been educated up to skepticism. Simple, untutored soul, he still believed in miracles. At last I understood what he had intended by the constant reference to "my eyes." He had served my father as *valet de chambre;* he had instantly recognized the son. He had thought the chancellor working in the light, not the dark; thought the quest ended, the young king found and smuggled in to secretly fight the Hohenstauffen. He, of us all, one of the least of my subjects, had held the key to the riddle.

And as yet, the key had not been publicly turned nor would it until John Mortimer played out his last card. The chancellor had begged me to immediately utter a proclamation stating my acquisition to the throne, assuring me that the people were anxious to offer me their loyalty and support. I had no right to keep them longer in suspense.

But I thought I had. I must remain John Mortimer until I had answered to Zenia. I had offended in the capacity of nameless wanderer; in that capacity I must answer. And another duty confronted me. I would close accounts with Boris von Hohenstauffen. He had not only killed the late King of Zollenstein and young Prince Hugo, but my father and cousin. He would answer to me. Moreover, he claimed the throne. Then, I vowed, let God judge between us two. But one of us could live. I would offer him fair fight and force him to accept.

But I said nothing of all this to the chancellor. He and Von Lindowe were concerned enough about my riding

alone to Saxonia and further concealing my identity. Their loyalty was of such a nature as to cause me to forget and forgive all past offenses. After all, what they had done was for my own country; done unconsciously for myself.

Von Moltke Hertz had acquainted me with the full particulars of the weaving of the web which had entangled me in Zollenstein's destiny. It had been as I suspected. Moreover, Greystone had been drugged on that eventful night, in order that he might have no coherent grasp of the dramatic incidents.

But subsequently he had arrived in Zollenstein, during his travels, and by chance meeting with that consummate actor, Colonel Gratz, had let fall some hint of his suspicions. Then the chancellor, taking no chances, had instigated the ransoming movement.

My first official move was to have the outraged viscount liberated. He placed his troubles, very obligingly, to the score of certain unknown criminals. He had suffered only in the restriction of his liberty and, on the whole, was inclined to let the matter drop; being convinced of the fact that but for the zeal of the Zollenese police department, he might have been left to rot for all time. Now I was on the other side of the table and it was with considerable relief that I felt that the might of England, which I had so seduously invoked in the name of Greystone, would not respond.

Thoughts of the kingdom's destiny possessed me as I pursued my solitary way to Saxonia. At last the canker of a wasted life had been cut out. Here on this royal chess-board I had found the square I was intended to occupy in life's game. Please God, I would be a credit to my blood and kingdom. That I had been a pawn, experiencing all the vicissitudes of a minor piece, would make me only the more qualified to wield the scepter.

Yes, Heimruh and its brood should be wiped out; peace and plenty would flood the kingdom; peace and plenty and the fear and love of God. I, the last of the Von Buelowes, by the grace of God and the guidance of the Iron Chancellor, would rule with wisdom and justice; with hatred and malice toward none; with love and charity toward all.

And so I dreamed. Then thoughts of Boris came and as I reviewed his many crimes, his seeming insolent omnipotency, my dream changed to a nightmare. Why put off judgment? I asked myself. Reckoning with him was the first duty; the only duty. For I could not trick my heart into any other thought than that audience with Zenia, no matter what the conditions, would be a delight. Yes, the land cried out for justice against Heimruh and I, its king, would be its law.

Firm in this resolve, I deliberately turned my horse and headed north. I was in no humor for prudence.

The sun was westering to its home in the far horizon, when at length the stark, frowning battlements of the castle split the vista of my vision. All seemed peace and quietude. Looking about me, I could have fancied myself on some errand of mercy, not death. Or as some novitiate about to seek sanctuary in yonder brooding monastery. I owned no set scheme, no plan of campaign. My one absorbing thought was to meet Boris face to face. And so I foolhardily, boldly rode up to the postern-gate and thundered for admittance.

After a time, in which I had occasion to call myself fool, an old face showed behind the bars. I took desperate measures. "Open!" I commanded curtly. "Your master is expecting me."

I was fully prepared for resistance, expostulation, or a sudden alarm, but to my surprise the gate swung open without further parley. Already I had dismounted, taking everything as a matter of course.

The gate-keeper was a doddering old servitor, his mouth formed in a perpetual ristus of astonishment. Surely, I thought, times had strangely changed in Heimruh for such a decrepit to be in charge of the wolf's jaws. Hand on revolver, I watched the old man, suspecting some trick, some treachery, but he was either capable actor or fool, for his smut-rimmed eyes met mine fairly

until I stared them down. A strange, reckless spirit moved me that day.

"Where is your master?" I asked curtly, glowering at him.

"In his chamber, sir," he answered humbly, even meekly. "Permit me to announce you."

"Stay here. I'll announce myself." I ordered harshly. "I know the way."

He bowed, blinking at me.

"Aye, the master will be glad to see you, sir," he mumbled, more to himself than to me. "All gone—all gone. Nothing left; nothing but Old Marx. Hark you, young sir," he added, timidly fingering my sleeve, and looking up with his kindly, smut-rimmed eyes, "measure well; judge rightly while you have youth and hope and strength. Remember that the good Lord has said: 'This commandment I give unto you: Love one another.' Aye, that's it. I'm none so half-witted that I don't understand. Love one another, young sir, so that when it comes time to say the long farewell, you will have other than an old spent heart and muddled brain," tapping his forehead wistfully, "to watch you out."

"Eh?" said I, as the tears came to his old eyes. "What is this? Is your master ill?"

"To the death, young sir. And sir, of them all, you are the only one to come to him in his need. And for that," with curious old-world dignity, "you have a servant's loyalty and service to the death."

"This illness of your master's—how did he come by it?" I asked as we walked slowly toward the castle. He answered simply, colorlessly; and for all his half-wits, the stark, horrible tale lost none in the telling.

It seemed that the red-haired captain had not died of his wounds, but had made a brave fight against death. When at length it was borne in upon him that his time had come, he deliberately secreted his revolver beneath the bedclothes. Then a priest was called in to administer extreme unction, the last rites of the church. The worst sinner does not care to face his Maker alone.

Boris, in his rôle of master, was also present; partly, I suspected, to checkmate any charge of murder formulated by the dying man. And then, almost face to face with the Almighty, before the servant of God, Kienert with his last strength had suddenly flung the clothes from him and scrambled to quivering elbow. Over a hunched knee was leveled the gun, leveled straight at Boris.

The priest, all unconscious, with reverently closed eyes and raised hands, was eloquently interceding between man and his Maker. Kienert's eyes met those of Boris—and both men smiled, smiled in an instant comprehension of the ghastly sacrilege of it all. It was true to both their natures. Not a word was spoken. Boris, with folded arms, realized that he was corned at last, and he spurned any plea for mercy. In fact, it seemed as if his one motion was admiration for Kienert's intellectual strategy. He had taken a leaf from his own book.

So, calm-eyed, unflinching, the last of the Hohenstauffens faced his death. A breathless space—and then the red-haired one, smiling, deliberate, swiftly pumped six shots into his master and enemy. Then he flung back on the pillows, gave a sigh as of a good deed well done, and, still smiling, went before his Maker.

Such was the horrible story and I shivered, soldier though I was. I felt morally and physically nauseated. Then old Marx in his colorless voice went on to say how Boris, though riddled like a sieve, was still hovering on the brink of the Great Divide. How since the prior raiding of Heinruh by the Saxonian troops under their queen for search of the young king the castle's brood had felt that their master's reign was over.

His wound and Kienert's death were the signal for general license and a looting of the place. Then all had gone in search of fresher fields; all but half-witted old Marx.

"Not that I'm of any use, young sir," he concluded wistfully. "But at least I can attend his few needs. A servant is his master's servant until the end. Perhaps you can do something for him?" In silence I accompanied him to

the death-chamber, God knows with no idea of gloating over my fallen enemy. The room was drearily bare and inhospitable. I could almost smell death in the atmosphere. The westering sun was stealing fitfully through the single window, throwing a pale, diluted golden shaft over the vast walnut bed with its canopy and trimmings of dull crimson. Propped up on pillows, the ever cynical smiling, brooding eyes staring at nothing, was the last of the Von Hohenstauffens.

In silence I stood looking at the snowy patriarchal head that should have known a family's love: the honor, dignity, and majesty of age: of a fight well fought and won: of years replete with worthy endeavor and achievement.

"Boris," said I quietly.

No answer.

Then, at last, I understood. Those brooding, cynical, smiling eyes were looking into futurity: into the Great Beyond. That which had been given had been recalled. That spirit with which he had been entrusted had been returned to its Maker, soiled, distorted, maimed. That trust had been betrayed. That sinful soul, but withal exceeding brave, had passed out alone; unbefriended, unhonored, unsung.

Death had cried me quits with Boris von Hohenstauffen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MY COUSIN, MY SWEETHEART, MY QUEEN.

I found Zenia, after a cold delay, in the throne-room of Schillingberg's castle. Why I should be granted audience in that particular place I did not know. But perhaps there was forethought behind the move; perhaps a curious pride that was flattering. For it was the first time I had seen her as she was, surrounded by the environment and atmosphere of royalty.

In direct contrast, here was I dressed in a commonplace khaki riding-costume; sober enough of face and bearing, for I had not digested as yet the ghastly death-scene at Heimruh. And here, too, in direct contrast, sat a girl in the great ebony throne-chair on its raised dais, backed by the dark-red and silver of Saxonia bearing the royal arms—a double-headed eagle holding in its talons a golden scepter. She was dressed in black, the only relieving contrasts the dead white of throat and face and the golden shimmer of her hair.

The court chamberlain had withdrawn. We were alone. She sat in her old familiar attitude, elbows on knees, chin in locked hands, eying me broodingly, steadily. Night had come and a half-score electric candles in tall silver sconces flanking the dais right and left, were casting long javelins of light far down the polished floor.

"Your majesty," I ventured brilliantly with a bow, "I have come."

She nodded without replying. Then I saw that she had been crying. No wonder. She was absolutely alone; left, a mere girl, to rule her kingdom. In that vast room, in that great chair, she looked a thing so frail, so incompetent, so like a frightened child, suddenly face to face with an engaged crisis, craving love, help, sympathy, yet too proud to beg, that I felt the worst sinner under heaven for my unwitting share in her tribulations. And I was glad that he who had dragged death and sorrow to her door should have found it this night at his, clamoring for its own.

For a long time silence reigned supreme. Then:

"At least you have one redeeming trait, sir—you can keep your word," she said finally in a quiet, spiritless voice. "I have considered your case," she continued in the same cadence, "and I am inclined to believe you in a measure guiltless of my brother's death. I have ascertained the facts and weighed them carefully. Of late," she continued seriously, even harshly, "I have learned to temper mercy with justice. It is a cruel thing you have done me, sir, but I must overlook my personal affliction for the sake of the service you rendered me in my need. I must even overlook the law—the strict edict against dueling. So, I give you back your freedom

sir. But, also, I give you one thing to remember," she finished, suddenly intensely human, nursing a quivering silk-clad knee, "men but think of themselves—not of the women at home. With them it is only a question whether or not *their* personal honor is affronted—not whether some mother, wife, sister, is left to go through the world alone, suffering her loss until the end. Battle in the name of self is nothing; it is the fight for another or for one's flag, sir, that counts! Remember that the song of the sword, however merry, is followed by the dirge. Remember that 'They who live by the sword, shall die by the sword'—aye! and innocent mothers, and sisters, and wives."

I bowed, moodily kicking toe against heel.

"What are your plans?" she asked bluntly, at length. Then, more gently: "I—I think I can secure you a captaincy in the Saxonian cavalry. Such soldierly merits as you possess," she added, in some haste, "should not go begging for a berth."

"Madam," said I, "I appreciate the honor, but I cannot accept. And I say this in all sincerity: Wouldn't that be carrying mercy to too great an extreme? I am owed nothing at your hands. Already you have placed too great a premium upon my poor services."

She sat considering. At length slowly:

"I have given you exoneration for my brother's death, sir. That is sufficient. Come, I offer you the billet."

"I cannot accept, madam."

"Why?" she asked sharply, anger in her cheek and fire in her eye. Then, with some scorn: "Isn't your sword, sir, at the beck of the highest bidder? If you can serve Zollenstein, you can serve Saxonia. Or perhaps," she added slowly, "some one awaits you in England, sir?"

"And if there is, madam?" said I, suddenly brazen, seeking for a sign.

She met my eyes, and strive as she would, the blood came to her cheek. Then she went dead white.

"Why, then, if there is," she said at length, with cruel patronage and irony, "the wench is honored above women."

"Wench?" I asked quietly.

"Yes," said she patronizingly, calmly, "wench!"

But the blood was still in her face, and I knew that she hated herself for the underhand stab. Gradually we had swung around to the intimate, personal footing; a footing I had once dearly known and treasured and thought for all time lost. I longed for that former intimacy for the sake of John Mortimer, not Johann von Buelowe. She was before me, a girl, a woman; not a ruler, a queen.

"Well?" she asked sharply, at last.

"Why—why nothing, madam," said I, surprised.

"Then why not terminate the audience?" she returned. "I am waiting for you to go. You have received all you sued for."

"Your majesty has graciously granted me infinitely more than I sued for," said I.

She did not reply. Still she did not arise, the signal that the audience was terminated, and I boldly stood and watched her; watched her as a change came over her. The hard lines of her face relaxed and her breath, of a sudden, came hard and fast.

"Mr. Mortimer," she said quietly, "you see," laughing strangely, "that I am but a woman, after all. I cannot quite forget the nights—the nights in Heimruh. It—it is difficult for one to remember sometimes that one is a queen with all a ruler's fetters and obligations. Come, let us at least part friends. Pardon my many discourtesies. The girl then spoke, not the queen. Mr. Mortimer, I honor her who awaits you in England, and—and"—in a whisper which I could just catch—"I envy her. You have proven yourself a loyal gentleman, sir. When time has drifted in between and you have forgotten all this; when surrounded by your own, secure in peace and fortune, when you have attained that station your qualities merit, think sometimes of a lonely woman who ascended the empty throne of her fathers; think of what was to you a mere

adventure, an incident in a teeming career, as *the* supreme moment of that lonely woman's life. Think of her not as the princess, but as the woman. See not the crown, but—the heart. That is all I can ask; all I dare ask. Good-by."

Lips quivering, as if blindly seeking sanctuary, she shivered and seated herself in the great throne-chair and closed her eyes, the brave smile still on her lips.

And still I stood, like the dumb thing I was, my heart pounding like a racing engine. There could be no mistaking her words, her attitude—and yet I could not believe. When a man has come through what I tasted from the world, the Bible itself is beyond credence. She still thought me an adventurer, guilty of manslaughter. No, it was impossible. In my selfish longing I had crassly confounded a sovereign's charity with a woman's love.

Suddenly her eyes opened, and, seeing me still standing there, she arose, white-faced, in a tempest. Now she was true to herself at last. Here before me was the daring, untamed spirit minus the leash. Here was the girl owning sovereignty only to the moment; owning sovereignty only to her passion.

"Go!" she cried, pleaded incoherently. "Go! Have you no scrap of decency left? Must you see me stripped of all dignity; a sop to your egotism? Must I lose all honor and womanhood? Won't you understand? Must I say that I love you——"

"Hush," I cried. "Zenia! Zenia!" I was on the dais, and had caught her hands. But she broke away, confronting me with white, passionate face and hot, labored breath.

"Yes, look at me!" she cried harshly. "Look at me—Saxonia's queen! But I owned a heart before a crown. No, I won't stop! You shall hear it, now! I *will* say it, say it for once—the other will say it a lifetime. Look at me! I love you! I love you! I have always loved you! I have loved you from the first! I don't care *what* you did—*who* you are——"

I caught her hands and bent toward her in tense silence. My eyes must have said what my tongue withheld, for she stopped, lips parted, head thrown back, her eyes, black and storm-swept, meeting mine gloriously unashamed.

"Zenia," I began almost harshly, bluntly, for I was in no fit way to choose words even had I the faculty, "God knows I can't say all. But listen, dear. I have five things to say: Boris is dead. I am guiltless of all crime. I am Johann von Buelowe, King of Zollenstein. I am your cousin. And—I love you. No one but you. It has always been you—my cousin, my sweetheart, my queen!"

For a long time she could not understand. I watched fear, doubt, hope take their place by turns in her smoldering eyes. Hands on my shoulders, she looked at me, the naked soul in her gaze.

"Five things to say," she echoed slowly, as one dreaming. "Boris is dead. You are innocent of all crime. You are the young king. You are my cousin. And—you love me. No one but me."

"Yes, dear," I said, taking her dead-white face in my hands.

Again fear leaped starkly to her eyes.

"I cannot believe—I cannot," she whispered tensely, her hands closing hotly about my neck. "God is too good. It is not the life I was schooled to live. It is not the dreary, lonely interminable road. I am not worthy of all this. No, no, I will awake to find you gone—but—but say it again. Say it again!" And she looked up with pleading, feverish eyes.

"Boris is dead," I began, holding her close. "I am——"

"No, no. Not that; not that," she cried. "First tell me the last. That is the greatest; that is all; that is everything to me. Tell me, dear, that you love me!"

And so the young king told his love.

THE END.

The Brotherhood of Suppression

By George Bronson-Howard
Author of the "Norroy" Stories, Etc.

It is a serious menace to a government to lose the secret code-books of the state department and the identifying seal-ring of the corps of diplomats. When such a catastrophe befell "Uncle Sam" it is but natural that the fastidious Yorke Norroy should bring about their recovery. A peculiarly devilish plot, tending to destroy the English-American equilibrium and involve Japan, is hatched by Saxonia's notorious secret agent, who, however, finds a worthy adversary in the diplomatic spy

(*A Complete Noveletie*)

IT is most discouraging to one's self-respecting belief in one's own originality to be forced into the use of a tritism, but for all of that it is better to be trite than to fail in coloratura, and to mention the Café de la Paix without the accompanying assertion that all Paris and half the rest of the world will pass you if you occupy one of its little iron tables long enough would be to set down yourself as a most untrustworthy guide to the center of perpetual gaiety.

Even Yorke Norroy, seasoned boulevardier as he was, murmured the axiom as he recognized successively two men from San Francisco, a woman from Chicago, a New York yachtsman, and his own cousin from Washington all in the space of three minutes if the clock at Cook's could be regarded as trustworthy. But for all his recognition he neither bowed, spoke, nor rose, remaining in pensive attitude sipping his *café-au-lait* from the long glass and occasionally stirring minute particles of sugar into a more advanced state of dissolution.

But had he been attired in his usual custom and his general appearance been such as to identify him as the arbiter of Washington's *ultramonde,* he would have been given no opportunity of remaining in his lonely state; for, in spite of his affectations and general attitude of the sphinx, there was that to Norroy which gave him a curious interest even to those who believed him but the social flutterer he pretended to be out of official transactions. Of the latter the public were not aware; and even though their superficial aspects might be presented in the newspapers, the connection of Norroy with them was information for only the secretary of state and some of Norroy's brother agents; unless a certain clandestine knowledge of the diplomatic spies of other countries be counted.

Norroy had no very good reason for wishing people to believe him the typical *flaneur* at the time. It was only one of his fancies to live the life of the country as one of its sons that had put him into peaked shoulders, trousers wrinkling over a long, thin shoe, conspicuous scarf, frock coat with flaring skirts, hair cut *en brosse,* and rat-tail mustache. It gave him considerable personal pain to wear such atrocious clothes, for upon sartorial matters his taste was more than habit; it was a sixth sense.

He had not intended to seat himself before the popular café at this particular

time; had, on the contrary, come out of the Rue Vivienne into Montmartre and down to the Place de l'Opéra to board an omnibus to the Luxembourg Gardens; but as he gained the Boulevard Capucines' side he saw, over the sheet of an open newspaper, a round head with a curious brown birthmark close to the hair-roots. When last he had seen that head the hair was thicker and the birthmark only apparent when its owner thrust his fingers through his coiffure. Some half a decade had thinned his luxurious growth, and now the mark stood out.

Norroy, secure in his disguise, deferred the Luxembourg visit, and took a chair at an adjoining table. Since that time he had consumed three glasses of coffee and milk and had, apparently, no knowledge of the birthmark and its owner. But the fact that Norroy still sat there would be conclusive proof to those who knew him that the branded gentleman had not yet tired of the boulevard and its promenaders.

Norroy himself had no full measure of the marked gentleman's acquaintance, remembering him chiefly as a confrère of the late Herman von Ladenburg, with whose summary dismissal from affairs earthly Norroy had had much to do. It was during his first encounter with Ladenburg that he marked this man, whose name he afterward learned to be Loew-Friedrich Loew.

At that time Loew had been a younger member of the secret corps of which Von Ladenburg was the chief; but with Ladenburg and Ehricke out of the running, he had advanced in the service until his personality was obtruded upon Norroy's attention on account of a misadventure which Carson Huntley, Norroy's protégé among the secret diplomats, had suffered through him; and which had caused Huntley's suspension from the service for the better part of the year.

The matter itself, having such an inconclusive and disastrous ending and besides having twisted itself into something quite futile in its finale, need not be treated at length. Suffice to say that Carson Huntley lost, besides prestige, one of the secret code-books of the state department and the seal-ring with the spring and inner monogram which identified members of the underworld corps of American diplomats.

As it was a stupendous task to change about a code almost mentally engraved by constant use, risks had been taken; and no action to formulate a new code yet been put to the fore.

Norroy, having himself stolen the secret-code books of another nation, knew the danger of such a possession in the hands of an enemy; not to mention the use of the curious seal-ring universally recognized throughout the entire United States diplomatic service as a pass-key to confidence. Even a greater loss than these two was the brief note which Carson had carried at the time; a note in the handwriting of a prominent representative of the United States, undated, and acknowledging Carson as an employee of the American Government.

Norroy might have accepted such a note, but he would have torn it to shreds as soon as he had quitted the presence of the writer; but Carson, who had not the infinite capacity for pains which had placed Norroy at the head of his unique profession, had seen in it a short-cut to his ends; and had not only taken it, but asked for it.

Huntley had remembered only one thing; that the man who had chicaned him had on his forehead a brown mark, and when he came out of the somnolent state induced by the drugs given him, the birthmark was his only clue to the identity of his assailant.

Norroy had not heard of the affair at the time; he had been too busy watching the undermining of Korea by Japan while he pottered about Seoul ostensibly a geologist; and when he had come across Carson in London, some few months later, the latter had been suspended from the service for some little time. But with the mention of the birthmark, Norroy's remembrance identified Loew as a former companion of Ladenburg; and an agent of the Saxonian foreign office.

Besides drinking the three glasses

of café-au-lait, Norroy had purchased every conceivable form of French journalism offered by the gamins who proffered their wares insistently beneath the noses of the seated persons. He had also read, even in the advertisements, the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail* and *New York Herald*.

The marked man, Loew, being a Teuton, did not appear to need distraction, sitting apathetically in his seat and staring insolently at the beautifully gowned Parisiennes and their badly dressed escorts; more insolently, if possible, at the English and American tourists, the latter of whom he seemed to view—unless Norroy's intuitive powers were waning—with more interest than other passers-by.

Upon Norroy he bestowed no attention. Norroy had taken some pains to appear typical in dress and general appearance. His slender form and small features conformed readily to any guise with which he might choose to cloak his own identity; and his indefinitely colored eyes were as equally at home under a black wig as when they served as complements of his own straw-colored hair. He had even gone to the length of discarding his own specially manufactured cigarettes for the villainous so-called "Maryland," which came in paper packets of thirty distasteful paper tubes.

Now it seemed as if he was to have some reward for his patience. A man came along, hesitatingly scrutinizing the seated ones; a side glance from Norroy's eyes gave him the spectacle of Loew sitting erect and in the attitude of one about to bestow pleased recognition. The man passed Norroy's chair; and the secret agent gave him just barely the years that go to make manhood before the law.

He was of slender build, and peered about him with eager, aimless eyes; his hair was tow-colored, untrimmed, much too long; for clothes he had baggy corduroys, a moleskin waistcoat cut high but not of sufficient altitude to hide a certain portion of crumpled unclean linen across which sprawled a clumsily tied four-in-hand; a black Garibaldi felt was tilted on the back of his head, and his pockets bulged, apparently with books, for one of them showed above the right-hand pocket.

Norroy paid no present attention to him beyond his first fleeting glance, the look on Loew's face having satisfied him that this was the one for whom he had waited. *Le Matin* seemed to have developed immediate interest for the secret agent; and he read interestedly and at length of certain doings of the officials of the First Arrondissement, not lifting his eyes to a view of the street until the waiter removed his emptied glass of café-au-lait. His stomach revolting against a fourth, he ordered a vermouth; and then, lighting leisurely a cigarette, looked over the burning sulfur at the marked man and his companion.

Their conversation seemed to be aimless, each scrutinizing in turn the faces of seated ones and passers-by. Loew's eyes met Norroy's, who matched his glance for insolence and then passed the same glance to the corduroyed person, gaining a further impression of extreme youth, misdirected energy, and that weakness of fixed impressions which makes the owner easily the prey of the stronger intellect.

Norroy's first belief that he was a German student was now changed by a glance at the manner in which his tie was tied—the huge sausage-roll of several wrappings peculiar to the cheaply smart of America. The secret agent dropped his eyes to the paper again and read more of events in the First Arrondissement.

What was Loew meditating that he found it good to have for companion a young American? Norroy tried to imagine the uses to which the youth might be put. He had the face of a student who assimilates much, digests little: the face of retentive memory unallied to reasoning mind, but which imagines itself possessed of all the qualities of a Shaw or a Schopenhauer. A college man probably; no doubt from some small college in the middle North; farm-boy before that, working his way through the university—his rough, red,

misshapen hands spoke of the quantity and lack of quality of his manual labor.

Norroy's meditations were brought to a close by the rising of both men. They sauntered past Norroy—Loew giving furtive backward glances—and crossing the Place de l'Opéra, went into Cook's office. Norroy knew that his appearance as well as that of every other man in front of the Café de la Paix was photographically lined on the brain of the astute Loew; for that reason he remained in his seat and sipped his vermouth.

From where he sat, on the extreme edge of the Boulevard Capucines' side, he had a complete view of both entrances into Cook's; and his glance wandered alternately from the Avenue de l'Opéra to the Rue Scribe. It was through the small door of the former that the two made their exit sauntering leisurely down the avenue.

Norroy left a franc on the little saucer on his table, and crossed over to Cook's. He entered as one in tremendous haste; and approached one of the clerks.

"I was to have met two friends of mine here. *Sacrè nom du pipe!*" He wrung his hands and looked feverishly about him. "They have gone, and how must I journey alone?"

The English clerk, accustomed to dealing with excitable Frenchmen, prudently said nothing.

"We were to journey together," pursued Norroy, seemingly on the point of tears. "And"—he glanced at the clock—"I was to have met them at four of the clock—and now how is it? For a perfectly detestable score of minutes they have abandoned me to cruel alone journeying. *Sacrè nom du pipe!* But"—breaking off with a vague uncertainty of hope—"perhaps they have not here yet been, m'sieur?"

"Perhaps if you would describe them, m'sieur," the clerk suggested urbanely.

"Describe, is it? I—I cannot. But, yes. One so marked with brown on his head—and the German. The other with the yellow hair that is long, the black hat, and the crimson tie, and the what-you-call scratchy clothes with long lines much as though run over velvet. Ah, m'sieur, it is I know that you have seen them?"

For some recognition of the descriptions was in the young Englishman's eye. He addressed another clerk behind a desk.

"You remember those chaps, Douglas. Where did they book?"

"Dieppe and Newhaven," returned the sandy-haired Scotchman, who had apparently been listening while he worked.

"Ah, Dieppe and Newhaven, for London. And the train she takes her departure when?"

"Gare St. Lazare. Six o'clock Plenty time."

As though in anticipation, the Scotchman provided Norroy with the necessary pasteboards to convey one person to London via rail to Dieppe, boat to Newhaven, and rail to London. Norroy, profuse in his gratitude, which was more real than his previous protestations, exchanged Cook's for a taximeter-cab which landed him at his Rue Vivienne pension some three minutes later; and having informed Madame Orois of his immediate departure and solaced her with payment for the remainder of the week he could not stay, he ascended to his room and packed kit-bag, Gladstone, and a small despatch-bag, which he slung over one shoulder and in which he packed necessary toilet articles, a change of underclothing, and a small make-up box, which contained cosmetics.

From a larger box he took several mustaches, a beard, and a wig; these also went into the despatch-bag; while his waistcoat pocket sagged with a small pistol of recent make—a tiny affair in shape much like a cigarette-case save for the short protruding barrel. This weapon was operated by compression, and discharged .38 steel bullets; sure for close range and well adapted to a man whom necessity compelled armament, yet whose sartorial instincts were opposed to the spoiling of the shape of his clothes.

The garments that he now wore were not the ones in which he was arrayed when he saw the man with the birthmark. They were German in cut, and his tie, for lack of taste and woodenness of appearance, rivaled that of a Heidelberg doctor. He wore also a Homburg hat. His shoes he had not time to change, and his facial appearance was the same, for he dared not change until he had quitted the pension of Madame Orois.

A fiacre summoned, he transported himself and luggage to the Gare St. Lazare, where he registered through to Victoria Station, London, all luggage save his despatch-bag.

It was now half-after five, and he saw neither Loew nor Loew's friend with the red necktie. Norroy entered the lavatory, where, behind closed doors and with no person to watch, he removed black wig and rat-tail mustache with the speediness of long practise.

He had but divested himself of these disguises when some one entered, a tourist, as Norroy saw from a swift glance, and laved his hands, prolonging his presence by some elaborate twistings of his mustache before the mirror. Norroy, his back to him, had taken out a squarely cut wig of reddish yellow hair and a short mustache of approximately the same undesirable hue.

With the Parisian gone, he clapped on the wig and mustache without even a glance at the mirror; then rushing almost upon that article, straightened the wig about his ears and the back of his neck; and gave the mustache the upward twirl of the Kaisermen. A pair of gold-rimmed spectacles of lacking-lens power followed; and Norroy saw reflected back from the mirror a fairly typical German savant of the upper middle class.

The abandoned wig and mustache back in the despatch-bag, Norroy resumed his ulster and swung the bag over his shoulder. It was now approaching train-time, lacking only some eighteen minutes of six. Norroy gave the guard a sight of his ticket and passed on to the train-platform, where the Dieppe express was marked with little sign-boards and passengers were peering in and out of compartments in search of ones not already preempted by hand-luggage.

Among the questing throng, Norroy made out the figure of the corduroyed youth, his red tie an oriflamme of identification; he was walking up and down before a second-class compartment, his eyes strained toward the entrance to the platform. From his anxious looks Norroy decided that he had come to the station alone; and that Loew had not arrived. A uniformed telegraph messenger entered some minutes later, and came toward the Dieppe train.

"Monsieur Buchold," he called as he neared the rim of searching passengers.

The corduroyed youth did not wait for the messenger's approach. He ran forward, nearly upsetting some third-class passengers who scowled at him and muttered anathemas under their breath. By the time Norroy had stepped behind a pillar the youth had identified himself, the messenger was on his way back to the office, and the youth was tearing the message across with an angry frown on his face.

After tearing the paper, he attempted what some fictionists are wont to describe as "grinding it under his heel"; but failing in this attempt and only "grinding" some portion of the asphalt and his boot-heel, he strode back to the second-class compartment over which he had been standing guard, went within, and sat down, staring moodily out of the window.

Norroy did not immediately avail himself of the opportunity to examine the torn paper, waiting until the crowd swelled about that place; and then, apparently by accident, dropped his newspaper. The two bits of paper were under the newspaper when it came back into his possession, and he thrust them into his pocket. He walked a trifling distance toward the gate, smoothed out the paper, and put the bits together.

It was in English, but quite apparently written by a German; and was not a telegram, but a letter written on the paper of a small hotel in the Rue de Rivoli. It ran as follows:

DEAR BROTHER ERNEST: The chief has come to Paris, and demands my presence until a later hour to-night. I will avail myself of a later train. It is better that you go on the one both had planned to take; and to-morrow morning I will awake you from your sleep at the hotel. You know the number and street. *Auf wiederschen.* FRIEDRICH.

Norroy folded the paper into its smallest possible compass, and thrust it into his cigarette-case, a gun-metal affair with a small compartment for matches but now utilized to hide the letter. Handwriting was not difficult of imitation when one had a copy of the original on which to work.

It was with some puzzlement of brain that Norroy regarded the question of the corduroyed young man. He was most certainly not a secret agent; secret agents were not in the habit of tearing their correspondence in two halves and tossing them in plain view of spectators. Suspicion dwelt ever in the mind of a secret agent, and in a crowd he was apt to believe there was always some one, unknown but noting, who watched with interest any action of his own.

Yet, though the young man was not a secret agent and without doubt an American, he was evidently a partner with Loew in some scheme which demanded the presence of both in London.

Then, too, Loew spoke of his "chief"; that would imply Wittschaeft, chief of the Saxonian foreign office, and he, Norroy well knew, never quitted the Saxonian capital. It was, therefore, some other "chief" of whom the corduroyed young man had knowledge that was referred to.

Norroy reverted to the idea of socialism; perhaps some secret, anarchistic league was referred to. But was Loew apt to belong to any such? In answer to this came the obvious answer, and Norroy smiled at his previous dulness. Perhaps Loew was pretending an interest in some cause which absorbed the corduroyed young man in order to use him to his own interest.

The note had further stated that Loew was expected to take a later train to Dieppe. Norroy consulted the time-table and found a *wagon-lit* which quitted St. Lazare close to midnight. The question then remained: had Loew dispensed with the services of the corduroyed young man and was thus giving him good-by; or did he (Loew) really intend to come by the *wagon-lit?*

That naturally was problematical; but one thing was certain. Norroy had the corduroyed young man in full sight; he knew nothing of Loew's whereabouts. From the corduroyed young man—since he was so unversed in craft as to tear once and throw away a letter—much might be gleaned.

Norroy looked at his watch. In one minute the train would pull out of the Gare St. Lazare. Already the guards had been urging the passengers to take their places; the train-bell had rung tumultuously, and there was some puffing and blowing from the engine.

His mind once decided upon a course of action, his wits worked quickly. Satisfied that the corduroyed youth had not noted him from his inconspicuous place behind a pillar, he rushed forward madly and peered into the second-class compartment where the young man sat in lone majesty, several cheap suit-cases on the seat beside him.

"Mr. Ernest Buchold?" queried Norroy, with a strong German accent.

The boy looked up surprised and admitted his identity.

"Friedrich has already written you?" asked Norroy. "Yes? He could not come but he will follow on the *wagon-lit.* I but stopped by his hotel on my way to this train, and he told me that you must travel alone; so he told me that I should find and accompany you. I am Max Berg, Brother Ernest."

The guard had slammed the door, and the two men were locked into the compartment cut off from the rest of the world until Rouen should be reached.

"Brother Max," echoed the youth, his pale face flushing. "God and the Right guard the Freedom of the People."

"Brother Ernest," parroted Norroy gravely, judging this formula to be some sort of a password, "God and the

Right *will* guard the Freedom of the People."

They regarded each the other, Buchold with his eager, fanatical gaze, Norroy with deep earnestness in his indefinitely colored eyes. The earnestness had by this time ceased to be a mere imitation of emotion. Norroy had the temperament of the actor, and once engaged upon a part, threw into his character-development all the power a mind trained to concentration upon the business of the moment to the exclusion of what had gone before or what might come after.

After the first sentence addressed to Ernest Buchold the sense of simulation passed. He was now conscious only of the fact that he must appear a very good comrade of the lad opposite; and one thoroughly imbued with whatever form of fanaticism his overeducated mind had taken.

"Friedrich has never spoken of you to me," said the boy tentatively, as one who opens a conversation and without suspicion. "Are you American, like we are, or are you a German? Friedrich says that there are many Germans of our order."

Friedrich Loew, then, was to this Buchold an American.

"Why should you think me German?" asked Norroy, somewhat regretting that he had been so careful of make-up as to appear typical.

"I don't know. You look German, somehow."

"No more than you do," laughed Norroy. "We are all birds of a feather. German ancestry, German names, but American training. Perhaps I appear more German because I have recently spent a year or two at Heidelberg for my degree."

The boy looked wistful. "I should have liked that; but I could not afford it. I am a bachelor of arts, however." And he mentioned the State University where he had matriculated.

Norroy capped his information with a degree of the same sort from the university of an adjoining State. "We are near neighbors, then," said Buchold. "And Friedrich is on the other side of me. The Lake States will be well represented in London—and gloriously represented, too," he added, his eyes kindling somberly, and morbid depths revealed which came as a surprise to Norroy. He had not imagined that under that thatch of tow-colored hair was a nature which ran deep enough for so intense an expression of eyes and mouth.

"Yes," agreed Norroy, his tones matching the other's, "glorious indeed—you may well say glorious, Brother Ernest."

He was wondering, meanwhile, what scheme would find this guileless youth an addition. What could Loew have in mind when he pretended himself an American? Evidently Buchold had neither intention nor thought inimical to his native country; he was, if anything, an American patriot. For some reason Loew had pretended American citizenship; and had selected for his State one of those adjoining Buchold's birthplace. These two were to be in London and their conjointed efforts were to prove "glorious." Norroy knew well enough that Loew was not the man to aid another in a cause without some peculiar gain to his own ends; and those ends were the ends of Saxonia.

Norroy waved the matter aside as a question of thought. He had this youth with him; and the youth would tell him all he wished to know if he pursued the questioning discreetly, guising it as knowledge already possessed. Loew was to join Buchold in London. Norroy must devise some scheme for recovering the code-book letter and ring stolen from Carson Huntley; that was his first immediate need. If in the process of recovery he stumbled on some other affair knowledge of which would prove useful to the United States, then all the better.

He had, to work with, just the knowledge that Loew and Buchold belonged to some secret order which prefixed its members' names fraternally.

"You are young to be one of us, Brother Ernest," he said, shaking his head. "I think I may well say you are the youngest of all of us. Your history must be very interesting; you must have

crowded many experiences into that young life of yours or you would never have found your membership so early. Even then, it is puzzling as to how your merits came to the ears of the ones in power. I did not have time to get your history from Friedrich. Tell me how you came among us."

The boy's face flushed; one might see that he took this membership of his most seriously. "It—well I am young, you see, and it was by luck that I—that Friedrich came to notice me at all. I—I won't deny that I came across as a servant. I was just out of college; and I had spent all my money going through. I wanted to see the world—and I—well I knew a man in my own class who was rich and wanted a servant—a valet—and I came along with him. But I—he had a sister, you see—and when we got to Paris—well I couldn't stay with him any longer—because— — Oh, you mustn't fancy any entanglement. There wasn't. She hardly knew I existed."

Norroy offered his cigarettes, but Buchold declined. "I neither smoke, drink, nor chew," he said, following the Puritan formula of a hundred years' duration. "Well, I left him, and the consul in Paris found me a position as a clerk in a shop of the Rue de la Paix—I could speak French pretty well, and they needed an English-speaking clerk for their customers. I got to know a lot of artists and people over in the Latin quarter; and one night we were talking about things and the question of Japan came up," he mentioned the name of the island kingdom much as a serpent might have spat forth venom, "and then I told them a few things about Japan. My father was killed by the Japanese and so were my two sisters and brother. Oh, they said it was robbers—my people were missionaries, you see—but I know what it was and so did my mother. We were in Kioto at the time it happened, my mother having to have an operation performed, and we didn't hear of it until a week later when we started to go back. Yes, the Japanese Government said it was robbers, but I know what it was well enough. There was a Russian who had stolen some valuable papers in Tokio and had escaped through our part of the country. We took him and hid him and fed him, not knowing that he had stolen these papers, and he had been at our house when mother and I left to come to Kioto—and they had raided the house to find him. They did not dare pretend to be anything but robbers because if they came as soldiers and searched our house and we offered opposition and were hurt, the United States would have held Japan responsible. So they said it was robbers, robbers, oh yes, robbers!"

He had worked himself up to fever-pitch and his eyes glowed and burned in the dusk that sifted through the windows of the compartment. Norroy knew from the twitching of his hands and the dilation of his eyeballs that the man who sat across from him was mentally deranged upon one point at least; a dangerous, unreasoning monomaniac.

"My father was a good patient Christian. My mother never took kindly to patience. She made me promise before she died to make the Japanese pay for what they did to us; and now—now——"

He went off into a series of low chuckles.

"You know," he said sitting up suddenly, "what I am to do in London, the glorious task which has been given to me?"

Norroy most certainly did not know; and his only way of finding out was to challenge the speaker's assertion.

"You are wrong," he said quietly. "At the last moment the chief decided that you were too young; that you might bungle. The task has been transferred into the hands of an older member—in fact, to me."

The boy leaped upward, his teeth snapping. "It's a damn lie," he shouted. The jolting of the train threw him back in his seat. "It's a lie, a damn lie," he repeated sullenly.

"It is the truth. That was why Friedrich was detained in Paris to rearrange matters."

Buchold stared at him from under

lowering lids. "You are to kill Viscount Ioki?" he asked.

"Yes!"

Another link in the chain. It was welding itself together in good shape now. Soon the motive would be apparent. As the silence continued between Norroy and the corduroyed young man, Norroy pieced the information together. This Buchold hated Japan; in a café conversation, he had been loud in his denunciations of her; Friedrich Loew had been at that time a patron of the café; for some reason Buchold's sentiments looked to prove valuable to him.

It was evident, then, that Loew had approached him with some sort of Mystic Brotherhood which had its existence, Norroy judged, only in Loew's brain; a species of association whose members were bound together by their mutual hatred of the Nipponese. For some reason it was desirable for Saxonia that Viscount Ioki be put out of the way; and Buchold was to be used as the cats-paw.

But it puzzled Norroy as to why Saxonia should desire the decease of Ioki. He knew of no reason for such an act and saw no good to Saxonia resulting from it. It was plain, then, that some international development had arisen which had made Saxonia for the time the enemy of Nippon; and out of such enmity might come far-reaching effects on the policy of the United States.

The idea that Loew might have some personal reason for the death of Ioki occurred to him; but he dismissed it. It was not probable.

His meditations came to a close when Buchold again addressed him. "When was it settled that you take my place?"

"This morning," answered Norroy suavely. "At Marseilles. I heard that you had been so delegated; and urged my previous claim and my longer membership. Surely, Brother Ernest, you cannot grudge me the right of priority."

"I would not care," murmured Buchold, "but I had been led to believe——"

Norroy nodded. "It is a disappointment, I know," he said soothingly. "But you will have your turn soon."

The conversation drifted, apparently aimlessly, but really directed by Norroy. He heard from the boy of Loew's first conversation with him, tinged with mystery; of Loew's call at his pension; and further discussion of the association which Loew dubbed "The Brotherhood of Suppression"; the admittance of Buchold to the society after many secret rites, at which Norroy murmured praises to himself anent Loew's ingenuity.

Then came Viscount Ioki's arrival in London; followed press descriptions of the preparations for his fêting and the parade in his honor which was to rival the Lord's Show; and the proposal that among this pomp and ceremony a man should leap forth from the sidewalk, and strike down the representative of Japan before the eyes of thousands of Englishmen on either side of the street.

It was only a natural inference to suppose that the man who lent himself to such a murderous assault would end on the gallows if he were not torn to bits by the mob or shot down by the soldiers. Buchold seemed to be aware of some such risk; but it was evident from his conversation that Loew had led him to believe that the "Brotherhood" would be out in force to attempt a rescue; and that he had something like three chances in ten of escaping.

Norroy did not attempt to disabuse Buchold's mind of this sophistry; that was no business of his; but he privately determined that no such assault should take place until he had discovered a reason for it which failed to concern the United States.

They reached Victoria at a few minutes after six, and Norroy suggested a four-wheeler. Buchold demurred at the expense, but upon the offer of the secret agent to stand the cost accepted with alacrity.

Buchold gave the address, a number on Greek Street, Soho Square; and the cab landed them before a tobacconist's shop, behind the shuttered windows of which no person was visible; but a sign

at a side entrance gave the information "Landis Hotel"; and Norroy climbed a flight of stairs, followed by Buchold and his two cheap suit-cases.

There was an open space at the head of the stairs from which opened many rooms; and which evidently served as the foyer of the "hotel." There was a fly-stained show-case on a support in one corner, a case containing some boxes of cigars and cigarettes; behind it on shelves stood some bottles of vermouth and *vin ordinaire* and one half-emptied bottle of brandy. Some rickety tables held domino-boxes and ash-trays; but no person was visible.

"I was to ask for Yussuf," said Buchold. "Is that right?"

Norroy nodded. "See if there isn't a push-button about here somewhere;" he suggested; but a search revealed none and Norroy brought his hands together in three smart claps. The summons brought a belated answer in the shape of a half-dressed mongrel who might have been anything from a Berber-Moroccan to a Turco-Macedonian.

"Ze zenthleman—ah, heem I have some word to look for," he said. "And ze telegrafique—ah—one momen', jus' one leetle momen' and heem I get——"

"Is that Yussuf?"

Norroy pretended not to hear him. It would not do to make a mistake. Buchold repeated his question, but the entrance of the Oriental mongrel with a soiled telegram saved an answer. Norroy did not wait for Buchold to claim it. He went forward, tore it open, read it; and thrust it in his pocket before Buchold had stepped to look over his shoulder.

"From the chief," said Norroy briefly. "I will tell you of it later. Come, Yussuf," he said, addressing the mongrel about whose identity he was now sure, "you must have some accomodation for us."

Yussuf assented and led the way to as unclean a room as Norroy in all his wide experience had had to do with.

"Is zhere anut'in' zhat zhe zhentleman want?" asked Yussuf, showing some yellow teeth.

"Some of your vermouth for both of us," directed Norroy. "And let me see the bottle that you take it from."

He followed the grinning Oriental, leaving Buchold in the room behind. They had reached the foyer and Yussuf had taken down the vermouth-bottle when Norroy leaned across the case, addressing him in Turkish.

"The young fool. He is an encumbrance. I must be rid of him for a day. He hampers my movements. You understand?"

"Yes, effendi," grinned Yussuf, pleased at the sound of his own tongue spoken in Norroy's flawless fashion.

"I want—a drug; one that will keep him sleeping until this time next morning." He dropped two napoleons into the Oriental's hand. "And two more of the same if he sleeps until to-morrow—if he wakes——"

Norroy's manner was threatening. "He will sleep as the dead sleep, effendi," Yussuf assured him earnestly.

"Extend, then, to me the glass which is not drugged, leaving the drugged one for him. You understand?"

"And will obey, effendi," replied Yussuf, bowing low in the presence of one who spoke his language as one of high caste might speak it. Norroy, satisfied, returned to the bedroom, where Buchold rubbed his eyes, yawning prodigiously.

"I want some sleep for mine," he said. "What did the chief say in his telegram?"

"Ordered you to be ready beside me in case I failed to kill my man. Now are you satisfied, Brother Ernest?"

The boy's face was alight. "Satisfied, ah!" And he drew a long breath. "Ah!" he said again.

"But now," continued Norroy, "you will sleep. The parade is not until to-morrow; and Friedrich will not arrive for some hours yet. Sleep is what you need; and what I need. And here is the vermouth. Come, a drink, and then sleep!"

Yussuf, with an expression quite blank, extended the battered tray toward Norroy, who took the nearest glass; and when Buchold had done the same, clinked glasses, and drank his

vermouth almost at a single gulp. Buchold, in an attempt at emulation, nearly choked himself and spilt some of the liquor on his not overclean collar.

"It has a queer taste," he said, holding out the empty glass to Yussuf.

"Zhe veree best—zhe zhentleman's vermouth," explained Yussuf; and softly took himself off.

Norroy removed coat and waistcoat, collar and tie, and, not without some hesitation, stretched himself upon the undesirable bed, and closed his eyes. Remembering, he arose and stripped to his underclothing, then resumed his position. His example was followed by Buchold's exhibition of himself in coarse woolly undervest and drawers that tucked into his rough socks. He was in the act of taking off one shoe when drowsiness overcame him; and he slipped back on the bed, breathing stertorously. As his body became limp, he slipped an awkward mass to the floor striking his head against one of his suit-cases; but he only groaned and did not awake from his stupor.

Norroy remained in his recumbent position for some time, making sure that his companion was really unconscious; then arose and put on his clothes, gathering up Buchold's discarded attire into a neat bundle, which he tied into some newspaper which he found in one of the bureau drawers. Bundle in hand and bag slung over his ulster, he went out, locking the door behind him, and encountered Yussuf in the foyer.

"The drug will hold until to-morrow morning; you are sure?"

Yussuf invoked Allah to witness his probity. Norroy gave him another napoleon. "If he awakes before noon to-morrow you are to detain him; you understand?"

Yussuf claimed for himself an understanding far-reaching, introspective, globe-encircling, almost infinite in its lack of boundaries.

"Much may be done with two more napoleons," added Norroy.

"More might be done with four," was Yussuf's opinion in his own language. "And——"

"More than that with a knife in the hand and a steady arm behind it," finished Norroy menacingly. "And such is the portion of men claiming more than Allah finds just."

"I spoke only of the total I would receive from the effendi," submitted Yussuf humbly. "I will have the light-haired son of a milkless camel safe when the effendi comes at the hour he chooses after to-morrow's sun has risen."

Norroy gave him an hour and went out. It was still early in the morning. A stray hansom landed him at a little hotel on Norfolk Street, between the Strand and the Embankment, a small hostelry which had once been a famous coffee-room, its other chambers being utilized for cards and the putting-to-bed of unwise carousers.

The secret agent had stopped here before in disguise. A front room was vacant; this he took and sent the aged retainer of the hostelry in a cab to Victoria to get his registered luggage. He rang for hot water for shaving and for a bath; and when both were forthcoming sacrificed his German make-up and clothes, retaining only the wig when he went below for his grilled chop and coffee.

The morning he spent in visiting the various wig-makers; and in a shop off Covent Garden found what he desired; a wig of tow-colored hair resembling Buchold's; and which, when Norroy had tried his tonsorial talent upon it, would nearly approach Buchold's shock in shape; close by he purchased a pair of square-toed brogans to harmonize with the corduroys; and then, quite satisfied with his morning's work returned to the hostelry and ascended to his room.

It was one of London's days when the sun bore much resemblance to a red moon shining wrathfully through mist-bank piled upon mist-bank; and faces were undistinguishable until within a few feet each of the other. Norroy lighted the single jet in his room; and, removing his moist coat, sat down and unfolded the telegram he had so hastily concealed from Buchold when Yussuf

had delivered it. It is unnecessary to state that the message in question had been addressed to the young American; and had that in it which called for the prompt measures which Norroy had adopted. He had fully realized its importance at first reading; and he had taken it out for no particular reason except to verify his remembrance of an address it contained.

BUCHOLD,
Care Landis Hotel,
Soho.

Detained. Leave this morning. Cannot come Greek Street. Too well known. Remain until to-night then come forty-two Ratcliff Street off Stepney Causeway eight o'clock, three flights, second door.

FRIEDRICH.

"Forty-two Ratcliff Street, off Stepney Causeway; three flights—up I suppose—second door—ahead that is I presume," mused Norroy, repeating the formula several times; then carefully he tore paper and envelope into little shreds and sifted them from the window into the fog, a few bits at a time until the wind had thoroughly dispersed them.

Closing the window, he looked at his watch, and found the hour to be near twelve. He rang for a maid.

"I came in on the night-train and I am going to sleep," he informed her. "I wish to be awakened at six o'clock precisely."

The maid made her word good at the appointed hour, and brought him hot water. Norroy got into his undergarments, coarse woolen socks, and the newly purchased brogans; then with his make-up box on the dressing-table and the gas-jet lit above the mirror, locked the door and proceeded to use his twelve years' experience as an amateur actor and secret agent in the task of transforming his countenance into one that nearly approached a likeness to that of Ernest Buchold.

He used many make-up pencils and brushes before the result pleased him. The wig drawn on, the crumpled shirt, low collar, and sausage-roll necktie adjusted, and attired in the corduroys, he deemed himself if not the twin brother of Ernest Buchold at least enough like him to pass momentarily in his personality without detection. About the voice there would be no trouble. Norroy's natural capacity for mimicry and his constant use of this capacity had made him quite equal to reproducing the callow squeaky tones of Ernest Buchold.

Drawing Buchold's Garibaldi over his eyes, he opened his door, secured it from the outside; and passed from the hotel into the street.

He hailed a blue Blackwall bus at the Strand and reached the neighborhood of the address in the telegram. It was now half-after seven and half an hour before the appointed time. He entered a public house and was served with a pint of bitter and a small meat pie, which he devoured with some distaste. Lounging about the "pub," he inquired of another patron in a thick husky voice the way to Ratcliff Street. The patron surrendered the information in a voice that matched Norroy's for enunciation, and seeming kindly disposed, inquired as to the number the other was seeking.

"Forty-two, eh?" he repeated when informed. "I s'y, you *are* a gaff, you are. There aren't no one in forty-two."

A voice from the other side of the bar demurred. "'Old yer tongue, you, 'Umphrey Allen. Wotcher know 'bout it, you that ain't out of quod once a twelvemonth. A Dutchy's took it, mister, and its the second house three streets out of Stepney on the roight-'an' soide. Wot's yours, 'Umphrey Allen, you that stands in a poor man's pub and loses 'im 'is repertation and drinks one 'arf-pint in two h-ours."

Norroy made the unfortunate Humphrey Allen's standing more permanent by requesting that he join him in a drink; and the irate publican, somwhat appeased, served both with ale. This action was rewarded by Allen, who took Norroy to Ratcliff Street, a narrow dirty little court with but one gas-lamp that flickered uncertainly through the fog.

"That's forty-two," Allen informed him. "Goo' night, ole pal."

Norroy's manipulation of the knocker producing no answering effect, he

put his hand on the knob which turned easily. The interior had that smell peculiar to houses with damp cellars. A single lamp set in a bracket in the wall with a tin reflector behind gave sight of a rickety stairway with linoleum worn away in patches. It was very quiet within.

Norroy felt the little Gaulois revolver in his waistcoat pocket with its six .38 steel bullets reposing snugly therein; and heartened by the touch of the gun metal went rapidly up the stairs, glancing furtively behind him. There was no light on the second landing, but a pale glimmer came from above. He rushed headlong to the third flight, where another lamp was fastened to the wall. The first door was almost at the head of the steps; the second was closed. Norroy did not knock; but turned the knob and walked in.

There was a lamp on a small table and a man standing behind it. He raised the lamp on Norroy's entrance and the light fell upon the hat, wig, and corduroys. The lamp went down and the man came across the room.

"Brother Ernest!"

Norroy had carefully rubbed rosin on his hands before leaving Norfolk Street, remembering the calloused palms of Buchold. His hand met Loew's without hesitation and they gripped.

"Brother Friedrich!"

"Sit down," directed the Saxonian secret agent. "You cannot remain here long. The Brotherhood is watched. I did not dare go to the Greek Street house. Tell me, my boy, does your heart cry out for the destruction of Japan as before?"

"Ever as before," replied Norroy tensely.

It was indeed a comedy; two men playing at cheap melodrama; the Saxonian believing that he was deceiving a foolish boy; the American knowing that he was hoodwinking an astute man of his own profession. Norroy thought grimly that he had the better of it.

"You will not falter when it comes to the test," pursued the German, his eyes narrowing behind the lamp.

Norroy had been with Buchold long enough to gather the stilted style of formula in which he indulged in all matters pertaining to the "Brotherhood." "I but wait the glorious opportunity," he replied.

There was a short interval of silence, during which Norroy was able to gather some impression of the room. It was under a gabled roof, the middle portion alone having sufficient height from floor to ceiling for a man to stand upright. But the room bore by no means a resemblance to the stairway. It was newly plastered; a few well-chosen prints hung on the walls; the table was a finely grained mahogany, the lamp bronze with a shade of beaten purple glass. The floor had been well stained and several woven rugs covered portions of it. The two windows at the base of the far side were small and offered little opportunity for egress even had not two thin rods of steel barred them. Immediately Norroy knew that this was no room hired by chance; but a chamber in one of the "Haunted Houses" of diplomacy.

Once within a "Haunted House" it was as though the grave had opened for the person whom the exigencies of state demanded be eliminated from the sphere of mundane affairs. Norroy knew well enough that he had not now to deal with Loew; but with, perhaps, half a dozen agents of Saxonia ready to answer the slighest call. In such a place his revolver was useless; to use it as a means of defense meant to have the hornets' nest about his ears. The windows were barred; the constable on the beat probably subsidized.

But, as yet, Loew had no suspicion of his visitor. The make-up was excellent; and there were the shock of hair, the red tie, the identical corduroys; and no reason to suspect another in Buchold's place.

Loew had taken from his pocket a packet wrapped in oilskin and sealed with a huge red sploth of wax with some impress which Norroy could not make out; and upon which he dared not cast too curious glances. This packet Loew twirled between thumb and forefinger, then laid on the table;

from his waistcoat pocket he slipped a bronze ring.

"This," he said, "is the ring of the Brotherhood. It is the first mark of the chief's favor. He told me to give it to you. Take it and be sure to wear it from now on."

Norroy reached out his palm; and dropped into it the secret-monogram ring of the state department; the ring which Loew had purloined from Carson Huntley. Unable immediately to follow the trend of the conspiracy, Norroy slipped the ring mechanically upon his third finger, where a duplicate of it had often had a place.

"This packet," continued the German, cutting into the fervid expressions of gratitude which Norroy imagined would come from Buchold at the receipt of a trophy such as the ring, "contains your reward. It is not to be opened until the viscount is dead and you have escaped. Remember"—and his voice rumbled threateningly—"this is your trust; if you open this packet before you have accomplished your work, you will be forever barred from the Brotherhood; and in order to preserve their secrets they must make an end of you, too, you understand?"

"But if I am captured and the packet found on me?" queried Norroy naturally.

"Then," answered Loew, his voice rising in triumph, "the world will know of the glorious Brotherhood which has removed the hateful yellow man in the midst of his pride and pomp; and Japan will know that she has a secret enemy, deadly as the snake, which does not fear to sacrifice lives to bring its ministers to justice. The packet will be broken open and read: the world will know of the honor that Ernest Buchold has gained from the Brotherhood and of the fearlessness and strength of the order."

Norroy breathed deeply. When the first sentence of Loew's paraphrase of the Bible had been spoken he knew immediately of the reason for Ernest Buchold's hoodwinking; and, remembering the ring, guessed shrewdly as to the contents of that sealed packet. Buchold was to assassinate the Japanese in the plaza before the Mansion House with some three or four thousand people looking on. He would be immediately captured and searched. On his finger would be the secret-monogram ring of the United States state department, its significance known to many alien diplomats; in the sealed packet was, no doubt, the letter from one American ambassador to another, undated, and simply stating that the bearer was an employee of the United States government; there would be also the secret code-book of the state department. Buchold was an American to boot. It would then appear that Viscount Ioki had been assassinated by orders of the United States Government.

This would have much the same effect upon Japan as the blowing up of the *Maine* had upon the United States. War must necessarily be declared. The English people, wrought up at the cowardly assassination of a distinguished visitor among them, would no doubt side immediately with their ally, Japan. The two nations would spring each at the other's throat. Much as Norroy disliked the Nipponese, he knew no good could come from war with them at the present juncture.

It was a peculiarly devilish plan, this of Loew's, backed no doubt by the Saxonian foreign office. Japan, her rival in the East, would have her commercial back broken; the United States, her rival in the West, must loose hands on that continent so much desired by Saxonia, South America, and leave the Teutons to settle the affairs of the banana republics without interference. The friendliness between Saxonia's most powerful enemies—England and the United States—would become a thing of the past; an Anglo-American alliance an anomaly. Yes, it was a devilish as well as a peculiarly brilliant stroke for Saxonia.

Loew was extending the packet across the table when his eyes met Norroy's. For the moment the American secret agent had forgotten the character-part he was playing; and his eyes glinted with the cold brilliance of a set

purpose. Instinctively Loew drew back; but Norroy's hand closed over his; and the two men faced one another, half in shadow, the lamp between them.

As Loew looked he realized that there was something queer in the appearance of his supposed dupe; then came sudden suspicion and he endeavored to draw away his hand.

Norroy's grip became inflexible. In one second he tore the packet from Loew's hand, sprang to the far side of the table and struck the Saxonian beneath the ear with all the force of arm and body. The blow was well calculated and placed and the Saxonian fell forward, carrying the lamp and table to the floor with him in one great crash.

Immediately Norroy knew he had overreached himself. The sound of the fall must have echoed through the entire house. Escape by the stairway was now obviously impractical, meaning as it did to fall into the hands of the other residents of the house. He groped forward to the door, found the bolt, shot it into place, and turned the key in the lock; then, thrusting the oilskin packet within his shirt, he struck a match.

Loew was back up on the floor, blood trickling from the contact of his face with the broken glass. Norroy picked up the lamp; globe and shade were shattered but oil and wick were still available for use; the wick he ignited and holding the lamp above his head examined the triangular roof. There was a trap-door opening on the right-hand side. He put the force of his right shoulder against it but without effect; and at that moment came a tap on the door.

There was now no time to waste. The tap was repeated. Norroy picked up a stool from a corner. Putting down the lamp on the floor after carefully marking the location of the trap-door, he swung the stool and brought it into forcible contact with the trap-door. It creaked. He swung it again; then repeated and the flap raised a little; another swing and it loosened and flapped clear of the room, opening much as a window might have done.

But as Norroy had battered so had the persons outside in the hall; and a vigorous rain of well-directed blows were being launched against the door, which was groaning its protests and proclaiming its inability to much longer withstand the assault.

Norroy peeped along the slanting shingled roof. A little below was a metal rain-gutter running the entire length of the shingling; craning his neck, he could see an extension roof of flat construction, some five feet below the rain-gutter. Here was his only way of escape; risky and depending upon proper sight and catch.

But he knew the danger of hesitation and swung clear of the trap, holding to the sill; then, nerving himself, dropped some three feet in air, catching at the rain-gutter in his downward flight. It quivered, shook, creaked, and a second later gave way; but it had broken half the fall and Norroy landed on the roof below directly on his feet, which stung at the impact; then a queer pain ran up his spinal column. But he had no time to think of discomfort, for when he looked upward, he saw a face outlined at the trap-door.

There was risk in waiting to decide identity; his little Gaulois pistol came out of his waistcoat and sent a steel bullet toward the face. There was a choking cry; the face disappeared; and Norroy scrambled along the roof of the out-house, caught another rain-gutter, shifted to the tin spout that ran downward, and slid down, the joints creaking and opening and tearing his hands.

Now he was in an old disused garden, with milkweeds and others of the same variety growing knee-high. Out of somewhere came a shot that sang perilously close to him. He doubled over and ran furiously head downward, suddenly careening into a fence with such force that his head swam. Another shot tore up some earth a bare three feet from him; but the fog was too thick for accurate firing, and although a third and fourth came, Norroy had by this time found the gate and thrown his shoulder against it.

It was of old rotten board unable to

hold the bolt fastenings after the second impact, and Norroy was launched into an evil-smelling alley where ran gutter-water among garbage-heaps. Through this he ran, careless of probable resisting objects, careening into first a fence, then a brick wall, and coming out finally to the light of a gas-lamp and the semisecurity of a highway.

But for all of that he still continued to run until he had passed from Ratcliff Street to the Commercial Road, attracting attention but not pausing long enough to gratify curiosity. As he swung into the road a big red motor bus marked "Oxford Circus" poked its nose through the fog.

It was bound for the Strand and Norroy put out one last sprinting effort, caught the guard-rail and swung aboard. Waiting on the platform he saw no other passengers board the bus until some five streets had been passed; then secure in his escape, he ascended to the top and, taking off hat and wig in the security of the fog, let the cool wind blow on his heated face.

He got off as the bus turned out of Fleet Street fifteen or twenty minutes later; and before he reached his hostelry had stuffed the yellow wig into his pocket. Once in his room he broke open the sealed packet. It was as he had imagined; the letter and the code-book were within.

When he had removed all traces of his make-up, he lighted, with a sigh of relief, one of his gold-crested cigarettes; and wrote briefly of the occurrence to the secretary of state, tying up with his letter the code-book, the ring, and the rescued note.

These he himself conveyed to the embassy next morning, when, in another disguise, he requested that they be included with other matter to be sent to Washington in the diplomatic weekly bag. He returned to his hotel in a hired motor, his identity cloaked in motor-coat, cap, and goggles, and removed his luggage to the Berkeley, where he registered as Mr. Yorke Norroy; and ascending to his room, unpacked and became again the beau of the clubs, distinguished only for ultra-cut of clothes and marvelous blending of shirt, tie, and waistcoat of green.

That evening he attended a ball and was voted by several intelligent diplomats a most high-developed specimen of an American ass—Yorke Norroy did nothing by halves.

THE OPTIMISM OF THE O'MALLEY

MAGGIE O'MALLEY has the reputation of being the most optimistic Irish girl outside Ireland.

Two weeks after Maggie's arrival a small boy threw a baseball at her, and knocked out two of her front teeth. Maggie arrived home with a bloody but smiling mouth.

"Holy Saints! Wasn't I that lucky!" she exclaimed.

"Lucky!" cried her mistress, in astonishment.

"Sure! That it wasn't me eye," said Maggie.

But the other day when Maggie O'Malley carelessly broke a valuable cut-glass bowl, she carried her optimism to extremes. Her mistress was distracted when she saw the pieces.

"Now, don't be bothered," urged Maggie soothingly. "Sure an' it might have been turrible worse. See!" And she held up her hands. "It's broken in twinty paces, and I nivver cut a finger!"

The Outlaw

By B. M. Bower

Magnanimity and generosity are hardly associable with the virtues of an outlaw on whose body, dead or alive, a price of ten thousand dollars is placed. But circumstances play havoc in the career of some, and a woman has not unfrequently proved the undoing of a good and "white" man. The good in the worst never dies and often, at the supreme moment, it manifests itself

IN the beginning of it Lee Allan was not much out of the common; just a big, wire-muscled, care-free cowboy, with much skill in the taming of broncs, and with always a certain reckless light deep down in his hazel eyes—if only one knew enough to look for it. But there was nothing particularly reckless in his behavior, for all that. He rode and shot better than most men, and when he gambled he did not often lose: he was not given to brawling, and men liked him and knew him for a "square" man.

Then, quite unexpectedly, he fell in love. Always before, women had been mere pleasant incidents which were not worth much worry or loss of sleep, so that just at first Lee didn't quite know what ailed him. With him, to love at all was to love much, and to foolishly place the woman high up on a pedestal and do homage as a man sometimes does believing that he has found the unfindable—a human being with no faults whatever. This is all very uplifting—until that disastrous time when comes disillusionment; then it is a toss-up whether the lesson is going to prove a blessing or a curse.

Lee Allan loved the girl as wholeheartedly as a man can—and for a time he held her fancy and was happy. He was straight and tall and good to look upon, and the reckless flicker just back of his eyes piqued her interest a bit. She liked to look into them and speculate upon the real man of him, and to feel that she held complete mastery over his life. It flatters a girl to know that a man has stopped gambling for her sake, and that he is living soberly and virtuously simply because of her.

She even went so far as to think seriously of marrying him, and to give him a promise—with those mental reservations which play the mischief, sometimes. Lee, taking her at her word, and not knowing anything about her mental amendments, naturally thought the matter settled, and was filled with a great content—until some one told him to look out for Dick Ridgeman, the banker's son, and hinted complications in Lee's smooth little love-affair. Lee went straight to the girl, caught her lying to him, and started blindly out to find Dick Ridgeman.

He found him—a blasé young fellow; his own match, so far as size and strength counted. Lee was just a primitive young man at heart, and he thought he was fighting for his own. They went at it savagely, with clenched teeth showing in that mirthless grin which speaks of rage and of muscles strung taut for combat. With bare fists, it was; a fair fight, with the weaker due to get soundly thrashed for his pains—until Dick Ridgeman reached backward with his right hand suggestively, when they stood free of each other for an instant. Then Lee drew his own gun and shot to kill before the other had quite brought his gun to the aiming-

point. It seems unnecessary to add that Lee Allan, the quickest and straightest shot in the county, succeeded in killing.

His first thought then was to see the girl and tell her; after that would be time to go—or to give himself up, he did not quite know which. The girl seemed frightened and horrified when he told her, but she clung to him, and begged him to wait. She would get him a lunch before he started on his long ride—just a cup of coffee, in case he must ride farther and faster than he thought. If he loved her, she said, he would let her do so much for him.

Lee waited, and considered whether it were worth while running away at all; still, it was nice to be petted and waited upon, even if he had been unlucky enough to shoot a man: it showed that the girl really cared for him, after all. And to Lee that overtopped everything, just then: he had so lately been almost convinced that she did not care.

While he was waiting, determined to tell her that he would not run, the sheriff walked in and arrested him. Lee had forgotten that the sheriff lived just around the corner—but it really made no difference, since he had meant to surrender, anyway. So he comforted the girl, and told her not to worry about him; he'd come out all right.

But he didn't. At the trial—and because it was the banker's son he had killed, the trial came very soon—he had his first real shock. The girl appeared as a witness, and she appeared for the prosecution.

Lee didn't quite understand, just at first. When she told the jury that she had been engaged to Dick Ridgeman, Lee stared at her incredulously. When she admitted—under question, it is true—that Lee had threatened to "fix Dick Ridgeman so he wouldn't bother anybody," he caught his breath. It was true, and not true. He remembered telling her that he would fix Ridgeman so he wouldn't want to bother *her* for a while, which was not quite the same. But when it came out that she herself had sent word to the sheriff that he was with her, something went wrong in the heart of Lee Allan, and the world became full of a great, unnamable bitterness.

For all that, he sat quite still, and the reporter only transcribed that "the prisoner winced perceptibly once or twice, when Miss Mabel Thomas was giving her testimony, but otherwise he appeared quite unmoved." When a man received the cruelest blow of his life, it speaks well for his fortitude if he only winces once or twice.

Even then, if they had given him justice—but they did not. He had killed the son of the Honorable John R. Ridgeman, the great man of Colton; and Lee Allan was just a well-meaning, hot-tempered, daredevil cow-puncher. They gave him ninety-nine years—convicting him of murder—and told him how fortunate he was, and how lenient were they, that he was not to be hanged.

That night Lee twisted two bars in his cell window and escaped, leaving a characteristically brief and comprehensive note behind. If you want to know the exact words, they were these:

> Damn the law and the lawyers! It's all a rotten fake—and your jail ain't much better. It's me to the wild bunch. LEE ALLAN.

To the "wild bunch" he certainly went. The first reward for his capture was only a paltry thousand—because they did not yet know their man. But when a posse, after riding far and fast on his trail, turned back and suddenly found themselves ambushed in a narrow gulley when they emerged finally from the trap with every man of them painfully but not permanently crippled—Lee was certainly an artist with a gun—the reward jumped to five thousand, and the fugitive became a man of importance in the county.

A month later, when the sheriff and his deputy met him face to face in the Bad-lands, and the sheriff was brought back to the coroner's office by his badly frightened deputy who had a bullet-hole in the fleshy part of his right arm, the law awoke to the fact that it had a bad man to deal with; a very bad man, for whose body, dead or alive, five thousand dollars was not considered too high a price. The Honorable John R. Ridge-

man doubled the amount, so that Lee Allan was worth just ten thousand dollars to the man who succeeded in capturing him.

After that he became alternately the hunted and the hunter. He must have had friends who stood by him—cowboys are a clannish lot—for he never seemed to lack ammunition, and his rifle was remarkably accurate at long range, as more than one enterprising outlaw-trailer could testify, with the corroborative evidence of bullet-holes. More than that, he seemed always abreast of the news, and undoubtedly knew of the large reward.

For some months the Bad-lands witnessed a desultory war at long range, and always with the same result. Men who regarded covetously the ten thousand went boldly out to slay and spare not; without exception, they returned more or less painfully wounded, and one or two were brought back to the coroner.

Lee Allan persisted in remaining distressingly alive, and in a year he had that part of the Bad-lands practically to himself. It began to look very much as if the ten thousand must go begging indefinitely.

Two sheriffs had been disposed of, and the third was laughed at when he told his constituents that he would capture Lee Allan or be killed by him. He was two months in office, and had been kept very busy overhauling a gang of horse-thieves, so that the public waited curiously and a bit impatiently for the grand encounter, and speculated much upon the result. In the meantime, Lee Allan was left very much to himself, with not a soul to shoot at—which must have been wearisome to the last degree.

Colton is not what one might call a large or important town, and at certain seasons of the year it is insufferably dull; at certain hours of those seasons it is even duller, which is the way of "cow-towns" in midsummer.

It was at such an hour that the Honorable John R. Ridgeman stood quite alone behind the cashier's wicket in his bank; for the bank was quite as small and unimportant as the town, and there was little business transacted between shipping-seasons.

When the cashier went to his lunch, the Honorable John R. often took his place for an hour or so. He was doing some aimless figuring upon a blotter when a stranger opened the door and walked in composedly, bringing with him an indefinable atmosphere of the range-land.

At the first glance the Honorable John passed him over casually as some small cattle-owner, perhaps wanting a loan. At the second, his mouth half-opened and his face became the color of stale dough. He reached out nervously for a revolver which lay always conveniently near, but the stranger laughed unpleasantly; the Honorable John drew back his hand guiltily and stared at him, quite frightened and helpless.

"I hear you've had a reward out for Lee Allan for quite a spell now," began the fellow nonchalantly. "And you stand good for half. Ten thousand dollars for him, dead or alive—that right?"

The Honorable John ran the tip of a nervous tongue along his dry lips, which even then refused him speech. He answered with a queer, convulsive little nod.

"Yuh had it up a long time; seems too bad yuh ain't had a chance to pay it out to some enterprising varmint. I've brought your man in—and he's just about as live as need be. Cough up that ten thousand, old-timer. Yuh won't have another chance—not in a thousand years."

The Honorable John "coughed up." That is, he began shoving bundles of bank-notes under the wicket, till Lee Allan stopped him impatiently.

"No, thank yuh. I'll take the gold."

"Eh—excuse me," mumbled the Honorable John quite humbly for so great a man, and went for the gold—but not alone. Lee Allan very calmly went with him to the vault, carrying his gun ready for instant use in his right hand. The Honorable John fairly trotted, so great was his anxiety to get that ten thousand.

Ten thousand dollars in gold is rather heavy—heavier, perhaps, than Lee had expected, though he did not say as much. He lifted the bags, slipped them into a larger one, which he took from his pocket, and smiled whimsically. The Honorable John could see nothing funny about it, for he was still facing the gun and all that it suggested; he still wore the stale-dough complexion, and his manner was ill at ease.

"It's lucky yuh didn't make the offer twenty thousand," grinned Lee. "I'd 'a' had to make two trips after it—and by the looks, your nerves wouldn't stand for another visit, old-timer. Yuh needn't be scared. Yuh ought to be glad to see me—the way you've been mourning around over my absence. Do I look good to yuh ten thousand dollars' worth? Well, so long. Yuh likely won't meet me again for some time. This'll last a while; rent's cheap down in the Bad-lands, and a man don't blow much money there."

He had tied the loose top of the bag into a hard knot, working deftly with his left hand. Now he pushed the Honorable John R. Ridgeman into the vault, closed the door, and walked out of the bank as calmly as he had entered.

Outside, he walked quietly down a side street toward the river, where he had left a boat drawn up on the bank. His revolver he had slipped inside his trousers band, and the bag of gold he carried upon his left shoulder. Figuratively, he looked the whole world in the face, for he made not the slightest attempt at concealment.

A saloon-keeper, standing outside his empty saloon, saw him disappear around a corner, and stared incredulously. Surely, it was nothing more than a remarkable resemblance, he thought—though it would be hard to mistake that tall, straight-limbed figure or the proud set of his head. He stood looking at the corner and wondering if his eyes had tricked him.

Aside from that, no one saw him except a woman who came to the door of her shack to throw out a pan of water. Lee was passing within fifty feet of her, and as she stopped and stared, as had done the saloon-keeper, Lee looked up and smiled at her astonishment. Inwardly he said: "Lord, what a pair of feet!" The woman's feet *were* large, but one would scarcely expect an outlaw who had just claimed and received the reward upon his own head, to notice a woman's feet.

On the river-bank, half a dozen children were playing around the boat "Here! yuh better pile out uh that, kids," he commanded, but gently. They stood back and eyed him curiously while he placed the bag in the boat and thrust an oar into the soft clay bank. He was positive that the oldest boy recognized him, but he did not hurry. When the boat floated clear, he sat down and adjusted the oars, looked up at the staring group, and held the oars poised in air.

"Say, kids!" he called. "Yuh better run home and tell your dads that the Honorable John R. Ridgeman is shut up in his bank-vault, and I don't believe it's any too well ventilated. Hike along, before he uses up what air there is. And, say, tell that little tin sheriff uh yours that I'll leave him a note in this boat. Get a hustle on, now!"

He dipped the oars unconcernedly, threw his straight shoulders backward, and began to row deliberately but with strokes which sent the bow leaping over the water like a cat running through snow. His hat, dimpled in true cowboy fashion, was pushed back on his head, and his forehead was very white. As he watched the children scurry up the bank and race back to the town, he laughed; but in his eyes the old, daredevil light burned a steady flame, and deeper than the laugh sounded the note of bitterness that the last two years had bred.

The sheriff was not in town, and it was two hours before he was notified; it was three before he reached the place where was moored the boat. Three hours would carry the outlaw far toward his hide-out in that jumble of barren hills which was the Bad-lands, so the sheriff went about his investigation deliberately. Allan's message had been given him verbatim, and he looked first

for the note. It was easily found, and his name, Bob Farrow, was scribbled upon the outside, so there could be no mistake. Also there was no mistaking the utter scorn of law in the few lines of the message, which was this:

> Come on down and play tag with me—if you ain't afraid. Bring a possy along, so I can practise up shooting. If you come alone I won't shoot you. I'll just tie you to a tree and let you starve to death. You'll come a-running—I don't think!
>
> LEE ALLAN.

Bob Farrow was not a coward. He straightened so suddenly that the boat rocked under him and little waves licked along the sides like gray tongues. He gritted his teeth and swore.

"I'll go—and I'll go alone. Thinks he can bluff *me*, does he? He'll eat this note—or I don't come back."

"What does he say?" queried an old fellow, who had come up with the little crowd, from his shack down by the ferry.

The sheriff, every tone vibrant with contempt, read the note aloud.

The old man combed his beard thoughtfully; he had known Lee Allan long, and had liked him. "Better not tackle it alone, Bob," he said uneasily. "He'll git yuh, sure as you're born; and he'll do just what he says, too."

"Would you take a dare like that?" demanded the sheriff angrily. "Anyway, what am I sheriff for?"

"Yuh ain't sheriff to commit suicide," said the old man calmly. "I voted for yuh, Bob, and I hate to see yuh tackle the job single-handed. Lee's desp'rate. He used to be as white a boy as you'd find—but he's got a price on his head; that'll change most anybody's temper, I reckon. Don't yuh go alone, Bob."

Farrow laughed shortly, read the note slowly through once more, and put it carefully away inside his memorandum-book. "I'll go play tag with him all right," he said grimly, "and I won't come back alone—I promise yuh that."

He mounted his horse and rode back to the ferry, meditating the insult and how he should avenge it. As the ferry swung out from shore, the old man stood on the edge of the bank, combing his rusty-red beard with his fingers and shaking his head ominously; the sheriff, looking at him, laughed.

"Yuh mustn't be too blame sure about Lee Allan winning out, old-timer," he shouted, a bit boastfully, and turned to discuss the hold-up with his friends.

Many warned him, and many begged to be taken along. But for every fresh applicant his refusal was tinged with a deeper annoyance. Why should they be so sure of his failure? It was man against man, both well armed and able to hit what they shot at. He could not see where Allan would have any particular advantage, except that he was familiar with the battle-ground. On the other hand, he had given his promise not to shoot the sheriff—which he would doubtless regret. Farrow smiled to himself: *he* had not handicapped himself by a promise of any sort; he would certainly shoot on sight.

He went about his preparations calmly in the face of much-unheeded advice and remonstrance. To the men of Colton, the fact that any man was determined to go out alone to capture Lee Allan seemed proof that his mind was not right. They called him a fool privately, and wished him luck publicly, and let it go at that.

Next morning at sunrise the sheriff jogged down to the ferry, with a well-laden pack-pony ambling at the heels of his horse, and with a smile for the melancholy farewells of the early risers whom he met. The old man came out of his little shack on the far river-bank, and looked after him bodefully.

"See yuh later!" called the sheriff cheerfully, and laughed at the general air of gloom with which his levity was silently reproved.

Farrow looked back at the little town, sent a mute good-by to a certain girl who had cried, the night before, with her face hidden on his shoulder, and faced calmly the south. He did not ride as though moments were very precious, for he was of the sort who can hold impatience in leash and hasten slowly. He had a "grub-stake" that would last him two weeks—longer, if he were put to the necessity—and am-

munition a-plenty. With the town and the river behind him, his eye went appraisingly over his outfit and spoke satisfaction.

He settled into his saddle contentedly and slipped the reins between his fingers while he made a cigarette. Then he faced the rim of yellow-brown hills and went on with the leisurely dog-trot that carries a man far, between sun and sun, and does not fag his horse. And while he rode, that last, jeering line of the note chanted over and over in his brain, and fitted its taunting measure to the hoof-beats of his horse: "You'll come a-running—I don't think! You'll come a-running—I don't think!"—till the words whipped his resentment into a cold rage that held no place for mercy.

At dusk he camped in the very edge of the Bad-lands, and knew that the game began on the morrow, and that it was to be played out to the end—which was death, if he lost. For the other, death or shackles, as fate might determine. But Bob was not afraid of the outcome. His dreams had nothing to do with outlaws and their haunts; they were all about the girl who had cried upon his shoulder.

When he swung again into the saddle the sun was gilding all the hilltops, and the hollows were gloomy and chill with the night that had gone before. He felt, for the first time keenly, the magnitude of the task he had set himself. Somewhere in that bleak, barren jumble before him Lee Allan lurked and waited his coming; but where? The stony hillsides gave no trace to follow; it must be an aimless quest, with the finding left to chance.

He rode warily, choosing instinctively the easiest path and watching like an Indian for sign of life among those silent pinnacles; stopping often to examine with field-glasses some far-off object that looked suspicious, and that turned out nothing more than blackened rock, grotesquely human in form.

At noon something whined past him and spatted against a rock ten feet in front of his horse. He pulled up sharply and listened; the far-off crack of a rifle echoed mockingly among the rocks. He turned and eyed the gaunt hills behind, but they held their secret in grim, unsmiling silence.

He swore aloud, got off his horse, and went and examined the rock that had been hit. He picked up a bit of flattened, steel-jacketed lead, and slipped it into his pocket. Then he looked again behind, searching with the glass, studied the sheer walls of the bluff, mounted his horse, and went imperturbably on. The game, he told himself, had begun.

Just at sundown another bullet sang plaintively and flicked up the yellow dust in the cow-trail he was following. He got off and hunted for it; found it, and put it with the other—and his fingers trembled slightly.

"I'll give him bullet for bullet—the cur!" he comforted himself.

He did not try very hard to discover the source of the shot. The outlaw was evidently using smokeless powder, and there were more than a thousand places within long range that might be his hiding-place. The rifle-crack told nothing, for the hills caught up the sound and distorted it with their echoes, as if they were in league with the outlaw and took pleasure in throwing the sheriff off the scent.

That night he sat with his back against a rock wall, with his rifle across his knees, and with his eyes wide open and his ears strained to catch the slightest sound—of sliding gravel, or the click of boot-heel upon rock. The stars rested their toes upon the jagged pinnacles and blinked down at the lonely, black hollows that lay sleeping beneath.

All night he sat there watching, and at day-dawn boiled his coffee, fried his bacon, and ate his breakfast moodily. After that he packed and saddled, and went on—heavy-eyed and savage with the world.

Half a mile, and a third bullet spatted significantly against a boulder ten feet from the trail. Unconsciously he noticed that the bullets always struck approximately ten feet from him; even in missing him, Lee Allan showed accurate marksmanship. With teeth grinding he got down and went after the bullet. A bit of paper, held in place upon the

boulder by a stone, fluttered as if eager to claim his attention. He jerked it viciously loose, and read the laconic message:

Tag! You're *IT*.

He shook his fist impotently at the sullen, gray crags, and shouted curses that the rocks gave defiantly back to him, word for word. When he had calmed he went on doggedly.

When the rock-shadows were but narrow frills of shade, came another leaden reminder that he was watched, and he knew now the song it sang: "Tag! You're *it!*"

He searched for the bullet anxiously, feeling Lee Allan's scornful dark eyes following his every move. When he had found the bullet and dropped it with the others, he ate his lunch feverishly and went on, doubling, turning unexpectedly north and south and west, as he found opportunity, hoping to fool his enemy and throw him off the scent.

When the sun was setting redly came the fifth singing messenger ten feet before him. That night he sat as he had done the night before, with his back to a rock and the rifle across his knees, and waited and watched, and strained his ears for faint sound in the chill, brooding silence of the wilderness.

That night there were no stars to keep watch with him; a cold wind crept down the rock-strewn gulches and chilled him as he sat, but he did not move; he did not dare. He only listened the harder, and peered into the black with eyes that ached with sleep-hunger, and waited for the dawn.

Late that afternoon, when the bullets he had gathered numbered seven and when the strain upon nervous and physical endurance was too great longer to be borne, he fancied that there was movement among the huddle of black, scarred boulders across the narrow gulch. He raised his rifle and fired his first shot. Half a minute, perhaps, he watched, dull-eyed and haggard, the place.

"If I killed him," he muttered aloud, "I could sleep."

It had come to that, then; he must sleep. Killing Lee Allan was, after all, but the clearing away of an obstacle to his sleep. He became unreasoning, malignant. His clouded brain, strained to the limit in those two days and nights, had place for but one idea—to kill.

He fired wildly at every rock, every stunted sage-bush that his distorted imagination could construe into the semblance of a man. He emptied the magazine of his gun, and refilled it feverishly; emptied it again, while the fantastic peaks and cliffs and hollows barked jeering reply. Save for the echoes there was no sound, and he laughed gloatingly.

A bullet—the eighth—hummed close to his ear and kicked the dust under the very nose of his horse. It threw back its head nervously, and Bob, forgetting where he was and the precarious path he followed, jerked the reins savagely and dug deep with his spurs.

They went down together, sliding and rolling to the bottom of the gulley. The horse struggled wildly, gained his feet, and stood with the saddle hanging upon one side, eying his master curiously. After a time he took a tentative step or two, shook himself disgustedly, and began nibbling the scanty grass-growth. Up on the trail, the pack-pony gazed into the gulley and whinnied lonesomely.

When Bob opened his eyes, it was to see where all the water came from. His head and face were dripping, and the first conscious thought was met by another dash of water in his face.

"How the dickens did yuh fall over that bank?" a voice questioned plaintively. "Yuh wasn't shot—and neither was your horse." The last words were spoken defensively.

Bob raised to an elbow and stared grimly at the man. The cold water seemed to have cleared his brain. "Hell!" he said, and lay back again. There did not seem anything else to say.

"Yes, and then some!" assented the other petulantly. "Do yuh know your leg is broke?"

"No matter," said Bob laconically. "I

can starve just as long with a broken leg."

"You was a fool to come," complained Allan. "Yuh might 'a' knowed you'd got the worst uh the deal."

Farrow looked at him. "I'm Valley County's little tin sheriff," he reminded. "And that ten thousand would come handy to start housekeeping with." He was holding himself steady with an effort. When he stopped speaking, his lips twitched with pain and weakness.

Allan stood irresolute, looking down on him with close-drawn brows. "Who—is she?" It was as if the words spoke themselves, against his will.

Farrow opened his eyes and looked at him squarely, challengingly. "Her name's—Mabel Thomas," he said defiantly. "We was going to be married in six weeks."

He saw Allan wince, and closed his eyes satisfied; if he had to die, he had at least struck one blow home, he thought.

Allan sat down on a rock and rolled a cigarette with unsteady fingers. "I suppose," he said slowly, "yuh think a lot of her." He lit a match, held it to the cigarette, and took three puffs. "And yuh think she—likes you," he finished deliberately.

"I *know* it!" flashed Bob, forgetting for the moment his hurts, anxious only to wound the other.

Allan said nothing—but his cigarette went out many times before he finally threw it away. Bob sank into a stupor born of his great weariness, his hurt, and his loss of sleep. He was roused by a great wrenching pain, and struggled wildly.

"Lay still!" commanded the voice of Allan. "I just had it in place."

"What——"

"I'm trying to set your leg—if yuh'd keep your nerve. Can't yuh stand nothing, yuh lobster?"

Farrow lay still and clenched his teeth; he did not like having even Allan think him a coward. When it was over he was weak and giddy, and felt only vaguely that he was being moved, and that the new place was softer and more comfortable. After that was blank.

He opened his eyes to the sun of another day, and his nostrils to the smell of frying bacon. He discovered that he was lying between his own blankets—and with memory came wonder. He raised painfully to an elbow and discovered Allan sitting upon a rock beside a camp-fire, rolling a cigarette while he kept an eye upon the bacon, frying in the sheriff's frying-pan. Instinctively he reached toward his hip. Allan caught the movement—being an outlaw must breed wariness in a man—and he frowned.

"Better lay down," he said evenly. "I didn't think yuh was such a sneak—but I didn't take no chances. Yuh ain't got any more gun than a jack-rabbit, old-timer."

"I'm not a sneak. We ain't what you might call chums, Lee Allan."

"Sure not—thank the Lord! But we aint fighting each other just at the present time, either. It's 'king's ex,' old-timer—till further notice."

Bob Farrow lay back and did some rapid thinking. He had never known Lee Allan, save by reputation. He could not fathom the mystery of his mercy; he felt dazed and uneasy, and he watched the outlaw covertly.

When the bacon was done they ate, not as comrades, but in stony silence. Allan did many things for the comfort of Bob, and refilled his coffee-cup twice, saying only: "Drink lots—yuh got a hard day ahead, with that game leg uh yours." At this Bob wondered more.

He watched Allan divide the pack, and tie a part behind the saddle of his horse—and thought it meant desertion in cold blood. He watched him bring a rude, newly made travail—such as Indians use to drag burdens—and fasten it to the pack-saddle on the pony; he did not quite know what to think of that; but leaned to the belief that Allan was a past master in refined cruelty, and meant to keep him with him, alive—for what purpose he could not guess. He made no protest, and fought to keep back the groans, when he was transferred to the travail, blankets and all.

The day dragged interminably to Farrow, though he dozed part of it away. The travail was not as excruci-

ating a mode of travel as he had feared, though his leg hurt cruelly at times. The way seemed strange—he had no doubt they were penetrating farther into the wilderness; they wound through coulée-bottoms and narrow gulches, for the most part, on account of the travail. He could not help seeing that Allan was very careful, and made the trip as easy as possible.

That night, when they had eaten and the camp-fire of sage-brush was throwing fantastic lights and shadows upon them, his silence broke in a question.

"Allan, on the dead—what are you doing it for?"

"That's my affair," said Allan shortly, and the conversation closed abruptly.

The next day, just after sundown, they stopped in the shelter of a hill that seemed familiar. Bob looked at it long, and studied deeply a new thought. Still, he did not say anything—then. He was weak and feverish, and he thought he might be mistaken.

Then Allan spoke quietly, in the undertone he must have learned in those two years of outlawry.

"It's pretty hard on yuh—but if yuh think you can stand it, we'll make a night move. It's that or lay over till to-morrow night—and yuh need care."

Bob caught his under lip sharply between his teeth to steady himself. Then: "I'm dead next to you now, partner," he said, a bit shakily. "You're taking me *home*. Don't yuh know the risk? If anybody gets sight of yuh—that ten thousand'll look like a gold-mine."

"I'm only going to take yuh as far as the ferry. I'll hold up that old red-whiskered rube and make him take care of yuh." Allan spoke roughly, but the roughness was not very deep, and Bob was not fooled. He stretched out a shaking hand and gripped the fingers of the other.

"You're a better man than I am," he said simply. "You're white. I didn't know yuh, or I wouldn't have come out here. You're—*white*."

"No," Allan's tone was bitter. "I'm ten thousand dollars' worth of menace to the peace and dignity uh Montana! I'm a blot that the law'd be tickled to death to wipe off the earth. I ain't human. I'm just—an outlaw!" It was a cry for justice, and as such Bob read it.

"Look here," he began, after a silence. "You mustn't go any farther. I can manage alone. If you'll fix the bridle on the pony and let me have the reins, I can drive him. Or, anyway, he'll go straight home—straight to the ferry. He's dead gentle."

"Not on your life. I may be all that my reputation calls for—but I never quit a job till it's done. I started out to land you at the ferry."

Bob said no more for a time. Then: "I hate to have you ranging out in those God-forgotten hills; it ain't a fit life for a dog. I wish——"

"I'm through here," Allan confided simply. "I'm sick of plugging posses an' raising particular hell by my high lonesome. I got that ten thousand to help me out. I'm going to drift, partner, soon as I see yuh at the ferry. I wanted to get yuh down here and have some fun with yuh, was why I wrote that note. That—that starving business was just a bluff; I wouldn't do that to a coyote. It was a josh. I knew yuh couldn't get me in a thousand years—but I knew I could deal *you* misery, and never touch you."

"You sure succeeded," Bob answered dryly, thinking of those sleepless nights and nightmare days.

"I can savvy a trick like that," he went on, after a minute. "You had a cinch, and you knew it. But what gets me is why you're doing *this*."

A flame leaped up from the fire and lighted Allan's face; his dark eyes glowed in the glare, then he moved back into the shadow. He got up and looked away toward the horses.

"We'd better be drifting, if we want to get to the ferry before daylight," he said.

He walked a few steps from the fire, stopped, then turned and came back. He stood a minute without speaking.

"You—said—*she* cared a lot," he said.

He went hurriedly back and brought up the horses, and lifted the travaux-ends gently, so as not to hurt Farrow.

With the Fear of Death

By T. Jenkins Hains
Author of "Panama Bill" Stories, Etc.

Being Another of the Adventures of "Hammerhead Jones," Second Mate

Few of us know much about the perils that beset the crew of a lightship. It is only off a shoal like the Frying Pan near Hatteras that one can come to an understanding of the "mighty" sea. In a thrilling narrative Mr. Hains gives a phase of the adventurous life led by these desperate men.

(*A Complete Story*)

SHE lay just off the end of the great shoal, riding to many fathoms of two-inch iron shackled to a ponderous mushroom of ten thousand pounds which had buried its head deep into the treacherous sands. Her high bows gave her the appearance of an overgrown life-boat, for she had a sharp stern, and the bulging sides, high and red, caused her to ride like a gull upon the long sea which swept in from the Gulf Stream and burst in a thunderous smother upon the Frying Pan.

Twenty-one miles away the tip of the Bald-head Tower rose above the horizon to mark the entrance of Cape Fear. Between it and the light-ship were the dangerous shoals, the dreaded sands of the Frying Pan extending clear out of sight of land and having upon them in places less than two fathoms of water. The bottom could be plainly seen in calm weather just inside the giant buoy, a couple of miles west of the light-ship, but all the time the huge rollers lifted and grew steep with that dreadful slant to their inner slopes which told of the break that might occur at any moment even during a calm.

It is a fearsome place, the Frying Pan, next to the Outer Diamond, off Hatteras, the worst place on the eastern coast of the United States. The Gulf Stream sweeps in close at times, and the vessels heading for the Hatteras light-ship often get jammed to the southward of it. Out of sight of land in perfect weather, the Frying Pan is not wholesome when it's thick and the sun has been in for a day or two, thereby preventing the wary navigator from getting his bearings. The sun means much to the man at sea coming on the coast.

There had been a long week of thick weather. The sea ran evenly, but toward the end of seven days it showed a tendency to shift to the eastward. The light-ship had plunged and bucked, rolled and twisted with the steady motion, her great buoyancy causing her to respond to each and every lift.

The crew had taken it easy for some days, the motion becoming regular, and when the motion of a light vessel becomes regular it is hailed as a blessing by those aboard. Each wild throw,

each twisting kick had become almost identical with the fellow preceding it, and the men read, sewed, played checkers, and pined for the day when the relief would come and let them have their turn ashore to spend their hard-earned cash in a relaxing debauch.

At night the two huge lanterns were hoisted upon the short, stumpy masts heads, and there was little more to do, save stand lookout. Those who were not on watch passed the time below, for the weather was cold and there was no comfort on deck.

Captain Forsberg, the master of the light-ship, was a "square-head," a Swede, and he was naturally a sailor. A Swede takes to the water as naturally as to eating, and Forsberg had been everything from ship's boy to master navigator between the ages of thirteen and forty.

But Norwegian and Swedish ships pay very little for navigators. The captain of a Scandinavian is lucky if he gets fifty dollars a month, even as master, for in spite of the constant dangers and hardships attendant upon a life at sea in a sailing-vessel, it is one of those trades which have run down, run clean out at the heels; and there are fifty men who will risk their lives for fifty dollars per month to one ship to command.

Forsberg happened to land in the country of dollars, and it had turned his head. He could get as much for going as second mate in a Yankee ship as he could as master in one of his own country—and they cared not at all for his nationality.

The light-ship offered seventy-five—and little to do. It was a "soft snap," and the pay was certain, being guaranteed by the United States Government.

Forsberg loved to think of it, loved to dream that his pay was sure, certain to come at the end of the quarter as the sun was to rise out there beyond the edge of the great Gulf Stream. And because of this happy occurrence, he and his mates were prone to accept things in a manner more philosophical than was good for the service.

It is nearly always the case. When the pay is regular and certain, the effort is weak and uncertain. Among the high this is slurred to such an extent that it becomes nebulous, but among the low—and Forsberg was low, being only a sailorman—it was more or less apparent to his shipmates only.

When the United States inspector made his annual rounds in the light-house tender, the light-ship was as clean and shipshape as the finest yacht or man-of-war. These visits being well-timed, this was easy for Forsberg. When the long, unending months dragged along during the hot weather of summer and the inspector was not within a thousand miles of the Carolina coast, the small games of chance took up much of the time which the government paid for.

Forsberg had a mate named "Texas Jack," who hailed from Galveston and who had kept the position of third assistant at the light off the jetty until transferred to the Frying Pan. Jack would bet on anything from the number of waves in the sea to the number of clouds in the sky—and put up his money like a "man." Yes, if the snappers who fed along the bottom only knew of the chance they had for a race with a true sport to back them against the mackerel, they would have made things lively on the Shoal.

Jack, with six others, fought it out at pinochle, draw-poker, fan-tan, drop-dead, and various other skilled arts which are too numerous to mention, and the result was that Jack always had the wages of the entire crew owing to himself; that is, all except what Forsberg landed, for the skipper of the light-ship was wily and divided honors with his mate, sometimes holding more and sometimes less than the redoubtable Texas.

All of this is, however, outside the story of the events following, for gambling is prohibited in all government ships. But it is necessary to know it to account for the peculiar development of character which took place upon the Frying Pan in the case of Forsberg and his followers, or crew.

The night of the seventh of December fell cold and dismal over the gray ocean. The thick weather of the ensuing week seemed to culminate in a night of intense blackness. The wind died away to a light breeze and swung to the southward, bringing with it a peculiar warmth, a softness to the winter air which boded ill to the men who understood. A light snow fell, and the flakes flashed by the lanterns like volleys of pearls coming out of the sudden blackness a few feet distant and disappearing almost instantly again into the surrounding void just outside the powerful lantern-light.

A slow swell swung up from the southward and began to have a shifting motion, a cross-lift to it as though another disturbance from the eastward was sending out its advance waves. The sea grew slowly in volume and the cross-swell rose in proportion until there was little comfort playing at the table in the cabin, and the men forthwith flung down upon the deck itself to finish.

"Seems like there's a buster coming along up the Gulf," said Jack, as he took his place, cross-legged, on the smooth planks of the cabin floor. "How's th' glass, cap?"

"Low, pretty low, aye tank you guess him right, Texas," said Forsberg. "When you go on deck, Yohn, you take a good peep to the s'uth'ard—an' you see them gears all fast. She'll yump yiminy Christman, afore daylight, or I don't know noddings. Mebbe we give her forty fadom more scope—get them stoppers clear an' th' chain ranged—how much you bet, hey, we don't get a nord-easter, what?"

"Raise you six cents," said Jackson, the second mate.

"Small game, hey?" said Forsberg.

"You got de money, cap, we got to play careful—I want enough to buy some tobacco when we git through."

"Blacker'n all hell an' a pot besides," said a seaman coming below a short time later, "looks like we'll git it from the south'ard, sure—glass still goin' down, hey?"

"It'll hit in from east nor'east, an' I'll lay a fiver it will never blow to the s'uth'ard of that within half an hour after it starts," said one.

Texas was about to bet him, not being as familiar with the tricks of the circular storms, but he refrained, and the game proceeded. By ten o'clock a tremendous sea hove the light-ship upon her beam-ends. It was dead calm, not a sign of wind save the breeze made by the vessel's switching about.

The captain went on deck.

Forsberg was a sailor, and knew the laws of the sea. He knew that the tremendous lifting-swell which rolled in from the southeast was caused by some violent disturbance in the Stream, some whirling storm-center, and as his own barometer was falling fast he felt pretty certain that he was within the danger-zone.

A giant sea rose in the gloom, lifting high above the ship like a monstrous hill. Suddenly it top-lifted higher, burst, and rolled a fathom deep in foam, a huge comber. It struck the light-ship and burst over her amidships with a thunderous smash, the foam washing knee-deep across the deck.

Nothing is more uncanny than the huge bursting sea rolling silently in the night without any wind to speak of. The silence, the quiet stillness of the atmosphere, the blackness, all combine to make things look ugly for the mariner who has to wait for the coming fracas, unaware from which direction it will strike him and only knowing that it will hit him hard.

Going forward to the chain cables, the captain looked over the bows and watched them leading down into the black water below, their surging making a fiery trail which flared and faded as the light-ship rose and fell. She was lying to a good scope, and with huge mushrooms bridled and sunk deep into the hard sand of the shoals. No power could pull those masses of iron out of the ground, the only thing to watch was the surging cables which, although of heavy metal two inches in diameter, might possibly break under the fling of a hundred tons snapping on them. The great chains led below, passing through

spring stoppers and gear which was made to ease the strain and make it elastic as the ingenuity of man could devise.

There was little to concern the master, so he turned away.

"Keep a lookout ahead to the north-'ard," he said to the man on watch, "an' if you see anything coming down the coast let me know."

Then he went aft again and soon joined the rest below.

Within ten minutes it came roaring out from the eastward, the squalls striking with the peculiar violence which characterizes the central portion of the cyclone, and the light-ship, with everything snug and fast, reared her buoyant nose skyward and plunged into the smother, her lights burning steadily to warn the hard-pressed seaman of the fate which awaited him upon the deadly sands of the Frying Pan under his lee.

The motion aboard was too much for even the hardy men, inured by years of habit, to continue their game. The vessel flung skyward one moment and then plunged downward with such frightful velocity that even the men had to make fast to keep from being killed by being thrown about the cabin. The deep dull roar of the squalls rushing past and the tumultuous thunder of the driven seas made a ponderous, sonorous roar and conversation had to be carried on in yells and howls between men only a few feet distant.

But they were a cheerful lot, these seamen, and they placed their confidence in a perfectly able ship and many fathoms of good iron. Outside the roar and motion they felt as comfortable as one would ashore. Some jammed themselves into bunks and slept in spite of the wild flings, while others, ready for turning out, smoked on, and howled remarks at each other now and then.

"Blowing one hundred miles an hour —an' the glass still falling," said Texas, coming below a little after one o'clock.

The man on lookout had to be lashed atop of the forward lantern-house in the lee of the mast, so heavy was the flying water and so violent was the throw of the plunging ship.

The captain called his mate again and examined the cables where they ran out through the pipes, the stoppers squirting brine at each plunge. The savage set upon them when she swung back with the sea made him nervous, the crash of the straining iron, grinding, rasping, surging with the strain of hundreds of tons thrown suddenly upon it was enough to frighten an ordinary seaman.

But these men of the light-ship knew that the immense anchors would hold, knew that the only thing they had to dread was the snapping of the giant chain.

The booming thunder of the hurricane grew louder overhead. Squall after squall hurled upon them, and the shifting lift of the sea told plainly that they were nearing the center of the gigantic whirl. The compass showed the ship's head pointing almost due east, but the lunging rush of the sea was working to the northward.

"Aye tank Aye should have dat big sheet-anchor out," said Forsberg. "It looks like we might need him—what?"

"We can't drop anything like an anchor now," said the mate. "Why, man, if we loosened anything we'd have it take charge in about four seconds. Hang on and wait—that's all we kin do. She'll hold—— Whew!"

The exclamation was caused by the ship dropping swiftly down into a watery chasm. It left the inner man in the air, apparently, and the gasp for breath was involuntary.

"She takes one hundred an' fifty fadoms. I wish we could give her fifty more to hang on to—what?" roared the master.

"She'll hold," bawled the mate, hanging on and eying the chain calmly. They made their way on deck and were followed by some of the men. The master crept along the shelter of the lantern-houses and managed to get the lee of the foremast. The water was knee-deep in the alleyways, and it was cold. The foam flared white against the black flood, and the phosphorescence shone now and again.

An appalling rush of wind struck him

as he gained the top of the lantern-house nearly taking him bodily from his grip and hurling out into the roaring blackness. It made him gasp for a moment. The flying spume struck him fairly in the face, hurled along as if blown from a gun. He could see nothing.

Behind the mast a figure crouched, and he stumbled over it before he made it out for the man on watch. Together they tried to peer out into the cyclone.

"Seen anything—any lights—ships?" bawled the master, bending down to the man's ear.

"Nar-r-r-s'r," came the reply, faint and weak in the wind.

Above them the lights burned brightly and cast a glow into the roaring chaos about. The lights of the light-ship would stand the motion. They would stand almost anything, for they had been made for that purpose. Their heavy lenses were not high enough to cause instability to the small vessel, their size was nothing to affect her, save, perhaps, to make a little more resistance to the blast which tore past them, streaming away as though the whole atmosphere of the world was pressing behind.

The squalls came quickly, the spaces between them shorter, as is the case in the center of circular storms. A howling, shrieking squall struck them and died away, the roar ebbing to a drone and the thunderous rushing of the seas sounding more and more apparent.

Then the wind died away, died out.

"Aye tank we hit de middle of him," said Forsberg. "Now take a look around before it comes out from de westward—I go look at de glass."

It was low, way down, lower than he had ever seen it, and the air was warm with a tropical feeling, a heaviness which oppressed, and but a little while before it had been cold winter.

"All hands!" called the master, as he sprang on deck. "Now, den, get de stoppers off de cables; gi'e her de chain, gi'e it to her, bullies; gi'e her plenty, bullies—fifty fadom more!"

The rattle and smash of the paying-out cables cut him short. The gear had to be handled carefully, for although there was no wind, the ship surged mightily with the wild sea which rose about her and ran irregularly.

"Down to the last link, sir," came the cry, after a little while.

"Shut her down," came the order.

And the cables were fast again, the ship getting a tremendous scope for the shoal water, a scope which she would never lift clear of the sand in an ordinary gale; but it was a wild night, and the men knew there was something more coming. It was far from over, the quiet center would hardly last over twenty-five or thirty minutes at the most.

Texas, the mate, and Forsberg stood upon the forward lantern-house and waited. Far away to the westward a dull reverberating thunder sounded faintly upon the ears of the listening men.

"She's coming," said Texas.

"It's the outer shoal—hear her roar—Lord, what an awful sea's fallin' on her to-night!" said the mate.

A dull snore alongside drowned the distant thunder of the breakers, a huge sea broke and rolled white in the night, its top flaring ghostly. Far away on all sides came the dull rumble of breaking seas, the thunderous rush and snore. The plunging of the ship and the noise of straining gear made so much sound that the night seemed filled with noise, and yet above it all and beyond it, as though coming from the vast void of sea and sky, the far-reaching murmur of some mighty force smote the ear. It was low at first, low like the undertone of a mighty orchestra—then it died away and the rush of a sea alongside filled the gloom with its hiss. Above them the squall-clouds seemed to thin out, showing a varying outline of deeper tints of blackness.

"How's she headin'? asked the master.

"Sout' three quarters east," called a man at the binnacle.

"Well, we'll get it in a minit—stand by an' close up everything."

There was a light puff of wind, not enough to put out a lamp.

"West, nor'west, sir, she's coming," said Texas, gazing out into the blackness.

The low murmur was heard again. It seemed like a vast eolian harp-string vibrating under a strain. Another puff of wind, this time unmistakably from the westward, and the light-ship began to swing to it. A sea, lifting high in the night alongside, burst with its combing top full into the waist, falling as though dropped from a great height.

The smashing crash of the blow dulled the ears of the men and they gazed down at the decks filled with the foam.

Then a sharp spurt of wind struck them, died away again for an instant, and then with a mighty rush and whirl, out it came from the opposite direction it had been blowing but half an hour before. The center was passing and they were on its edge.

Forsberg and the rest clung to the rail of the lantern-house. The blast seemed to come like a sudden blow, as from something solid. The light-ship laid her length down into the sea and went broadside away from the weight of it until the cables brought her up. The lee-deck was under water, and for an instant it looked as though her lanterns would be driven into the surge alongside. The straining cables straightened her out and swung her head to; and then, with nose lifting high in the air to each driving sea, she held straight into it, the flying water driven by the hurricane smothering her in a storm of white.

For a few minutes she plunged and rolled with the uncertain turmoil of rolling hills, and then the steady sea from the wind began to come down on her, lifting her and dropping her regularly, the motion becoming greater and greater as the sea took on its momentum from the squalls.

The light-ship had been tailing to her cables from the eastward and the sudden shift had caused one of them to ease, the weight of the whole fabric coming upon the port chain. A particularly ugly cross-sea dropped her down and swung her head off, putting an extraordinary effort upon the iron. A sudden smash from the other side threw her head hard on the port cable and the chain parted.

The peculiar tremble, the quivering shock, told the trained men plainly what had happened. They knew at once that the cable had parted, and the master ducked behind the mast to peer ahead.

"Port cable—gone—parted—hawse—pipe," came the cry, faintly as from a great distance, one of the men aft feeling it, coming up to give the news.

"She'll—stand—hang—other cable—holding," roared Texas, straining toward the master in the lee of the foremast.

The wind seemed to sweep his oilskins from him and the tails of his coat slapped against the form of the mate. Still the wind was dead ahead and they knew the sea would come from that direction. She was still holding, still plunging to the starboard cable.

A mighty wall of water rose ahead, its top roaring white in the blackness. High above them the foaming wall showed, looking like a hill with a snowy top. She rose to it, smashing her head through the rolling mass of comber, and as she did so there was a distinct jar, a trembling. Then her head swung to the eastward. She had gone adrift, parted her last chain and was going astern into the night.

A shrill calling rose for a moment above the hurricane, blending with the chaos of sound, but unintelligible. Forsberg with his men fought their way down from the lantern-house, struggling, crawling, half-swimming along the flooded deck, until they made the after companionway.

"Get—canvas—on her — after — try sail," came the order and the word was passed, the men below having come on deck at the first shock of the parting.

It was necessary to get the ship hove to. She was light on the water and would ride it down head on, but if she fell off in the trough of the sea, she might meet an accident, for it was rolling very heavy, a terrible quick running, ugly sea which broke suddenly. She would go clear of the shoal and there was no great danger, only she

must be got under control to ride it out in the open.

All hands worked desperately for half an hour and finally got the trysail upon her, bringing her head to and letting her ride easily. She was buoyant as a cork, and there was nothing more to do save get a bit of canvas ready forward to clap on the moment the squalls let up enough to do so.

Meanwhile she was going fast to the eastward into the Gulf Stream. Forsberg lowered down her lanterns, and she went off into the blackness of the storm without lights.

Just before daybreak the Malling liner, *Cræsus*, was plunging headlong into a living hill of water in the Stream. She was under full power, but such was the strength of the squalls that she had barely steering-way on her, the seas smashing upon her, tearing up her upper works and flooding her decks while a man holding to the bridge rail tried to peer into the furious whirl ahead, to steer right into the face of it.

Everything was gone from her deck except the heaviest material, and her lights had long been submerged under the weight of tremendous seas. She was just a giant black shadow, darker than the surrounding gloom upon which the furious seas burst and smothered, making a whiter outline about her sinister hull. Over streamed the masses of spray and drift, and below in her engine-room the whole force were on watch, trying to hold her up to it and keep the steam-pressure to the limit.

Her wheel raced and ran as she plunged headlong, and the men were sorely put to it in their endeavor to keep it from getting away from them entirely.

Her captain had just gone below for a few minutes rest and a bite of something to eat, for he had stood sixteen hours heading into a hurricane and needed refreshment.

The man on the bridge was "Hammerhead Jones," second mate, and now entirely in charge during the captain's absence.

Jones was well enough known on the coast. He had been master, and mate of several ships, had on one or two occasions given up the sea. He had also gone as chief in the engine-room of two vessels, and was familiar with the heaviest weather found in the Gulf Stream. He had now turned up as second mate of the freighter, having tried ship brokerage and made a failure of it.

Hammerhead Jones, so-called because of certain stubborn traits of character, had stood the morning watch, relieving the first officer who had retired to get the sleep the law allows to even a hard-pressed seaman.

The fury of the hurricane had prevented him lighting the side lights. Even had he lit them they would have gone out almost instantly, for the *Cræsus* was plunging headlong into a veritable mountain; and first one and then the other light-house, built upon her main-deck, was submerged under the roaring flood. She was an old freighter and she had no electric plant nor side lights upon her bridge.

In the deep blackness ahead the officer seemed to see a darker shadow. Then a white-topped comber rose straight in front of him and on its crest he thought he saw something solid, something blacker than the inky night, showing for an instant upon and against the whiteness of the surge.

Then the feeling, the peculiar instinctive feeling that there was something wrong came upon him. Many old sailors will tell you of this peculiar intuition, this strange dread of something the senses do not divulge. He pulled himself along the bridge rail and toward the pilot-house, where the rattling clank of the steam steering-gear told of the watchful helmsman trying to hold her to a swinging lubber's mark. Just as he reached there he dashed the water from his eyes again and peered for an instant through the blackness.

"Hard a port — hard — port — hard over!" he yelled, his voice rising to that shrill screech of a man who knows everything depends upon it reaching its destination in a fraction of a second.

The sound reached the ears of the helmsman who, intent upon his card, heard the many noises of the hurricane,

rumbling, roaring, rushing, as one hears the deep tones of an immense orchestra and distinguishes them from the shrill notes of the smaller instruments. The cry came to him, faint, distant yet distinct and with the terrible meaning conveyed by the intonation.

The rattling smash of the steam gear crashed in the confined recesses of the house, while above the din came his answer, "Aye, aye, sir."

The wheel was hard over in an instant and the swinging compass-card showed the *Crœsus* was turning her head away from the blast. The next instant she swung off, swung well away and, the full force of the hurricane striking her upon her long side, she heeled over and sank her lee decks under, the wind holding her down and the seas smashing clear over her.

The captain, feeling the changing direction, the changing motion, knew at once something was wrong, and made his way on deck, struggling with his oilskins and wondering what had caused her to fall off so quickly with the engines under full headway.

In the vast space of the engine-room, lighted by many lamps, the dull rumble of the straining elements and the low roar of the boilers giving the engine steam, the great volume of sound caused by the moving rods, shafting and other complicated machinery all doing its work, made an undertone above which the slightest sound from outside struck the ear in a most peculiar manner.

The men gazed and waited, while Jones upon the bridge, steering the ship and acting as her brain, held his breath as the shadow of the light-ship bore down upon him. To him it was many minutes, almost hours, before that faint shadow in the storm ahead now came down abreast of him.

He wondered if he had done the right thing, thought if he had kept on how it would have been, but he knew the law of the sea, and that was to get clear of a sailing ship bearing down with right of way. He had done the best he could. He was certain it was a sailing ship for she had no masthead light, nothing to show that she might be a steamer in distress or otherwise. He had to give way or take the consequences of violating the law, but under all there was a feeling that he would have done better if he had held on and not seen her.

A sharp cry attracted his attention, and he felt the hand of the captain tugging at his arm where he held to the bridge rail.

The form of the light-ship bore quickly upon them. It passed the bow of the *Crœsus,* passed alongside—then a mighty sea raised her far above the great freighter, swung her high in the air, and she smashed down with irresistible force right against the midship section, right upon the engine-room bulkhead.

The force of the blow was so terrific that Jones was thrown across the bridge, landing with the captain against the lee rail, which gave way under the combined shock; and the only thing that saved them both from going into the sea was the second officer's presence of mind and strong hand-grip.

The engine-room force met their death as men meet it sometimes. The lighted room, the giant engines moving with regular rhythm, the low roar of the boilers doing their work, gave place in a moment to a crashing vortex in which iron arms whirled in inky darkness and the thunderous roar of mighty fabrics in quick disintegration took place.

The *Crœsus,* lay her long black side under the storm-torn sea and settled slowly, while the waters poured into the gaping hole made by the blow of the light-ship.

No boat could live a moment in that sea, no one could do anything. Those who could made their way on deck got there in time to meet the fury of the hurricane which swept them to their end quickly and without desperate delay. Jones knew the truth at once. So also did his captain, and they struggled aft over the fiddly, running, crawling and fighting furiously for hand-grips.

The hull of the light-ship showed farther aft, grinding alongside. The

Crœsus was already settling by the head; and as Jones turned at a tremendous shock, he saw the white of flying water going solidly over the pilot-house.

Men shrieked in the blackness to windward. A light flared for a moment upon the light-ship and then vanished, but in that moment Jones recognized her, knew at once what vessel it was which had caused the destruction, and a hot fury swelled within him as he saw she was without lights. A light-ship without lights upon that storm-swept sea—it was murder, nothing but pure murder; and gasping, panting, struggling along, half-under water now, he called out every curse he could think of at the black shadow.

Suddenly the sea hove her again with a tremendous shock against the hull of the sinking freighter. She was close to Jones, so close he thought he saw the forms of men in the blackness along her rail. She crashed her way into the vitals of the steamer and he found himself right against her.

Then an idea flashed into his brain, the idea of a drowning man catching at a straw.

He made a great effort and got a grip of some dangling wreckage hanging from the light-ship. Then he drew himself upon her deck.

Just then a huge sea caught her and flung her astern, tearing and rending, but doing no damage to her strong hull below the danger-line. She had gone clear.

In the gray light of the stormy morning, Forsberg found the body of a man lying in the flooded alleyway of his half-wrecked vessel. He carried him below, and by the use of strong waters he soon had him in a condition to talk, but when he heard the trend of his language he was almost sorry he had taken the trouble to bring the fellow to.

As the morning wore on the weight of the blow subsided, the storm-center passing northward along the stream, but the heavy sea continued and kept all hands busy keeping the gaining water to a point below that of imminent danger. The blow she struck the freighter had injured her badly, but owing to the manner she had landed it, right upon her stern frames, which being identical with those of her bow, her build being that of a giant whale-boat, she had suffered no fatal injury. They had no difficulty in keeping her afloat and her head to the sea.

She lay hove to all that day, and toward night they put more canvas on her and headed her due west to raise the coast.

Five days later she came dragging herself into Savannah, and the revenue cutters, who had been sent out in search for her, were notified at the earliest opportunity that she had been found. Her appearance cleared the missing of the *Crœsus*, for Jones told his tale.

The squarehead was discharged and Texas and the second mate were transferred to outlying lights, where the solace of the American game of poker is of no consequence whatever to any one save those immediately concerned.

Jones, the sole survivor of the *Crœsus* disaster, made good his explanation of the collision. He was exonerated from all blame—but he had lost his ship. And a sailor who has lost his ship—no matter under what conditions—is a sailor without a job, a sailor without a living.

"Men who fail—do so from hard luck, so they say, and men who succeed do so from their manifest ability to accomplish their object," said the commissioner, with a grin, as he handed Jones back his license. "Perhaps you've heard something of this sort before, hey. Well, the world is very cynical—yes, the world is ready to believe anything the one who succeeds says; they grin a little at the hard-luck yarn."

"Thanks," said Jones, without emotion, taking his license, "I'm not quite through with the sea yet. Perhaps you'll have something to say to me again."

"Yes, yes, but take my advice," laughed the commissioner. "Don't lose too many ships."

The Devil's Pulpit

By H. B. Marriott Watson

Author of "Hurricane Island," "Twisted Eglantine," "Captain Fortune," "Galloping Dick," Etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

ARIADNE.

I COULD not make out the separate figures of my captors, who were nothing but a moving knot in the gloom, and I held my tongue, being more anxious to get my breath than to enter into altercations with the mutineers. I had walked into a trap. Of that I was certain. Why else was this strong party —five, at least, I reckoned—waiting in ambush?

"Let us get a move on. We'll be too late for the job at this rate," said Clifford in a businesslike way which seemed unlike him.

My arms were tied behind me, and a knee was jerked into the small of my back, so that I suddenly had the alternative of going forward or over. I chose the former, and in comparative silence we penetrated the fastnesses of the forest. Five minutes later we had reached the mutineers' camp. In the shelter of the bushes and scrub that grew low under the larger trees some huts had been constructed, and I was hurried into one of these before which a fire was blazing merrily.

Stakes were driven into the earth in four separate places, and to these I was pegged out by hands and ankles, so that I was unable to do more than move my body an inch or so any way. This operation was superintended by Crashaw, who eyed me the while with the cold eye of a butcher contemplating his victim. In the distance I heard Clifford and Byrne talking.

"How goes the enemy? Well, that makes it an hour, doesn't it? We must be on time."

"That back way," said Byrne's voice, "was a great find."

"Immense," agreed the other. "Barney, we'll have a tot to celebrate this. Where did we put that bottle of Oh-be-joyful?"

There came to me the noise of some one groping among the grasses, for the camp was wonderfully silent. I marveled. The mutineers were on the eve of some venture, just as we were. What could that be but an attack on the zariba? And how was it that they knew about the back way to the Pulpit? I was puzzled even while I chafed at my impotence. I heard some one approach me.

"How's the brigadier?" inquired Clifford cheerily. "Glad that wasn't me you hit. I hoped it was Crashaw. He's getting a bit lofty, and wants his hair combed." He sat down near me and bit off the end of a cigar. "You owe me one, Herapath," he resumed. "Don't be sulky. They wanted something with boiling oil in it, but I fell on my knees and begged your life. 'No,' says I, 'he's a philosopher as well as a bruiser. Let him philosophize; give him time to meditate on the vanity of human wishes. Slow rises worth by poverty depressed,' says I. 'Peg him out for a period of prayer and recreation. He hasn't had a holiday for a long time, and has earned one, he has.'"

He laughed, and held the match he

This story began in the July issue. The back numbers can be obtained from any newsdealer. Price fifteen cents each.

had struck so that he could see my face.

"'You are my honey—honeysuckle. I am your bee,'" he sang briskly. "You shouldn't orter have done it, Herapath, at your time of life. I put it to you anxiously; was the gal worth it?"

"She is here?" I asked quickly, breaking silence for the first time.

He lighted his cigar, so that the match flamed red on his brick-red face. "We've fixed up the little angel for a spell like you," he said indifferently. "Unfortunately, I can't afford to pay her the attentions proper to her rank and beauty; but a time will come, and once aboard the lugger——"

He made a gesture which drove me to madness. I strained at my ropes, and they bit deep into me.

"Comfortable?" he asked mercilessly. "Both doing well? That's all right. Nothing would have pleased me more than to have had a nice little chat with you, Mr. Herapath, but unfortunately I haven't time. I've an appointment. But I'll drop in some day soon, and we'll fix it up."

"Look here, man," I said, restraining myself. "Do you mean me to believe that Miss Sylvester is roped down in the same way as I am?"

"Allee same you," he nodded. "You see, we're off on an important engagement, old cock, and we can't afford to leave our guests exposed to risks. So we've put cruel gyves about her little tootsies, and——"

I strained fiercely. "Steady on!" he urged. "Somehow, I thought we should fetch you by taking the lady. Neat scheme, wasn't it? Mine."

The trap was manifest enough now, and yet how could I have avoided it in the circumstances. I growled an oath under my breath.

"Who's that swearing?" said the insufferable Clifford sternly. "I won't have it in this camp."

Byrne joined him now in the firelight, and the two contemplated me.

"It's a mighty fine compliment to you, Herapath," said the newcomer. "You can comfort yourself with that. We wouldn't have taken the trouble for any of the others. We laid for you."

"Smoke that all night," said Clifford serenely. "It will be as soothing as a fragrant havana. Incidentally, Barney, this is no great shakes."

"Well, whose fault is it?" asked the Irishman. "You looked after the food and the liquor and all."

"Talking of food and liquor," said Clifford, addressing me, "we expected you to make a raid on the cove this afternoon. But you hadn't the pluck, V. C."

It crossed my mind as I lay there helpless and hopeless that they seemed very well informed of our intentions. Davenant had urged me to make this very expedition. Clifford rose.

"We've got half an hour yet," he remarked as he strolled off, and I was left to the misery of my own reflections.

The garrison of our camp was not anticipating an assault, and it was now the weaker by my absence. Moreover, Miss Sylvester lay close by, probably in the neighboring hut, and in the shameful bondage which held me. These were two reasons why I should rack my brains and my muscles in an attempt to get free. But I saw no way, and in sheer despair I desisted, my mind a futile pulp of vague thought, my body full of aches and pains. Presently the voices of the mutineers beyond the fire reached me.

"Don't swipe any more, Jacko. We mustn't keep Davenant waiting."

Keep Davenant waiting! The words burned in my head.

"Oh, let him fry cheese," said Clifford. "I'm running this show. He's not got nerve enough."

I cannot tell you my sensations as these words fell on my ear. It was as if a whole house had tumbled in ruins on me, as if the world had, by a dreadful accident, suddenly turned topsy-turvy. And then, as my mind, under the impulse of its amazement, played rapidly on the situation, a flood of light swept quickly over the past, illuminating all the dark places. I understood. Davenant was a traitor!

Little things, big things, things of no

import, which have no place in this narrative, things of great moment, which had been grievously misinterpreted, all became invested with new significance now. Clifford had been the open mutineer; Davenant was the silent plotter.

From the very first I seemed now to trace Davenant's guilt. It was he who had apparently made the mistake about the island; it was he who had endeavored, against my desire, to steam away and thus maroon Halliday and Wade and Marley, whose presence was dangerous to the plot. It was he once more who had striven with me on the ledge and tried to throw me over the precipice. There came back to my memory those tumbling rocks which so nearly committed me to death. It was he who had wished to send me to the cove, where, no doubt, a posse had been awaiting me.

It was he—ah! it was at his instance the Frenchman and Miss Sylvester had been despatched out of the camp to safe quarters. Safe quarters! I could recall the picture of Davenant and Clifford conferring outside the camp, while we deluded fools looked on in placid ignorance of what they were plotting.

And now Davenant had communicated to them our intentions, and they were to assault the camp by arrangement with him. And I not there! There was bitter gall in the thought. We had all played the fool, but most of all I, who was doubly in their toils. Miss Sylvester had been the bait for me.

I came out of this fierce mood of despair, to hear the voices round the fire louder.

"I'll play you for the girl, Jacko."

Clifford had the cards. "I'll cut, toss, or fight you for her, Barney, my boy," said the ruffian. "She's a knock-out. She's a daisy, she's a ducky, she's a lamb. Look here, Barney, let's draw for the queen of hearts—that's her—come along. We've got ten minutes. Pay the bottle round, my boys.

'Bacchus only drinks like me
When Ariadne's coy.'

But when the time comes I'll forswear sack. Ace of hearts, by thunder!"

It was diabolical to have to lie there, and listen to these vile exchanges. There was something like a menace in the conversation which made my blood sour, but I was as helpless as a log.

"That's warmer, Jacko," said Byrne. "Knave!"

The drawing went on, punctuated with coarse jokes, oaths, and innuendos, until at last Clifford gave vent to a laugh.

"Great Cæsar! She wasn't in the pack. Now, how the devil did that happen?"

"Well, it was my draw, Jacko," said the Irishman, "and so I claim the stakes."

"See you canned first," exclaimed Clifford. "Let's try again. Hello! Is it time, Crashaw?"

A third voice joined the others, and I heard no more for a time, since their tone dropped lower. But presently Clifford called out:

"All right. Settle that. I'll have a look at Hercules."

He came over to me, entering the open side of the hut.

"Samson, I've come to say ta-ta," he said, "and I've got a bit of parting advice for you. 'Ware woman as you 'ware wine. I dare say Delilah was a damned handsome jade, but she wasn't worth it; and here's a word in your ear." He stooped and whispered, and in my black rage I could have torn him in pieces. He drew back, as I struggled. "Nebuchadnezzar! Here's a regular Gaza!" he said breezily. "*Tatcho,* my elegant warrior; which sounds like a sneeze, but being interpreted is 'Keep your hair on.' So long!"

His retiring steps lessened in my ear as I slowly drilled myself to a more level temper. It was difficult, but I grew master of myself, knowing that I could do nothing by sheer blind fury. The camp sank into deep silence, and only the distant noise of the breaking sea reached me. I set myself to earnest and desperate thought. I reviewed the past with all its misappre-

hensions and blunders: I faced the future with all its doubts and darkness.

It seemed months since Wade and I had started with such light hearts from Southampton that misty evening; and Wade was in his island grave, and here was I stretched out like a criminal of old to die on the rack of starvation or maybe by a more merciful pistol-shot. I guessed that they had no use for me, and I wondered why they had so far spared my life.

I have since come to the conclusion that my knowledge of engineering had some influence with these scoundrels. I was to be reserved for eventual disposal, but in the meantime there was the *Duncannon* to work, and not one of the mutineers had any knowledge of machinery.

At any rate, I had been spared so far, but it was as bitter as death to lie there hour after hour, and watch the stars go past, and the heavens cloud and clear, and the pines rustle in the sea winds, and the flames leap on the rough rafters of the hut. I fought long and intermittently, raising first one shoulder and then the other a little way off the ground. But all my efforts were in vain. My bonds and the deeply driven stakes held. I remained a prisoner, ignominiously secure to the earth.

My thoughts, moving in this sickness of the mind, reverted to Davenant, the sleek traitor, the doubly damned, and I felt that if it were possible I would gladly have pulled over the pillars of Gaza to which Clifford had alluded on his treacherous head, even were I involved in the ruin myself. And then again Miss Sylvester—what was to be her fate?

In those watches of that terrible night, I realized my heart, and I knew that I loved her. Yet I who would have laid down my life at her feet was unable to put one finger to her assistance.

Orion lay far in the west. I knew the dawn was near—and suddenly I heard a cry, a cry of fear, of mingled terror and supplication; and it was the cry of a woman. There was but one woman on that island of despair. I lifted my head and listened, every pulse in my body seeming to have stopped.

The cry was raised again, and it appeared to sound near me. Was it Ariadne crying for help and crying in vain? A madness seized me, greater than I had ever before experienced. I put forth all my strength; the muscles in my arms stiffened into lumps of iron; the blood poured into my face and brain. And still I wrenched—and all of a sudden the stake on my right gave.

With a repetition of the effort it came slowly out of the earth in which it had been buried. My arm was free.

With tremulous fingers I sought my pocket, and found there the knife which in their certainty of my secure fastening they had not troubled to remove. With it I shore through the ropes that bound my left arm, and then repeated the operation on the ropes that held my feet. I cut away the wreckage and rose to my feet, a man once more, a man with a giant's strength because of the thoughts that moved like flame within him. I caught up the stake, a heavy billet of wood, damp from the earth, and I stalked out into the light of the fire.

The cry had come from my right, and I directed my steps thither, to a hut like my own such as I had already noticed. I reached the entrance, on which the light of the great fire flickered weakly, and in the flashes I made out the figure of a woman on the ground and that of a man who stood over her. A low cry went to my heart. I stepped in and raised my billet.

The next moment the sound of my feet had come to his ears, and he turned, and a revolver belched in my face. The bullet whistled past my neck, and then my billet fell. It fell on his right arm, and broke it like a cracked stick above the elbow. He shrieked with the pain, and made a rush for the back of the hut.

Between the flashing and dropping of the firelight I had glimpses of him. He dashed from wall to wall, his arm hanging helpless, his hand still nervelessly grasping the revolver. He ran about

squealing like a rat, and he trampled on the girl as he ran. I shouted, and, stimulated possibly by his panic, he suddenly put out his left hand and seized the weapon from the dead right hand. It was leveled and he was firing as I raised my billet again; and he dodged.

He pitched sideways with no cry; only with a little dropping bump into the darkness of an unlit corner of the hut. My stake had taken him behind the ear, and he had died immediately.

There lay the man with the ugly dead face that we had commented on early in the voyage, and the face that pressed the cold earth in that rough shelter was really a dead face now. For it was Heaven, the steward, who had been a confederate of the mutineers from the outset.

Ariadne Sylvester was whimpering at my knee.

"Oh, save me! Where is that man? He frightened me. Oh, he was terrible! I knew you would come. I knew —where is that man?"

"He will frighten you no more—never any more," I said, comforting her.

"Is he dead? Have you killed him?" she asked, in an awe-struck voice. She was still trembling, clinging to me. "I'm glad he's dead," she breathed, and then, her face panting up to mine, she collapsed on my breast.

I let her come to of her own accord, having carried her away from that hut into the shelter of the wood. She emerged from her swoon with a long sigh, and the first thing she saw was my face above hers, watching it with anxiety. The stars were paling before the shafts of the new dawn, and her face was dimly luminous. An expression which was not a smile, but mere content, passed over it.

"I'm glad it's you," she whispered.

I pressed the arm which was supporting her closer.

"Do you remember when we walked this way once?" she asked, after a pause, and was silent as if she puzzled to herself.

"Don't bother to talk," I told her soothingly.

"No: no. I must," she said, almost fretfully. "I wanted to tell you. I remember walking," she said slowly, "and it was night; and those men were about; and you—yes, you struck one as you struck——" She shuddered and ceased. "Why do you hold me?" she asked.

"You fainted," I said. "But you're better now."

"Is that all?" she asked, in the slow voice she had been employing. "Is that all?"

I drew her nearer. I thought she wandered, and I was afraid. Had the strain been too much for her brain?

"Why do you press me like that?" she asked again slowly.

"Because—oh, because I love you," I cried, forgetful of all else save that I did love her and that she was in my arms.

She put out hers toward me. "That's what I wanted to say," she whispered, pulling my face down to hers. "It was on that night it happened. I loved you then. It was then. I can see it now. For I felt—I feel it more now; and that's how I know it. Oh, I'm glad you love me."

I kissed her lips softly, gently, and she sighed her soul toward me. Whatever might be the fate of that hapless expedition, I at the least was indebted to it for more than life.

I laid her down on her ferny bed, and stood up, to regain the mastery of myself. About me spread the wonder of the dawn, which grew sensibly into morning. The grayness was slipping from a sky that was flushed with gold and rose toward the orient, and the sea alone was drab, darkly drab from the opacity of its depths. The firs and the palms that surrounded me like upstanding giants whistled in the breeze that blew off the water. And out of the innumerable crepitations of the twilight in the undergrowth sprang the strident but triumphant voice of a paroquet.

I turned my eyes again seaward, and absorbed the rare fine air in what was no less than an ecstasy of mind and emotion. I was like one taken out of the rough circumstances of this rude

world, and rapt to heaven. I was Nympholept, and behold at my feet, recumbent, silent, and with wet lashes over deep and tired eyes was Ariadne of the Island, yet no desolate Ariadne derelict and tear-stained, but one blossoming, even through her terrors, into the flower of full life and happiness. I looked down on her; and she stirred and looked up at me.

"You must rest, sweetheart," said I.

"I will go with you," she whispered.

"No," said I. "I have stern work. You have seen enough, too much. You must rest."

"What will you do?" she asked anxiously. "You won't——"

"I must visit our camp and see what has happened. I fear the worst. I have discovered many things during this terrible night, and I am afraid. Ah, but I have discovered a wonderful thing, too!" I cried, stooping to her and gathering her in my arms. I kissed her damp eyes, and she crept closer.

I stood up and faced the dawn which came with growing beauty. Away on the broad and neutral plain of the sea was a dark smudge visible against the gradual light of the east. I stooped again and picked up Ariadne in my arms, and carried her deeper into the recesses of the opening in which we had sought refuge. It was like a small gravel-quarry, in the side of the slope on which we were, and was grown plentifully with bushes.

"You are safe here, sweet," I told her. "I will return very shortly."

"But you will not—you will take care," she pleaded, clinging to me.

I felt in my coat pocket for the knife and gave it to her. As I did so something tumbled out of the pocket to the ground. But I was in too great a flutter to give heed to this.

"I will take care, child," I said. "And see, I leave you my knife. No one will seek you here, but this will give you a greater sense of security."

I comforted her fears, kissed her, disengaged myself from her arms, and fled.

From the quarrylike refuge I made straight for the mutineers' camp. I was without weapons of any kind, and I remembered the revolver of the wretched Heaven. The light of the morning was full on the hillside when I reached it, and the fire was dying into its embers, as if it had been a wild thing that feared the day and crept to earth. There was no sign of life anywhere, but the light had found its way into the recesses of the hut, and a shaft played weakly on the dead man's face with its glassy eyes. With a shudder I withdrew the revolver from his stiff fingers, and secured the cartridges also. Then, thus armed for emergencies, I set out for the stream.

When I had crossed it I approached our old camp with caution, for I did not know what might have happened. But I saw nothing to alarm me, and so noiselessly reached the barricade; no one was visible, and the fires here also were failing. I climbed the brushwood, revolver in hand, but was challenged by none. It was as the camp of the dead. Presently I noticed the body of a man lying in an awkward heap, with his face to the sky. I recognized him as one of the mutineers.

So our party had made a gallant fight for it. I could not doubt what had happened. Overpowered and surprised by the superior numbers of their opponents, Halliday and McLeod and Marley had fallen victims to the treachery of Davenant and the ferocity of the mutineers. I glanced up at the Pulpit, and my eyes detected some figures crawling on the cliff like flies. The treasure was in their hands. Sick at heart, I entered the central hut, which Halliday had occupied, and as I did so a groan reached me.

I looked carefully about me, and discovered Halliday securely fastened, hand and foot. I had only just time to release him, when in the farther corner I saw another figure. On examination this proved to be McLeod, similarly bound. I cut his bonds, also, and presently he had recovered enough to sit up, chafe himself, and tell his story. Poor Halliday was only half-conscious, owing to a severe blow on the head.

The mutineers, according to McLeod,

had made the assault at ten o'clock, just as the start was being made on the expedition. It came with dramatic unexpectedness, and the issue was never in doubt from the first. They had attacked from the stream, and seemed to be aware of our dispositions. McLeod seemed puzzled by this, but it was no source of wonder to me with my newly acquired knowledge of Davenant.

"We made a struggle for it," said McLeod sadly. "But it was a one-sided business. Halliday went down at once, and Collins and one of the stokers were shot. I didn't see Marley."

"I must look," I said, rising, for my own tale could wait. "Just give a glance at Halliday, while I search the camp."

I went out, and succeeded in discovering Marley, also bound, and swearing like a trooper. Near-by was Collins, with a bullet in his thigh, and a resigned expression on his face. Carter had been clubbed with a gun, and was secured like the others. The stoker had been shot dead. There was no sign of the Frenchman.

Thus our party was reduced to McLeod, Carter, and myself, able-bodied members, if we omit Marley, who was still something of an invalid, Halliday, and Collins, and the remaining hand, more or less hors de combat—in all, seven. I made out that the mutineers must at least count ten, ashore, to say nothing of those who had seized the ship. It was impossible for us to continue the unequal struggle; there was nothing before us but capitulation.

These thoughts were moodily in my head while we were mustering our little company of wounded and broken men. Luckily for himself Halliday had not realized his position, and was only half-alive.

"It's all up," said McLeod bitterly.

"I'd like to have just one more go at the blighters," said sick Marley, in his growling voice.

I was looking upward at the Pulpit, where the crawling flies were visible at work.

"No," said I. "You're off duty, and I command here. We're going."

A shrill cry, a squeal as of a bird that flew in the heaven overhead, came down to us. "What's that?" asked McLeod.

"Good God!" exclaimed Marley. "It's a man! It's——"

We held our breath: a fly had been detached from the height, and was falling. It struck the rocks below the Pulpit, just where Wade had fallen.

Marley's face was livid, and McLeod's natural red color went. Overhead the ruffians were fighting, maybe, in their greed of gold.

"Yes, I guess we'll go," said Marley, and turned away.

We got the remnant of the camp together, and started at once, going down by the stream, McLeod supporting Halliday, Collins tottering weakly, and Carter aiding the other wounded man.

"I guess they've done for that poor devil, Davenant," remarked Marley pensively.

"Not a bit of it," said I. "That's my story which you haven't heard; and it's another reason why we should reckon it's all up. Davenant's one of them. It was his treachery that caused the attack last night."

Amazement and incredulity followed on this statement, but I educed my arguments and my evidence, and they were silent. They did not even seem to have spirit left to stigmatize properly so base and cowardly and traitorous a scoundrel.

"The Frenchman's gone," said Marley feebly. "Is he in it, too?"

"No: I can't believe that," I said. "I should say he had run away. He's not a combatant, and he would not think he was called upon to fight for us."

We were bound for the creek where, it will be remembered, we had concealed our boat, and by the time our explanations had been exchanged we had almost reached it. A heavy gloom rested upon us. We were defeated, and had but a hopeless outlook. I was roughly projecting a plan in my mind, but that was by no means a solution of our difficulties. We had lost the treasure; we were a broken party, with several

wounded to embarrass us; and we had lost our line of retreat.

It remained only that we should find our way back to the cove in which we had landed at the outset, where we should at least be supplied with stores for the time being. After that—well, it would serve no good purpose to look too far ahead in that hour of despair.

We emerged from the undergrowth and came out upon the sandy margin of the little creek. As we did so a cry of amazement issued from Marley. I followed his gaze, and there in the offing, her twin black funnels throwing clouds astern, was a big steamer.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SIX PALMS.

We stood staring for some minutes in silence, for the surprise had been complete; and now I recalled that smudge of darkness I had seen earlier upon a neutral purple water. She must have been making a smart passage to have come up so soon. I judged she was distant about four miles, but she was drawing rapidly nearer. The appearance of the steamer opened up new avenues of thought, and our hearts lifted.

"God's providence! By George, it is!" exclaimed Marley.

McLeod, looking out under the hollow of his palms, said with characteristic caution:

"She won't be coming here; she'll be going about, and will pass four miles off, at least."

"We must signal at once," I said, and began to go about the creek for materials for a fire.

"The boat!" exclaimed Marley. "That's our ticket! They'll see a boat, if we put up a signal from it."

He scurried off to its hiding-place under Carter's guidance, while I quickly made calculations. It would take me fifteen minutes at least to reach the place in which I had left Ariadne; so that more than half an hour would necessarily elapse before the boat could start. I told McLeod exactly how things stood, and he agreed that it would be well to light a bonfire as an alternative signal to the steamer, even at the risk of attracting the attention of the mutineers.

"Get all aboard and ready to start directly I get back," I said, as I hurried away.

I ascended the stream by the left bank as speedily as I could, and when I paused to take breath it was upon a little elevation. The sweat was running down my face, for the sun, young as it was, streamed down roughly in those latitudes. I turned to get the sea wind, and saw the strange steamer still at her original distance from the island, and I wondered if she were going to anchor. Halliday's story of the chart, and the old man and his nephew in New Zealand returned to my memory. Was it possible, I asked myself, that here was a second expedition after the treasure?

Suddenly I heard the sound of angry voices, raised in shouting, which came from the hills, and I guessed that the mutineers were quarreling. I resumed my way with increased speed, resolved that nothing should come between me and my mission. Soon I recognized a palm-tree, and presently after I was in the recess among the bushes where my love awaited me. She sprang to me joyously.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come safely," she cried. "I was afraid——"

"Hush!" said I softly, holding her to me; for at that moment there was in my ears a noise.

It grew louder into a shouting; and then I heard the sound of feet heavily pounding on the earth, and the cracking of branches, as if a body was pushing through the undergrowth in haste.

We listened in silence; for the noise approached us. "We are safe," I whispered; she squeezed my arm as if to reassure me that she was not afraid.

The noise now came nearer, and I heard an oath. Some one was blundering down upon us. I drew my revolver and waited. There were more sounds from above, and then a voice:

"Damnation, and all for a cellar of bally empties!"

I knew that voice. It was Clifford's. What did it signify?

"Here, give me a shove, will you?" it proceeded. "My foot's caught." And there was muttering, and a crack, and another voice, the namby-pamby voice of Davenant, the traitor.

"It may be bad, but it will be worse if we don't take care. If they attract the attention of that vessel, we're done. Come along sharp."

"How the devil did they get loose?" grumbled Clifford, and the voices and the footsteps blundered away into the distance.

I was aware by now that my task was not so easy as it had promised to be. What exactly had happened was by no means clear, but I made a guess at it. The mutineers had been disappointed in the treasure; possibly it had not come up to their expectations; and now they were frightened by the strange vessel. Our party had got free, and, being in possession of a boat, might succeed in reaching the steamer. In that case the plight of the gang was desperate, and Davenant knew it. I could picture them all in a wild and frantic rush to the sea.

What was their object? They had their boat somewhere. They could either gain the shelter of the *Duncannon* and run for it, which was a counsel of despair, or they could try to prevent our party from communicating with the stranger. That was their more likely course, and explained this precipitate race for the sea. It also gave me pause. How was I to conduct Ariadne to the boat in safety, with those turbulent and unscruplous ruffians between?

I was sorely perplexed, but there was no time to pause. I must act at once; and so we began to hasten in the wake of the mutineers toward the creek, keeping a wary watch for the enemy.

We penetrated the undergrowth for ten minutes in silence, and at last came out on a rise which was bare of vegetation. The sun dazzled the eyes, and leaped in sparkling flashes on the sea below. The steamer in the offing caught my sight, and away to the left the *Duncannon* at anchor. A great clamor came back to us, for we were now not more than a quarter of a mile from the creek.

And as I looked I was astonished to see a boat put out from beneath the fringe of underwood that bounded my vision, and creep upon the face of the sea. The shouting increased in volume into a confused pandemonium of sound.

"What is it?" asked Ariadne, clutching me.

"It is our boat," said I, straining my eyes. "I can recognize Marley, and that must be Halliday in the bows. They've put out to avoid being attacked."

But still I could not understand the situation. Why were they not being pursued? I expected every moment to see the second boat leap after the first, but it did not, and I wondered if by chance the mutineers had their boat on a remoter part of the island; in which case the odds were in favor of our friends.

But as I gazed, fascinated, the uproar of fury did not abate on the beach, and now, in sweeping the purview with my glances, I was aware of a boat that crawled under the shadow of the bluff eastward. It was tenanted, as I could make out in the strong light, by one man only.

What did it mean? Was it possible that this was the mutineers' boat? At a loss what to make of it all, I gazed. The boat with the single occupant, having made the bluff, now turned and stood out to where the tramp lay, swinging at anchor. It must, then, be one of the mutineers, who had stolen his comrades' boat.

But now my thoughts came back to our position. We were left upon the island with the infuriated mutineers. I could not doubt that Marley and McLeod had waited for us as long as they had dared to do, and I could not blame them that they had pushed off. It was their manifest duty, as the capture of the boat by the gang would have been fatal to us all.

Besides, it had been arranged that

we should proceed to the cove. Thither, therefore, I must forthwith convey Ariadne, and to do so in safety obviously we must travel along the back-bone of the hills, away from the more open strand and seaboard. I explained to her what must be done.

"I trust you," she said, gazing at me earnestly, as a child might gaze at its father. "I know you can do anything. I am not afraid." Suddenly she put her hand to her bosom. "But see; I forgot. What is this? It fell out of your pocket when you gave me the knife. And I opened it. There is an old piece of paper in it."

I took it from her, and recognized now that this must be the hard object I had dug out of the cavern on the Pulpit. I turned it over, and scratched it with the knife. It was metal, and, it seemed, silver. It looked like an old silver snuff-box. The lid gaped, for dirt in the hinges would not allow of its being fully closed down again. I opened it, and drew out a discolored, moldy piece of paper.

It was not more than three inches long, but was almost as thick as cardboard, and had been doubled. I straightened it out curiously.

It was dulled with age and earth-stains, but there were certain marks upon it, discernible at once. On examining these closely I made out big, clumsy lettering, slantwise:

FOR JAKE

Below this the paper was black with grime, but a certain amount of loose dirt, which was its envelope, flaked to the touch of the fingers, and I could perceive that the lettering continued, still in that gross, uneducated hand.

Oved Headland 6 Palms N.N.W. 7 foot. Jan. 18.

Nothing was distinguishable after that, for all ended in a great blur. What did it signify? Ariadne at this moment uttered a little cry and drew my attention from the paper.

"Look!" she cried.

I glanced out to sea, and saw that our boat was some way off the island, but in the distance the strange steamer seemed very dim. Would they be able to attract her attention?

"What shall we do?" she asked, putting her arm in mine confidingly. "They have left us."

"Child, are you afraid?" I asked.

She shook her head, smiling. "Not with you."

My gaze fell again upon the snuff-box and the paper in my hands.

"Let me tell you something," I said, in a quiet voice. "When I gave you that knife this fell from my pocket. I had forgotten it was there. I dug it up the night before last in the cavern of the Devil's Pulpit. I was digging for treasure, and I came upon this. I thought it was a stone—anything. I thought no more about it. You opened it, dear; and I find it is a snuff-box. It must be over a hundred years old; and it was buried with the treasure."

"Ah, but there is no treasure," she said.

"No; the mutineers found the chests empty," I said. "But it is clear that there was treasure there once. It was doubtless used by the men who had possession of the chart during the last century. Can you explain this, Ariadne mine? 'For Jake, oved Headland 6 palms N.N.W. 7 foot. Jan. 18'?"

"What does it mean?" she asked, her dainty brows in a frown.

"I'm guessing, Ariadne mine; but this is my guess: I've got into fairyland this past night. I stand now in faery with the queen of that divine kingdom. Will she deign to give me her hand?" I took it and drew her nearer, so that her fair head rested on my shoulder. "If one day, sweetheart, an adventurer had come to the conclusion that the hoard was in too inaccessible a position, might he not have removed it? 'Oved'; observe. Moved might lie in that. Jake might be a friend, a partner. And the rest, the rest that is decipherable N.N.W.—a headland—and six palms and—well, I can't guess any farther, but the date is incomplete.

What think you of that, my Queen of Faery? Anything may happen in this wonderful world."

I kissed her softly, and she lifted her glowing eyes to me.

"The treasure!" she panted.

"The treasure," I said, and looked out again to sea. "They are making signals to the steamer, and if they get her attention she will put back and rescue us. We are safe for the present, and in any case we would be better away from here. Marley will expect us at the cove, where the steamer will undoubtedly call. In the meantime——"

"You mean we will make the venture —that paper?" she interrupted eagerly.

"If you will, my dearest."

"I will go to the world's end with you," she said simply.

Holding her hand, I pulled out my watch and glanced at the position of the sun. I made a rough calculation.

"Our way lies over the spur yonder," I said. "It's not so difficult as eastward, and we shall be out of the way of the mutineers."

Suddenly Ariadne looked at me piteously. "Oh, how hungry I am!" she said. "I've just found it out."

"I'll promise you a breakfast," said I, "in an hour's time. Come."

We set out at once, and when we reached the mutineers' camp I left her and turned into it to forage. I avoided the hut in which the dead Heaven lay, but found another in which were some tins of food, and some bottles. I took as many of the former as I could carry, and put a bottle of whisky into my pocket; and then I rejoined Ariadne, and we resumed our gradual ascent.

We halted, an hour later, on the heights by a little gushing waterfall to eat and rest. I filled a gourd, which I scooped out, with sparkling water from the stream, emptied a little whisky into it, and bade Ariadne drink it. This she did, with a wry face, but she had had so terrible an experience during the last twelve hours that I thought the stimulus was necessary. She was bearing up bravely under the stress of excitement, but it was possible at any moment that she might collapse.

After resting for half an hour in the flickering shadows and the cool air, we resumed our way, and that, with the vision of the boat like a dot below and the distant steamer with its trail of smoke, was the last we saw of the southerly sea for some time.

Immediately afterward we began to go down into a pleasant valley. The sky was full of clouds charged with light, and as we descended we were aware of a sensible warmth. To the extreme west, as we could now see, the island terminated in a rude and wooded bluff, but that clearly could not be the headland of the paper, for it was nearly due west of the Pulpit. Between where we were and this terminal bluff rolled a deep wooded valley, upon the eastern slopes of which we walked.

It was pretty evident to me that our headland was, therefore, eastward of the valley; and, accordingly, we corrected our direction. The woodland was fairly open, and gave wonderful vistas of sea and hill and valley. Behind us were the lofty summits of the craggy hills surrounding the Devil's Pulpit.

We quickened our pace, and soon emerged upon a plateau scattered with trees and bare of undergrowth. The sea winds, I think, reigned here, blowing sharply at times from their northern home, for the trees were twisted and gnarled as if driven in from the sea cliffs. I cast back my eyes, and the cone of the Pulpit arrested them. As near as I could determine it, we were north-northwest from that tragic eminence. And here was a headland. My heart beat the faster.

We walked forward toward the verge of the cliff, and, standing, I looked down upon two hundred feet of space to the white lather of the water on the rocks.

"You are not afraid, child?" I asked, holding out my hand to her.

"Never, with you," she said gladly, and came to my side and peered down. "I am not afraid with you," she repeated "See, dear, I give witness to my love and faith. If I looked down from a high window I shivered; I cannot bear

heights. Yet I look down into these horrible depths without a tremor—with you."

I lifted her face and kissed her, there in the eye of those dizzy heights, and then we turned and went back. It was Ariadne who spoke.

"The six palms!"

Her face was alive with excitement; she pointed; I followed her hand; and surely enough a grove of date-palms rose a hundred yards away, where the saddle of the headland began to give upon the valley. We both broke into a run, holding hands, and came up panting.

Five tall palms, sheering inward away from the sea winds, enclosed a circle; and the stump of a sixth remained to speak to its fate in some gale long past and gone, that had ravaged that promontory.

"Oh, your paper was right!" cried Ariadne ecstatically. I took it out of the silver snuff-box, and scrutinized it once again.

"Seven feet."

I threw a glance at the ground enclosed by the rough circle of the palms. It was overgrown with grass and low trailing shrubs. The circumference I estimated at about sixty feet, and the radius was, therefore, nearly twenty. If the treasure were there it was doubtless concealed in the chests in which it had been removed. But was it there?

As I mused, a notion came into my head. There would be several chests, and perhaps they began to be buried seven feet from the circumference? I went down the slope to where the vegetation grew more luxuriously, followed by the eager Ariadne, and I cut a big stick, making the thick end into a pointed stake.

"Cut me one; oh, do cut me one!" pleaded my dear.

And so I cut her one, and, armed with these instruments, we climbed back to the circle of palms to dig. First I measured seven feet from the circumference, and then, having cleared away grasses and trailing undergrowth, I began to dig with my stake. It was hard work, and it was slow work. The sun was high now, and we labored in a tropical heat, tempered only by the inblowing sea breeze.

Soon Ariadne tired, for she was in no physical condition to stand arduous work just then; and I was left to continue by myself. At a depth of between two and three feet I struck something hard; and at once proceeded to open a bigger hole for the purposes of inspection. This took me half an hour, but by the end of that time I was rewarded by bringing to light the iron-bound lid of a heavy chest.

Ariadne cried out in her excitement, clapping her hands like a child. I cleared still more of the earth away, and forced the lock. The chest was now completely dug about, and I tried to raise the lid. It resisted all my efforts, and so I was driven back on my resources. I was resolved to test the cache to the full, remembering the bitter disappointment of the mutineers.

I now went again into the wood and returned with a long stout pole which I had broken from a sapling. I inserted this in a crack of the lid, and using it as a lever slowly put my weight on it. With a rending sound the wood gave way, and the lid torn from the lock prised open. Ariadne leaned over the hole, flushed and tremulous. The chest was full to the brim.

Coins of all kinds were there, gold, silver, and copper, guineas and louis d'or, pieces of eight, moidores, and doubloons; and mingling with them was a mêlée of precious stones, pearls, diamonds, rubies and sapphires in rings, necklaces, and brooches—all piled in a heap, the spoil of those dead Caribbean pirates torn from dead victims two hundred years ago.

Ariadne drew a deep breath. "Oh!" she said, and looked at me.

But there was more to be done. I wanted to discover exactly how far the cache extended; and so I proceeded a little farther, still keeping seven feet from the ring, and resumed operations. The stake came down upon the top of something hard, as before, within three feet from the surface, and when after a great deal more labor I had cleared

the earth from the second chest and opened it, a similar sight met my eye.

Further exploration revealed a third chest; and now I did not trouble to open this, for I began to understand the system. The chests had been buried in a central ring within the outer ring of the palms, and at a rough guess I estimated the number at seven. But what was the value of the contents of these seven chests? I could but vaguely wonder in my mind, and more vaguely conjecture. From the glance I had of the first its contents might be worth anything up to one hundred thousand pounds! If so—my imagination staggered under the calculation.

And then to that succeeded the thought: Was even that vast sum worth the sacrifice of life it had entailed, the terrible passions it had let loose? But it was no time to moralize. We had found that for which we had set out, at an infinite cost of pains and bloodshed; and it was my duty to let Halliday know. We must make our way to the cove with as much expedition as possible.

I began to cover up the exposed chests, as I explained to Ariadne our immediate course, but when I came to the chest which we had first opened I paused. An idea flashed into me. I had been the discoverer of what Halliday had given up as hopelessly lost—I and Ariadne. Well, I would just take toll of one little thing, an atom among many. Among the dull gold of the guineas and doubloons and louis d'or lying as on a bed, was a single shining opal ring—large and brilliant as a rainbow. I took it, and seizing her hand gently slipped it on the third finger.

"My present, sweet," I said.

She looked at me with dewy eyes, but said nothing, only held me fast; and then with a gulp of tears broke out:

"I hope I shall be happier than the poor soul who once wore this!"

"Happy!" I echoed. "Yes, it will bring compensation. It has outlasted ill luck. It will bring you happiness."

And I kissed her there above the hoard of treasure under the shadow of the six palms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REFUGE IN THE COVE.

We were now bound for the cove, but before setting out we must make shift to take a meal. We had been at work for some hours, and the sun stood at noon. I was not alarmed, however, by this fact, as I was aware that our comrades would not leave the island without us. If they were picked up by the strange steamer they would see that she returned to rescue us. So we ate heartily of our tinned food, and drank from a little sparkling tarn which we discovered in the hillside. After that, feeling refreshed and rested, we made a start.

We kept along the northern slopes at a uniform level for some time until we reached the divide where the ridge broke up into separate fragments, and went down to the eastern sea like the spread fingers of a hand. On this summit, before our descent into the most southerly of these coves or bays, we got a wide prospect of the sea southward. To my surprise and chagrin I saw upon the horizon a low small dot as of a vessel disappearing into the amplitude of the ocean. It was manifest, then, that our party had failed to attract the steamer's attention, and my heart sank.

And then I had my second surprise; for casting my glance down to the cove below and the bluff off which the *Duncannon* had swung at anchor, I found her gone. My eyes swept an empty sea. I stared, wondering what this might portend, when again away on the horizon I made out a second blotch. The tramp had deserted the island!

For some moments I stood there revolving in my mind the possibilities of the situation. Could Marley and the others have regained possession of the *Duncannon* from the mutineers who remained, never, I guessed, so unscrupulous and tough a lot as their partners ashore? But if so they would certainly not have left us behind. Had they been overpowered by the gang under Clifford and Davenant? But Clifford and Davenant were without a boat. Who

was the single adventurer in their boat whom we had described?

Puzzles faced me in every direction. At the worst we might be alone on the island with the vile pack of mutineers. At the best the mutineers might have escaped and left our party marooned. But was that best? I had another alternative, at which my heart stirred. Were Ariadne and I alone on the island? And should we have to take up life there under the conditions of Robinson Crusoe or a Swiss family until we were rescued by a passing ship?

It was, of course, foolish of me to have contemplated this solution, yet I did so with a certain pleasure. I even went the length of hurriedly calculating the chances of stocking a larder under the threatened conditions.

"Ariadne," I asked her, "would you much mind if we had to play at Robinson Crusoe here?"

"No," she said softly, after a long pause. "Not with you."

"Well, sweet, it may be thrust upon us. But nothing is certain. The only thing certain is that nothing is certain. We must go down to the cove, and then we shall know more."

We descended slowly, for there was no need for haste now, and I had much to turn over in my thoughts. The bush was rough and luxuriant, and at times the hill was steep, and I had to hand Ariadne down from tree-trunk to tree-trunk. But at last we got upon the flat ground at the base which was closely wooded and thus shut off our view of the water. We advanced with great caution, and putting up a warning hand to my companion I went some dozen paces ahead of her.

I came to a pause behind a bush, and leveled my revolver in readiness, for a sound, as of a man creeping, caught my ear. Then everything was still, and only the noisy water on the beach was audible.

Then I was aware of a muzzle pointing toward me through the bush behind which I sheltered, and of a hand that held it. I did not know whether I was visible from the other side, but I did not move, and for some minutes we stood there, each with his lifted weapon on either side of the bush. Then a branch cracked under me, and the hand on the other side, as if moved in excitement or alarm, emerged more clearly through the twigs.

"Marley!" I called; I recognized the hairy, swarthy skin.

"That you, old man?" he cried. "Great Scott! I nearly put a hole in your gizzard." He came out of hiding. "It was a near thing," he went on, in his friendly manner. "I couldn't be quite sure it was a branch or a human arm I saw, and I thought of letting drive on the off-chance."

"Glad you didn't," I replied. "I saw you, but simply didn't shoot because I didn't know who you were. You might have been a mutineer."

"No; the blighters are over there." He nodded toward the bluff. "We hadn't any luck—couldn't get those beggars to see our signals, though I waved every blessed rag I had on my back on the top of the oars. So we came along here. I say, where's Miss Sylvester?"

"She's safe," I said, and called: "Miss Sylvester!"

Ariadne drew out of the bushes, alert and sweet and smiling. "Oh, I'm so glad you're better, Mr. Marley," she said.

"I'm as fit as a fiddle," he said. "I'm equal to another scrap, too. It was like my luck to be out of the fun last time."

He was quite an amazing person, was Marley, with his good nature, familiarity, bad language, and general indifference to moral precepts. We went back with him to the encampment, hearing his story as we walked.

"We waited for you, old chap, till the last; and then we had to do a bolt. Those panthers came down in a rage royal and scared us off. Why, there wasn't any treasure, it seems. And they kicked up a devil of a row. I tell you from the ugly looks of those dagos, Clifford & Co. must have a nice shop to shut up. They'd seen their boat stolen from under their noses. Oh, I say, Miss Sylvester, it was your uncle. Great Scott, the old man had 'em nicely

on toast, regularly gave them the pip. I chuckled. He cleared out with their blooming boat, my boy, hooked it and went aboard the *Duncannon*." He paused, looking seaward meditatively. "Though where the blazes she's gone and what's he up to fairly beats me."

"He's gone to get help," declared Ariadne positively. "I know he has."

"But how did he manage all those beggars on board?" he asked doubtfully.

"Oh, he bribed them once; he'd bribe them again," said Ariadne confidently.

"Well, if that's the case," said Marley cheerfully, "we ain't in so bad a fix as I thought. But, crikey, old man, it was up against us," he added.

We were cordially welcomed by McLeod, and by Halliday, who had recovered from his blow. McLeod was effusive in his attitude to Ariadne, and somehow for a moment I experienced a return of my old feeling against him. But it was an ungenerous impulse, and I fought it off.

It was curious and even pathetic to observe the change in Halliday. He had come back to consciousness, and he was cheerfully courteous, and even ceremonious, but he had lost all his elasticity. He was as a beaten man, and he showed his consciousness of this in a tender resignation. He was very thoughtful of others, and kept Ariadne's hand in his for some minutes while he shook it, welcoming her back to safety.

"I had just given you up, my dear," he said, in his strange, young-old fatherly manner. "But I'm right glad to see you back. Herapath's a good man at need, and I reckon he's pulled you through. We're going to hear all about it, as soon as you've had some food and rest. Come right along."

"Mr. Herapath's good at need," said Ariadne, flashing at me brightly, "and he's got something to tell you."

"That's right. We'll be much interested in your adventures," said Halliday pleasantly, patting her hand. "Come away in. We've got some desiccated soup, and I guess it's as good as gold. Collins here is a right-down fine cook."

We sat down under the tree which sheltered the party from the hot sun, and the first thing I did was to ask for a pipe.

"Right, old man," said Marley. "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, hey?" He pulled out a quid of tobacco. "Lucky we put some in the cache. We've got about enough provisions to last us two days. Reckon that uncle of yours will have to come along quick, Miss Sylvester."

"What's that?" asked Halliday, and was informed of our conjecture.

He listened thoughtfully, and then said wistfully: "Say, wouldn't it have been fine if we were putting aboard the treasure then? But I guess little Willie's gone and put his coat on a dead 'un this time. If he can shove off with his carcass he'll not squeal."

"But—but——" broke in Ariadne all radiance, "it isn't—oh, Mr. Herapath will tell you. Tell, oh, tell!"

"I think," said I deliberately, crossing my legs, smiling at her sweet face, and puffing at my pipe, "I think that this is Miss Sylvester's story. I will go so far. The Clifford gang took her, and they also took me, as you know; and when I got back to her my narrative ends. Hers begins, for the discovery was hers."

"No; no!" she cried. "It wasn't. It was yours. I only—well——" She was so excited that she turned off again in her course. "They seized me, because I heard them talking, in order to secure Mr. Herapath; they wanted to weaken the garrison, and they chained him up with ropes and things, and he was there all night."

"Let us come to the discovery, please," I urged.

"Oh, yes; and—well, I won't talk about that, because it was hateful. But when he went away he gave me a knife out of his pocket—and something fell out on the ground, and I picked it up when he was gone, and it was a snuff-box. I mean Mr. Herapath found it was when he came back. And so I showed it to him, and we opened it and there was a paper in it."

"Wait," said Halliday. "I don't just understand what this snuff-box is."

"I picked it up on the Devil's Pulpit," I said.

"Go on!" he said tersely.

"And then," panted Ariadne, resuming her wild, incoherent narrative, "Mr. Herapath made it out, and it said about six palms, and seven feet, and N.N.W., and how it was for Jake and——"

"Great Scott, what's this?" cried Marley.

She turned to him. "Oh, Mr. Marley, if you'd only seen them, the chests full of gold and——"

"Let us get the hang of this, please," said Halliday, interrupting; and his fingers were trembling. "What about this paper?"

For answer I took the snuff-box from my pocket and gave it to him. I deciphered the letters for him, and was giving my interpretation, when Ariadne broke in impetuously:

"Oh, see—see! Think of my nearly forgetting!"

She thrust her pretty hand under his nose. "This ring was there. It came from there. There were heaps more—thousands! Oh, it was wonderful."

"We're getting along now," said Halliday, with marvelous restraint, his eyes gloating over the ring. "Guess you ran the hoard to earth then, Herapath! That's your news?"

"That's about the size of it," I answered.

The faces of the group, which included Collins, were turned aglow upon me.

"By Jupiter, it's a fairly-tale!" exclaimed Marley.

Now that I had reached my climax I set out to explain in detail, and we gave the gaping auditors a history of our adventures. At the close Halliday moistened his lips.

"Say, Marley, you got a pencil anywhere?" he said feverishly. "Doctor, I'd be obliged if you'd bring out one of those bottles yonder, and draw a cork. I guess we're going to have a drink on this. And I'll trouble some one for a piece of paper. I'm going to figure out things."

McLeod brought from the cache one of the few bottles of champagne which had accidentally come ashore with us, and soon the cork popped while Halliday's nose was over his notes.

"Here you are, man," said McLeod, handing him the gourd in which the yellow wine was bubbling. Halliday looked up, and saw smiling faces. His wore a serious look.

He sipped the wine meditatively. "Here's to the treasure, boys!" he said, and bowed very formally in Ariadne's direction.

Yes, there was *that* treasure, too. She met my eyes tenderly, and drank a little of her wine.

"Here's to your success, Mr. Halliday. Your pluck has carried you through."

"Now, I was going to say," remarked the American slowly, "that it wasn't precisely my pluck. Anyway, I'm glad I'm through, and I offer you another toast, gentlemen. To the discoverers!"

They drank this with good fellowship, looking toward Ariadne and myself.

"It's lucky," observed Halliday, sipping his champagne, "that I didn't take up this wine scheme. I guess it would have got hold of me, and I'd have been a drunkard."

The idea seemed so preposterous that I could hardly keep from laughter.

"Not you, old man," growled Marley, "you've got plenty of backbone."

"I'm not exactly saying I haven't," he answered complacently. "I generally work through if I start. Now take this gold-business. I reckon there's few who would have started out on the proposition, as I had it. Herapath here laughed at me. Well, the laugh's on him now."

I laughed at him again, in contemplation of the change in him. He was transmogrified beyond all belief; in a way he was transfigured by his triumph, and his fair hair shone in the sunshine like an aureole about an ethereal face. He dazzled with the urbane sovereignty of his self-satisfaction.

"We aren't out of the wood yet," I reminded him.

It might have been cruelty, if it had

had any effect; but Halliday, in his recovered self-possession, was proof against all doubts and difficulties once again.

"I guess we'll wait for the *Duncannon* and Monsieur Carvaulx," he said. "We can get along all right till then. Well now, see here. I've just been figuring out things, and putting 'em down roughly. We've got to make out a new scheme." He looked round. "There's eight of us in this now, and Digby there aboard. I'm going to tear up those agreements all round, and start fresh. And seems to me the best I can do is to put it into a joint-stock-company shape."

"This is what I call premature," observed McLeod somewhat testily.

Halliday observed him gravely. "Doctor," he said, wagging a finger, "you take my word for it, there's nothing premature save premature death, and that don't count, because it wipes out. And if a man's got a bit of time squeezed out anywheres, he's going to fit something into that crack or lose an opportunity later on. If we can square things now, we won't be wasting our time and tempers later. For as for me, I'm blamed if I'm being occupied much just now."

That was true enough. We had the time on our hands, and our only occupation was waiting. Our camp was fortified by its store of provisions for a day or two; so that it would not be necessary to forage till then, and maybe events would make it unnecessary to forage at all. Yet it was hard to sit down and idle, always with the anxiety of the mutineering-party at the back of our minds. So far they had not shown any signs of troubling the camp, but it was always possible that they might make up their minds to descend upon the cove at any moment, out of mere wanton desire of vengeance, or to obtain possession of the boat.

It was that latter thought that hung in my mind all the afternoon. I left Ariadne to her much-needed rest, and made an inspection of the neighborhood. Halliday was puzzling out his proportions, and Marley was in charge of the camp. McLeod and I made the tour together, and discussed the chances of a surprise attack.

"They won't dare," he said. "They've nothing to gain by it now. There's no treasure, so far as they know."

"There's the boat," I urged, "and if the *Duncannon* is returning with help, as we hope, there is the necessity of their getting away before she does. That's vital to them. To my mind it's more vital than treasure."

"They can't have any hope of that," he said.

"Well, it's a risk, but they've got to take it," I replied. "If they had a boat they could make a bolt of it and trust to chance. There are other islands not far off, and Crashaw, at any rate, is a good sailor."

He did not seem convinced, but directed the talk to a topic that was even more important for us.

"How if she doesn't return?" he said.

"We're done," I said shortly. "We're at the mercy of chance—a passing steamer. I dare say we can manage to subsist, but it will be little more, and, by Heaven, all the treasure in the world won't make any difference to us then."

"That's what puts me out with that fanatic yonder," said McLeod, jerking his elbow. "Now the treasure's found he's in heaven, when he ought to be in hell."

"No," I demurred. "Purgatory."

He paid no heed; we had got to the eastern slope of the cove, where the trees overhung the deep blue water that swept in a little tide of foam against the sandy shore.

"There's fish," he said, pointing into the clear depths.

"Oh, we sha'n't starve," I agreed.

On the top of the bluff across the little bay something caught my eye. It moved, and I put it down as a man. I indicated it to McLeod.

"Yes," he said. "Prospecting. But there's nothing for them here. I shouldn't wonder if the bluff alone separated us. Purgatory? Well, maybe you're right."

We turned and went back, for the dusk was failing, and we had certain

precautions to take before dark. The camp had awakened into life when we got back. Halliday had finished his calculations, which he declared would be acceptable to us, and which he would set before us in the morning. But I do not think any one of us cared two straws about them, while our fate hung in the balance. The initial excitement of the discovery had worn off, and was succeeded by apathy. We settled into silence and the night in a dismal mood.

In spite of my recent trials and exertions I could not get any consecutive sleep of account; and I at last got up and joined the sentry, who was Carter. After some conversation with him I left the camp, and strolled down toward the beach.

The night was lifting, and the water was spectral-gray under the whip of a stiff wind. It rolled in with a continuous drone upon the shells and sand of the cove. I made my way round toward the outstanding bluff, and climbed the heights out of mere restlessness rather than with any design.

On one side of the bluff I seemed to make out a shadow that moved upon the water. I hurried down the hill, and came out upon the margin of the bay. The shadow was still there, and still moved. And then with a thrill of fury and fear I realized the situation. Some one was making off with our boat.

The boat was some two hundred yards from shore, standing off in the rough water, and if anything was to be done I must act at once. Without hesitating I plunged into the sea, and struck out toward it.

I swam quietly for some time, dipping in the heavy seas and wondering when I should emerge into the field of vision. It was almost certain that the runaway had not distinguished me in the black shadows of the shore, but if he kept a good watch, as he must surely do, he must eventually spy me, a dark blotch upon the face of the bay.

I had time to wonder what would happen. In a little I knew.

For I was only some thirty paces from the boat when the occupant rose, oars in hand, and peered out in his wake silently. Then he set to harder than before. Evidently he was trying to run away from me. I increased my stroke, but I could not gain on him. He had me beaten. Despair seized me.

And then suddenly he stopped rowing, and waited on his oars. I approached until I was no more than twelve yards away, in the black trough of the water, and his figure was outlined in the twilight. Then he laughed shortly, and I knew him. He never moved from his seat, but just shipped his oars, and leaned to the side.

"I've wanted you badly, my cock," he said, "you're too good for this life. And so you're off to Heaven."

He chuckled at his joke, and as I mounted the roller a flash was in my eyes. I heard nothing, for I dived at that moment. Indeed, I think I must have gone under before he pulled the trigger and my fancy had supplied the flash.

I held my breath as long as I could, and then came up. The boat was three yards away, Clifford, revolver in hand, was peering into the broken water, and his back was to me. I had gone under the boat. In two strokes I had my hand on the rudder and next moment I was aboard. He jumped round as I rose to my feet, but his shot went wide. Then I took hold of him.

"I think Heaven wants you," I said, "but that's not where he's waiting."

And I threw him out into the sea into which he sank with a mighty splash. Then I sat down and began to pull into the cove again. Clifford did not rise, as far as I could see; but I confess I did not bestow much consideration upon him.

I rowed for the shore as hard as I could.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The Adventures of Felix Boyd

By Scott Campbell

Author of "Below the Dead Line," Etc.

XXIII.—AN AVERTED TRAGEDY

(*A Complete Story*)

THIS way, Jimmie. Unless I am much mistaken this should be our man."

Mr. Felix Boyd led the way down the platform of the suburban station at which they had alighted. The train was about departing. The locomotive-bell was clanging noisily. Volumes of dense black smoke were rising in circling wreaths on the calm morning air. It was a clear cold day in December, Christmas day, so cold that the rising sun, scarce half an hour above the horizon, made no impression on the mantle of white from which its genial rays were reflected with quite dazzling brilliancy.

Barring two early travelers who had boarded the train, and a sleepy-eyed railway agent returning to the warmth of the station stove, the only person visible was the man approaching them, to whom Felix Boyd had referred.

He was a strapping, broad-shouldered fellow in a bearskin coat and cap, in high top-boots and huge driving-gloves; a man over forty years of age, whose dark yet rather prepossessing face denoted considerable strength of character and a generous endowment of animal courage. Despite that the sharp wintry air should have given him ruddy cheeks and sparkling eyes, however, his skin had a pasty white appearance and his eyes a bleared, lack-luster heaviness entirely wrong in a man of his superb physique and obvious good health. His smile was only half-hearted, moreover, as he approached with a salute indicating that he had seen military service—none of which signs escaped Boyd's observation—and said inquiringly:

"Mr. Felix Boyd, sir?"

"Yes, that is my name." Boyd bowed and extended his slender white hand, bent upon deftly noting the other's pulse when he quickly drew off his glove and responded, and he found it pounding heavily. "You are Ivan, I infer, whom Miss Zuboff stated would meet me."

"Yes, Ivan Rajenski, sir." The smile had left the man's face. "My mistress, Miss Ursula, decided to come with me, however. Her anxiety lest you might disappoint her——"

"Not likely under the circumstances," Boyd interposed. "Instead, as you see, I have brought an assistant."

"This way, then, gentlemen. She is waiting for you."

They found her on the rear seat of a large Russian sleigh drawn up around a corner of the station—a handsome, dark-eyed young woman enveloped in costly furs, from amid which she quickly extended a shapely, jeweled hand, clasping that of Boyd with a grip that startled him because of its supple strength and unconventional heartiness.

"I am so glad you could come," she said warmly. "It is most kind of you, too, on Christmas day."

"The day of all days on which one

should be kind," Boyd responded agreeably. "I have brought a friend, also, whose aid and advice I frequently find valuable. Detective Coleman, of the Central Office."

"Mr. Coleman—so pleased!" Miss Zuboff exclaimed, with a smile and glance that set his nerves tingling. "I was in such suspense lest you should fail me, Mr. Boyd, that I really had to accompany Ivan to the station. Sit here with me, sir." She threw aside the rich robe for him to enter. "I will at least wish you a Merry Christmas, despite that this dreadful affair may ruin the holiday for you."

"Thank you," Boyd bowed and complied, while the Central Office man seated himself with the driver. "Really, Miss Zuboff, I must compliment you upon the fortitude with which you meet your misfortune. One could hardly believe that you have just been robbed of nearly a quarter-million."

"Ah, Mr. Boyd, I possess the American trait of rising superior to circumstances," she replied charmingly.

The station had already passed from view when turning to the young lady, he said:

"Now, Miss Zuboff, what about this robbery? State all of the facts of which you feel positive."

"To begin with, since I am a total stranger to you"—she flashed a quick glance at him—"I must say a word about myself. My family history has, I greatly fear, a serious bearing upon the crime."

"Very well," Boyd assented, nestling into his heavy coat. "I am all attention."

"My name is Ursula Zuboff, and I was born in St. Petersburg twenty-one years ago come January first. I was, so to speak, a New-year's gift to my parents. But my poor mother died before I was a year old. My father, Alexis Zuboff, was a wealthy Russian nobleman. He was a man of very liberal ideas, however, which led him in early manhood to become identified with a secret revolutionary society, the precise character and objects of which he was not correctly informed. He subsequently learned—too late, alas! that he had taken the oath and bound himself to all the requirements of a branch of the terrible nihilist order, and that the dreadful step he had taken already had brought him under the suspicion of the secret police."

"A serious situation, indeed," Boyd remarked.

"Ah, most serious!" Miss Zuboff exclaimed. "An American, unfamiliar with European plots and intrigues and the terrible crimes to which they give rise, can hardly appreciate it. My father found himself between the devil and the deep sea. Siberia threatened him on the one hand, and on the other the death-penalty inflicted upon all who attempt to renounce the nihilist oath and withdraw from the order. My father felt that he had no alternative, Mr. Boyd, and to escape the consequences of his rash act he sold all of his Russian possessions and fled secretly to Rome, accompanied only by one faithful servant, Ivan Rajenski, and myself, then about six years old."

"That was fifteen years ago."

"Yes," Miss Zuboff nodded. "My father thus became a voluntary exile and escaped the censure of the czar; but, alas! there is no place on earth where the traitor to nihilism, as it exists in Russia, is safe from vengeance. Though we lived in obscurity in Rome, less than a year had passed when my father was discovered and forced to pay a heavy fine for having concealed his whereabouts, and was threatened with death if the offense was repeated. Nevertheless, as before, he fled secretly and went to live in Paris and afterward in London. In both cities, however, he in time was discovered by nihilist agents and compelled under threats of death to pay exhorbitant fines."

"I appreciate his situation, Miss Zuboff, and also their rascally designs."

"Secretly leaving London," Miss Zuboff continued, "my father came to America and purchased Elmhurst, the secluded estate which since has been my home. He hoped there to elude his persecutors and for several years——"

"One moment," Boyd interposed. "You have made these points sufficiently plain. Come now to the facts bearing directly upon the robbery. Is your father living?"

"Alas, no!" Miss Zuboff's dark brows knit closer. "One year ago, soon after my return from college, he again was visited by nihilist agents from London. Their previous demands were repeated, with which my father positively refused to comply. Then threatening letters began to come, which he also ignored. I think that they hastened his death, however, despite that no violence was attempted; for he was stricken with heart-disease a month later and expired within an hour."

"Was there any doubt as to the cause of his death?"

"None, whatever. To relieve myself of all misgivings, I had an autopsy performed."

"Very wisely, I think," observed Boyd. "I judge, however, that you think this robbery was the work of nihilist agents."

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Why so?"

"Because I was approached soon after my father's death by the same two men who had visited him," Miss Zuboff explained. "They now demanded one-half of his fortune, pledging me immunity from further persecutions if the demand was complied with, and threatening me with death if it was refused. I am not a timid person, Mr. Boyd, and I was resolved not to submit to the outrage. I sternly defied them and ordered both men from the house. Very foolishly, too, perhaps, I told them my father's entire estate had been left in trust for me in the hands of a New York banker until I was twenty-one, making it impossible for me to comply with their demand, even if so inclined."

"Yes, yes, I see," Boyd thoughtfully remarked. "A wise precaution on your father's part, Miss Zuboff. Have you since seen or heard from any of the nihilists?"

"Yes, sir, I have. At intervals I have received anonymous letters, informing me that the date of my birth had been learned, and warning me that I must comply with their demands immediately after assuming control of my property. Ten days ago I received a similar letter, stating that I was being constantly watched, and warning me against seeking safety in flight. Footprints lately discovered in the park and grounds, moreover, indicate that spies have been watching my house at night. Last Friday evening two bearded men were seen skulking back of the stable, who hurriedly fled upon the approach of Smith, my hostler, and eluded him in the dusk. Indeed, Mr. Boyd, I feel very sure that the robbery was committed by agents of the nihilists."

"Have you been visited more than once by these nihilist agents?"

"No, only once."

"How soon after your father's death?"

"Only a few days."

"How soon after their visit did you receive threatening letters from them?"

"Within a week, Mr. Boyd, and they continued to come at intervals for nearly two months. I paid no attention to them, however, and received no more until about ten days ago. Since then I have received two, one informing me that the date on which I should assume control of my property had been learned, and the other warning me that the previous demands must be complied with, under penalty of death if I refused or attempted to flee."

"Are they still in your possession?"

"They are in a desk in my chamber."

"I will examine them later. Did you observe where they were posted?"

"Both were posted in Jersey City."

"Humph!" Coleman glanced back over his shoulder. "There is a secret headquarters of the nihilists in that city, Felix."

"More than one, Jimmie, in fact." Boyd nodded. "By the way, Miss Zuboff, I presume that your banker was informed of your father's history and the threats to which you have been subjected since his death?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Boyd," she replied. "Mr. Joslyn, who has been our very de-

voted friend, knows all of the circumstances."

"Joslyn?" Boyd's brows rose inquiringly. "Not Elbridge Joslyn?"

"Yes." Miss Zuboff quickly nodded. "I am greatly indebted to him. He was my father's friend and financial adviser for years. Fear of the nihilists led my father to keep all of his bonds and securities on deposit with Mr. Joslyn, and to bequeath them in trust for me until I should arrive at an age when I could properly care for them. You have, of course, heard of Mr. Joslyn? Perhaps, Mr. Boyd, you are acquainted with him?"

"Not personally," said Boyd, staring intently at the powerful figure of the Russian driver. "I know him to be a prominent New York banker, with an office in Wall Street, and one of the largest operators in the Stock Exchange."

"Yes, indeed," Miss Zuboff earnestly assented. "He is an exceedingly busy man, Mr. Boyd, and it was partly for that reason that I persuaded him and his wife to pass the holidays with me."

"He accepted your invitation, then." Boyd's gaze appeared riveted on the profile of Ivan Rajenski.

"Oh, yes! That was accepted nearly a month ago."

"And he acted, I infer, upon your suggestion regarding your account."

"Willingly, Mr. Boyd. He was, in fact, very glad to relinquish the trust; for he at present is engaged in market operations so vastly important that every moment of his time is taken during business hours. The closing of the Exchange for three days, Christmas falling on Monday, made it nice for him to visit me and get away from the stir of the city, besides giving us ample time to effect a settlement of my affairs."

"Was that done, Miss Zuboff?"

"Oh, yes! Mr. Joslyn came to Elmhurst with his wife Saturday morning. He brought a statement of my account, also a tin box containing all of my securities, consisting chiefly of government bonds. I examined both that afternoon, finding them perfectly correct, and gave him a proper receipt."

"Did it occur to either of you, Miss Zuboff, that a week remained before his duty expired as trustee under your father's will?"

"It did, Mr. Boyd, but we both decided that would make no difference. Mr. Joslyn is, as everybody knows, a man of sterling integrity, and the business was entirely between ourselves. We did not, of course, anticipate the terrible affair of last night."

"Naturally not," said Boyd, a bit dryly. "Please state some of the circumstances for me."

"All that I know may be told in a nutshell," said Miss Zuboff, hastening to comply. "The box containing the bonds was locked in the lower drawer of a heavy oak secretary in the library. It was my intention to take them to the safety deposit vaults to-morrow morning. I know that neither the box nor its contents had been disturbed late last night, for I made sure of it before going to bed. I locked the drawer myself, Mr. Boyd, and took the key to my chamber."

"And this morning?"

"This morning—ah, it was terrible!" Miss Zuboff exclaimed, with a shudder. "Two of my servants on their way to the kitchen, the cook and a table-girl, were alarmed by a dreadful pounding on the door of the bedroom occupied by my two guests. They hastened to the door to find it locked, but the key, which was outside, had not been removed. Upon opening the door they found Mrs. Joslyn in her nightdress, half-fainting, with her wrists and arms left bruised and red by the ropes from which, after prolonged struggles, she finally had freed herself. Her lips and cheeks were covered with a tarlike substance, left by a hideous cloth which she had just torn from over her mouth."

"A pitch plaster," Boyd remarked, with a nod.

"Mr. Joslyn, bound hand and foot, with a gag in his mouth and a terrible bruise on his forehead, was lying on the floor, secured to the bedposts. Their room had been entered by two armed men during the night, by whom they

had been overcome and brutally prevented from giving any alarm. They had been robbed of their money and jewelry. My library also had been visited, the secretary broken open and the box of bonds stolen. My devoted Ivan, too, who has been my faithful guardian since childhood, was found a little later on a couch in his room, still dressed and half-asleep——"

"Drunk—half-drunk, mistress!" The Russian swung round with a dreadful cry of anguish, with his haggard face distorted with grief. "Tell it as it was—as it was, mistress! Half-drunk, that's what I was. Still half-drunk and good for nothing—as I was when I should have been most alert to shield and serve you. God forgive me, I was drunk and——"

"What nonsense, Ivan! Even if you were drunk, is the one mistake, for all it proved so costly, to be set against long years of faithful service? You see," she said, turning to Mr. Boyd, "he and Mr. Joslyn made merry over the wine last evening, but on Christmas we should be kind, above all things."

Mr. Felix Boyd made no reply, yet there was a gleam in the depths of his grave gray eyes that told how deeply he was affected.

II.

In a large sitting-room, heated by two huge logs ablaze in a broad stone fireplace, were found the New York banker and his wife, the latter rocking in a chair near the fire, the former stretched upon a couch in one corner, with his brow bandaged with a strip of white linen. Mr. Joslyn arose to acknowledge the introduction:

"I have heard of you, Mr. Boyd, and it was at my suggestion that Miss Zuboff sent for you. It seemed wise to me to employ a private detective on this case, instead of at once placing it in the hands of the police, which invariably results in a publicity that often proves of advantage to the offenders."

"Quite true, Mr. Joslyn."

"I hope you may be able to help us. We have had a dreadful experience, as you may see, but that is nothing when compared with the great loss my dear Ursula has suffered. Since the death of her father, Mr. Boyd, I have felt a fatherly interest in her, and I know——"

"I appreciate your feelings, Mr. Joslyn, and she already has stated many of the circumstances bearing upon the robbery. Time may be of value, if we are to get after the thieves with any hope of success, and I shall begin an investigation as quickly as possible."

Though he already had broken fast, Mr. Joslyn complied with a request from Boyd and joined them in the breakfast-room, that he might tell what he could concerning the thieves. Boyd knew him very well by name and reputation, a reputed millionaire and a man whose sensational exploits in the Stock Exchange had made him a conspicuous figure in Wall Street, and at times a power in shaping the course of the security market. His recent aggressive operations against United Railway, moreover, in the very teeth of a strong bull movement in the stock, had occasioned frequent press comments on the subject, and Boyd readily could see how so busy a man might have been glad to relinquish as soon as possible a trust from which he derived comparatively little profit.

In response to his inquiries while at breakfast, however, Boyd brought out very few additional facts. Of the servants employed by Miss Zuboff, the cook and the table-girl occupied rooms on the upper floor of the house. That of Ivan was a small room on the ground floor and adjoining the library, by the use of which for a sleeping-room he insisted that he could best protect and look after the house. Smith, the hostler, was quartered in the stable.

Miss Zuboff and an elderly Russian woman, a distant relative, occupied the two front chambers on the second floor; while her guests of the past three days had been assigned a large ground-floor bedroom in a wing, it being one that could easily be heated to their liking.

Except Joslyn and his wife, none of

the household had been disturbed by the burglars, nor had any suspicious persons been seen in or about the grounds since the previous Friday evening, when the hostler had observed the two bearded strangers skulking back of the stable.

I suppose, Miss Zuboff, you have confidence in all of your servants?"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Boyd, absolute confidence."

"Ivan——"

"I would stake my life upon his honesty."

"Yet his conduct—— I understand, Mr. Joslyn, that you and he were the last to retire," Boyd turned abruptly to the banker. "Also that he was somewhat intoxicated."

"I am ashamed to say, Mr. Boyd, that we both were in that condition," he frankly admitted. "I sat too long with Ivan, sipping wine and listening to his tales of Russian life. Yes, we were the last to retire. I saw that he was unsteady when he lighted me to my room; but I can hardly believe, even now, that he was so near a complete collapse. He must, I think, have returned to the bottle."

"Very possibly," Boyd assented. "At what time did you retire?"

"About one o'clock."

"You went immediately to bed?"

"Yes, indeed, and fell asleep the moment I struck the pillow," Joslyn replied, with a significant shrug. "I was awakened by a half-smothered cry from my wife, who had been seized by one of the thieves, who had clapped a pitch plaster over her mouth. When I opened my eyes, still a bit fuddled, I was blinded by a glare of light. I attempted to rise, but was struck a blow on the head that knocked me senseless. I think it was dealt with a sand-bag, for the skin was not broken, though the bruise is severe. You may see for yourself."

He raised the bandage from his brow while speaking, and displayed a dull red bruise running well back under his hair.

"A brutal blow, indeed," Boyd remarked, bending forward to view it. "Yes, it must have deprived you of consciousness."

"Rather!" Joslyn dubiously exclaimed. "When I recovered I found myself on the floor, bound and gagged, also secured to the bedposts. My assailants had departed, but I heard my wife groaning and struggling on the bed. I know that they must have tied her to it to prevent her from giving any alarm. Just before daybreak, however, she succeeded in freeing herself and hastened to summon help."

"Yes, yes, exactly," Boyd nodded. "From which side were you approached, Mr. Joslyn, as you were lying?"

"Which side?" The banker's eyes took on a puzzled squint. "From the right side, Mr. Boyd."

"Just so; I inferred as much. You labored under a slight disadvantage, then, while attempting to repel your assailant. For I observe that you are left-handed."

"Left-handed!" Joslyn stared, with his brows knitting perplexedly. "I admit that I am, Mr. Boyd, yet I'm blessed if I see how you discovered it."

"Your cravat is knotted the reverse way," Boyd tersely explained, laughing lightly at the astonishment of his hearers.

"Well, well, you are observing, to be sure."

"It comes of long training and is essential to success in my vocation." Boyd said indifferently. "I judge, Mr. Joslyn, that you had no good look at your assailants."

"None at all, Mr. Boyd. My wife, however, states that—— Ah, she is here and may speak for herself."

She entered while he was speaking—a tall woman with a rather masculine cast of features. In response to a request from Boyd, she stated that the two burglars, having secured both occupants of the room, had deliberately taken their money and jewelry and departed, locking the door after them. Also that both men wore beards and masks, were men above medium size and darkly clad, and that one carried a bull's-eye lantern, by the uncertain light of which she had been able to im-

perfectly view them. Neither had spoken above a low whisper, however, and she could not tell in what language their remarks had been made.

"If in the Russian tongue and you could have detected it," Boyd observed, "we could feel fairly sure that they were the nihilists suspected by Miss Zuboff. I am, in fact, somewhat inclined to her belief."

"That is my opinion, also," Joslyn quickly announced. "I advised her to leave everything undisturbed, Mr. Boyd, until you arrived. I know that you detectives bank quite heavily upon that. If you would like to examine them, things in my room are just as we dropped them after being liberated."

"I'll do so." Boyd arose with quite startling abruptness. "They may suggest something. Meantime, Jimmie, take a look outside and see what you can find. It will expedite matters. Which way, Mr. Joslyn?"

"This way, Mr. Boyd."

The Central Office man, though inclined to wonder, arose to comply, while Boyd followed the banker out of the room and through the hall, having signified with a gesture that he wanted no other observers. As they entered the wing bedroom, Mr. Joslyn turned and remarked, in a confidential way:

"I saw that you felt some distrust of Ivan. I am not so sure of him, either. A man who would get so beastly drunk while property of great value was in the house is not entirely trustworthy. He was Zuboff's servant, too, as long ago as the latter was identified with the nihilists. It may be that he was one of them as well, and secretly gave these burglars the information you mentioned."

Boyd listened and nodded, drawing out his note-book and pencil.

"All that has occurred to me," he quietly replied. "It led to the questions you heard me ask."

"I inferred so, or I should not have mentioned my own suspicions."

"Yes, yes, I see. Say nothing about them to others, however, at present."

"Certainly not."

"I shall keep them in mind, make no mistake about that. Do me a little favor, Joslyn," Boyd familiarly added. "Note in my book the memoranda I give you while I examine these things. It will enable me to work more rapidly."

"Yes, surely," Joslyn consented, taking the note-book and pencil.

Boyd's investigations in this room were brief, however. He examined several pieces of rope lying on the floor, and chiefly a knot in the end of one of them. Then he gingerly turned over a crumpled pitch plaster on the bureau, cast a furtive glance at the two windows opening on a narrow back veranda, made a few suggestions which his companion noted as requested, and finally announced that he had seen all he wished.

"I want to look into the smoking-room, also that of Ivan," he said, relieving Joslyn of the note-book. "Can it be done, do you think, without his knowing it?"

"Yes, easily," Joslyn nodded. "I'll have Ursula send him to the stable for something."

"Yet her misgivings must not be aroused," cautioned Boyd. "She has infinite confidence in him and might oppose any move directed against him."

"Very true. I'll find a way to get rid of him, however."

"Do so, then. Meantime, before I make any investigations in the library, I'll step outside and see what Detective Coleman has discovered."

Joslyn bowed without replying, obviously well pleased over having been taken into Boyd's confidence, and they parted in the hall, the detective putting on his coat and hat and hastening out of doors.

After a brief search, Boyd found the Central Office man at one of the windows of a basement laundry, which he was carefully inspecting, also several imperfect footprints left in the snow near-by. He glanced up when Boyd approached, remarking with a growl:

"Here's where the rascals broke in, Felix, all right. They forced the lock of this window with a thin knife-blade. The floor inside still is damp in spots where they tracked over it."

"See anything peculiar about it?"

"Peculiar?" Coleman looked again. "No, Felix, I'm blessed if I do."

"It is quite obvious, Jimmie, yet——"

"Yet what? I see only——"

"Quiet!" Boyd quickly whispered. "You should see, at least, that we may be overheard. Say nothing about it, Jimmie."

Ivan was striding by the corner of the house on his way to the stable, yet he did not observe them. Boyd gazed after him for a moment, then quietly opened the window and glanced into the laundry. Before Coleman ventured to question him again, however, Joslyn came hurrying from a rear door, clad in his heavy coat and with one of Ivan's soft fur caps on his injured head.

"I've got rid of him for you, Mr. Boyd," he said quickly, as he joined them. "It's all right, and nothing suspected. What have you found out here?"

"I've found where the knaves forced an entrance," he curtly answered. "They crossed the laundry and went upstairs. Note also these tracks in the snow, Jimmie, which was not frozen as hard early this morning. It must have come colder about daybreak. It's a pity the impressions are not plainer, yet some facts are obvious. One of the rascals wore rubbers, the other boots only, and they also departed through this window. Note that there are tracks pointing in both directions."

As far as the driveway leading to the stable the tracks were quite easily followed. There they were lost, however, yet Boyd hurried on in the direction the thieves apparently had taken, searching the ground on each side, rarely speaking, and all the while grimly intent upon his work. Presently he again discovered the tracks at a low wall back of the stable, beyond which a narrow lane divided the rear grounds from a belt of woodland.

"Here we have them!" he exclaimed, hastening to the wall. "The rascals fled through this lane, Jimmie. Here is where the one in rubbers vaulted the wall. The footprints left where he landed are very significant. They cannot be traced through the lane, however, as you may see. Here you, Ivan, where does this lane lead?"

The last was sharply addressed to the burly Russian, who had appeared at a back door of the stable, where he stood watching the three men.

"It runs through the woods a piece and then enters the main road," he replied. "It is traveled some by woodmen who——"

"I see it is traveled some, much to my regret," Boyd bluntly interrupted. "Otherwise, we might have followed the rascals. Come, Jimmie, we'll return to the house. I don't half-fancy that fellow, Joslyn," he added, under his breath. "I'll have a look at his room while he is absent."

He did not wait for an answer, but walked back to the house with strides that taxed the legs and lungs of his two followers, and with a countenance that precluded anything in the way of inquiries.

"Show me Ivan's room, Joslyn, also the smoking-room," Boyd said hurriedly. "I wish to view both before Miss Zuboff sees me."

"This way," Joslyn nodded understandingly.

"I think she now is in the sitting-room. You had better detain her there while I am thus engaged. Bring her to the library in about five minutes and you will find me there."

The banker bowed again and hastened away to comply, while Boyd entered the Russian's room and glanced sharply about. It was in some disorder. Several discarded garments had been tossed over a chair. The bed had not been occupied, but the pillows on a couch indicated that it had been slept on. Boyd remained there only a few moments, then hastened to the smoking-room, where Coleman was awaiting him.

Though the curtains had been raised, the windows were closed and the stuffy odor of stale tobacco smoke and dead cigars filled the room. On the floor lay a broken pipe and some scattered strips of cut plug. On the table were several soiled glasses, a carafe partly filled with water, and two entirely empty

bottles, both of which Boyd sniffed suspiciously, while glancing at an overturned ash-tray, the contents of which were scattered over the table-cloth.

"Drunk is right, Jimmie, I reckon," he dryly remarked. "They drained both bottles and—humph! it's a wonder that Ivan did so well as to reach his room. I thought he looked badly off color when I first set eyes on him."

"You don't think he——"

"I shall know better what I think and what to do, Jimmie, after I visit the library," Boyd interrupted, with curious intonation. "There is nothing more for us here. I'll have a look at that secretary."

The library was vacant when they entered it, but they were joined almost immediately by Miss Zuboff and the banker. Boyd then was crouching at a heavy oak secretary which stood against one of the side walls. The several drawers had been broken open and most of their contents, consisting chiefly of papers and documents, were scattered over the floor.

"It is the work of novices in this line, Jimmie, not professional cracksmen," Boyd was curtly remarking when the others entered. "These drawers were forced with a chisel and the top edge of each near the broken lock presents the same peculiar—— Ah, Miss Zuboff, everything seems to indicate that your suspicions are well founded. If we can obtain any clue to the identity of your nihilist foes, we yet may be able to trace your property, and—oh, by the way, where are the two threatening letters you last received from them? They may help us in that direction. I think you said——"

"They are in my desk up-stairs," Miss Zuboff hastened to answer.

"Ah, yes, I remember. Will you be so good as to get them? Meantime, Joslyn, give me a description of the box in which the bonds were contained."

With a restless energy that seemed to spur him on at such times, Boyd hurried into the hall while he was speaking and again put on his heavy overcoat. He remained there while the banker complied with his request and until Miss Zuboff brought down the desired letters, at which he merely glanced, then thrust them into his pocket.

"I'm going to make a move to trace the rascals, Jimmie," he declared, with a quick glance at the Central Office man. "Unless I call you up by telephone, wait here until I return. I may be absent one hour, or possibly ten. I'll hand you these letters later, Miss Zuboff. I shall take Ivan with me. I may need one who can speak the Russian tongue. I hope I may have something favorable to report when I return. I'll pick Ivan up at the stable."

The last was said with a sly glance at the banker, who smiled faintly in return, and before any of his hearers could interpose, Boyd had opened the door and hurried from the house.

Joslyn walked into the library to gaze from the side window, and he presently saw the two men vault the wall back of the stable and hasten away through the lane mentioned. When he turned, after watching them until they disappeared, he found the Central Office man at his elbow.

"Where do you think he has gone, Detective Coleman?" he inquired. "And with what object?"

"Gone?" Coleman spoke with characteristic bluntness. "That's a question more easily asked than answered. I'm blessed if I know."

III.

The inmates of the house at Elmhurst had become nervous and impatient before Mr. Felix Boyd returned. The lamps in the hall, the library and the rear drawing-room had been lighted when Miss Zuboff, watching with anxious eyes at one of the side windows, beheld his tall figure appear like a silhouette against the field of snow across which he was striding in the clear starlight of the early evening. He came from the direction of the stable and lane, and she saw with some surprise that he was alone, and she hastened to inform her companions.

They met him with eager inquiries in the hall, too many and varied to be

briefly answered, and Boyd only smiled and shook his head while he removed his coat and hat.

His moody silence was hardly broken, moreover, until he repaired with Joslyn to the rear drawing-room, where the latter, now led by Boyd's earlier remarks and present demeanor to anticipate confidential disclosures concerning the absent Russian, suggested that he might impart the information desired.

"Very thoughtful of you, Joslyn, I am sure," Boyd remarked, as they entered the room. "I should have suggested it myself, if you had not done so. I will close the hall door and draw this portière between the parlors. It may be as well if we are not overheard."

"Is privacy so important?" Joslyn asked, with an inquiring stare.

"Well, it appears advisable."

"What has become of Ivan?"

"I shall presently inform you."

"And what can I tell you about the stolen bonds?"

"Possibly nothing at all, my dear Joslyn." Boyd's voice had taken on a curiously quiet ring. "It is less about the bonds than about this affair as a whole that I wish to confer with you. I think you may be able to enlighten me on many essential points. Sit down, Joslyn. Sit down and I will tell you in what way."

The banker complied and as he did so the light from a tall lamp on the table showed it had lost its color.

"To be perfectly frank with you, Joslyn, I have accomplished very little as yet. I have, in fact, only formed a theory in explanation of this affair, a theory which I wish to submit to you, together with some of the deductions on which it is based. If, while I elucidate them, you detect that they are illogical or incorrect in any detail, you may set me right when I have finished. I say this only because I do not want my train of thought broken too frequently. I know, therefore, that you will hear me patiently, Joslyn, and not interrupt me needlessly. I know that you will do so, because—dear me! a gun is a nuisance in one's hip pocket when one occupies an easy chair." Boyd spoke without the slightest change of tone, while he languidly straightened up and drew his revolver. "With your permission, Joslyn, I will leave it on the table during our interview."

The banker stared down at the weapon.

"What is the meaning of this beginning, Mr. Boyd?" he huskily demanded.

"It serves as a preface to the theory I am about to submit," he replied, in tones doubly ominous because of their quietude. "To begin with, Joslyn, this robbery was made possible only by one extraordinary act on your part. You long have known the history of Miss Zuboff and her father, the character of their foes, the nihilists, and the nature of the threats to which Miss Zuboff has been subjected."

"Well, suppose I have?"

"Not supposition, Joslyn, but absolute knowledge," Boyd quietly insisted. "Despite the threatening possibilties of which you were informed, moreover, you transferred from their security in town to this isolated country house these bonds valued at nearly a quarter-million, and you did this one week before the expiration of the trust imposed upon you under her father's will. Joslyn, a man actuated with some secret design of his own might have taken such a step."

"Do you dare imply——"

"That now is immaterial," Boyd interrupted. "My later discoveries prove that any suspicion of the nihilists is untenable. On the other hand, Joslyn, I can easily conceive that a man occupying an enviable social position, a man long a power in the financial world, proud of these distinctions, aggressive by nature and inflexible in his determination to maintain his prestige—I can easily conceive that such a man, if hopelessly involved in the stock market and threatened with impending ruin, might take desperate steps to replenish his failing resources. Such a man would readily have seen the opportunity presented by the circumstances under discussion."

"Are you speaking of me, Mr. Boyd?"

"To begin with, Joslyn"—Boyd ignored his question—"you attempted to divert suspicion upon others. You sent to Miss Zuboff the two threatening letters she received ten days ago, knowing that they would be attributed to the nihilists. You blundered, Joslyn. You lost sight of the fact that nine months had elapsed since she last heard from them, quite plainly indicating that they have ceased their persecutions; and also the fact that one's chirography cannot be so artfully disguised as to preclude detection by an expert. A comparison of the letters with your writing kindly inscribed in my note-book admits of only one conclusion."

"That may be your opinion only," Joslyn icily rejoined.

"We will not discuss it," Boyd curtly answered. "To continue, the footprints recently observed in the adjoining park and grounds point to nocturnal visits on your part, Joslyn; and of the two men said to have been seen about here last Friday evening, you undoubtedly were one. As she since has been your rather able confederate, it is safe to assume that the other person was your wife. To avert ruin and its deprivations, few women would shrink from a brief masquerade in male attire."

"This is absurd," Joslyn declared, with a sneer. "You do not believe it."

"The latter might be true if I had nothing to confirm it."

"Confirm it—impossible!"

"Follow me and be the judge," Boyd said, with more austerity. "Joslyn, you secretly drugged the wine drank by Ivan Rajenski and afterward removed him to his room, thus disposing of the only person likely to hear your later movements. You poured away most of the liquor thought to have intoxicated him. Having disposed of Ivan, you left your room through one of the windows and with a knife forced one of those in the laundry. There you blundered again, Joslyn. You should have known that the edge of the blade so would mar the sashes that one might easily deduce in which hand the knife was held. It is your misfortune to be left-handed, Joslyn, and——"

"Faugh!" The banker swayed slightly, caught himself in an instant, then added derisively: "Ingenious—very ingenious, Mr. Boyd. But there are many other left-handed men who are——"

"Unless I have other evidence to put with it," Boyd again interrupted. "I have it, Joslyn, all right. On the secretary drawers, which you forced with a chisel, I found the same left-handed evidence, also where you alighted after vaulting the wall back of the stable. It was in that direction you hastened after securing the box of bonds, which you had to remove from the house and place in some temporary concealment. My search to-day has been after them, Joslyn, not after the nihilists; and you blundered again in leaving tracks that indicated in what direction you took them. You will presently confess that I have not wasted my time nor energies in——"

"Stop!" The interruption came from Joslyn like a half-suppressed cry of frenzy. "You do not mean this! There is no truth in what you say! You are stating a theory only—you said it yourself! You have no evidence in support of it, no proof that——"

"You are wrong!" Boyd shouted, with sudden terrible sternness, half-starting from his chair. "Enter, Ivan! Bring in the box and let him see for himself! Enter, Ivan, and present him with the evidence of his——"

What more he might have said can only be conjectured, for more was needless. Even while he spoke the portière between the two parlors was violently swept aside, and the burly Russian, bearing in his hand a large, rectangular tin box, strode into the room; while in the semidarkness of the adjoining parlor, evidently having overheard the most that had been said, stood the Central Office man, grim and frowning, and Ursula Zuboff, as white as the knot of lace at her throat.

Boyd had seized upon the proper psychological moment for this culminating move. The instant Joslyn saw the tin box he uttered a cry that rang like a wail of despair through the house.

With one frantic move he jerked the table-cloth aside and set the lamp toppling, and Boyd sprang to catch it.

The hand of the banker, however, darted like a flash across the table and snatched up the detective's revolver. Leaping to his feet, upsetting the chair behind him, as white as a corpse under the awful impulse that moved him, Joslyn clapped the weapon to his head and pressed the trigger.

The crash of the chair upon the floor, the fall of the tin box, the terrified scream that broke from Ursula—all of these were drowned by the ringing report of the weapon. There was a cloud of smoke about Joslyn's head, the noise of a diverted bullet tearing through the ceiling—diverted by the hand of the man on whom he had aimed to place his own guilt—and then Ivan Rajenski had him by the throat, wrenching away the revolver and bearing him heavily to the floor.

"Capital! Good for you, Ivan!" Boyd roundly shouted, while he replaced the tottering lamp. "Hang onto him, old chap! Lend him a hand, Jimmie, and slip on a pair of bracelets. Don't be alarmed, Miss Zuboff. He has done himself no harm. We have our man, all right, and a tragedy luckily was averted."

"Very little to it, Jimmie, very little indeed," Mr. Felix Boyd remarked, while riding into town with the Central Office man that evening. "You overheard most of my deductions while listening to my talk with the rascal. Knowing that he is seriously involved in the market, I felt tolerably sure that he was my man from the start; but I found, after getting at the points mentioned, that I labored under the disadvantage of having nothing very tangible with which to pin him down. I felt sure I could make him weaken, however, by using a little stratgey."

"That of springing the empty box on him, eh?"

"Yes, one like that he so kindly described for me," smiled Boyd. "I had the design in view all the while that I was blinding him with an idea that I suspected Rajenski. I knew that he must have hidden the box somewhere in the woods across the lane, and I spent considerable time with Ivan in a vain attempt to find it. I then had no alternative but to go into town and get one as nearly like it as possible. I rightly inferred that Joslyn had also placed his own money and jewelry in the box, rather than take chances of concealing them in the house, and that he would wilt like a wet rag when led to believe that the box had been found. You saw how completely he collapsed."

"Well, rather!" Coleman grimly nodded.

"There then was nothing left for him but a confession, Jimmie, and I was glad to see him make it like a man. He confirmed my deductions at every point."

"That's right, too, Felix."

"I felt sure while he was telling it that his story of masked burglars was a lie," Boyd added musingly. "What an absurd idea, Jimmie, that crooks tied a woman so insecurely that she liberated herself. One of them needs must be free, however, when the servants entered, so it devolved upon the woman. I knew that Joslyn must have locked his door on the outside, then left the house through the laundry window and returned through that of his room. It took some little nerve to let his wife deal him such a blow on the head, but they reasoned that the anticipated reward was worth it."

"Yes, presumably," growled the Central Office man.

"Well, their reward is not what it should be, Jimmie," Boyd sighed and nestled into his coat. "For Miss Zuboff, having recovered her bonds, not only refused to appear against her wrongers, but also begged me to let the matter drop. She pleaded that this is Christmas day—Christmas day, Jimmie, and that—— Why, bless her dear, generous heart, what was a fellow to do?"

"Do?" blurted Coleman. "Do nothing, Felix. You've done enough."

A Chat With You

A GREAT many months ago we published a story with the unusual title, "The Men With the Scars." The story was as unusual as the title. It had a strange plot, and the manner of unfolding it was strange. It created the sensation which we expected, and some months later the author followed it with "Cobwebs of Conspiracy," which was even more warmly received. In next month's POPULAR we will publish "Red Reef," Howard Fitzalan's latest novel. We believe that the majority of our readers will pronounce it his best. It is a story of the wireless telegraph, of an attempt to darken a lighthouse so that a ship might be wrecked, of a mysterious and fascinating girl who is apparently the leader of a band of unprincipled adventurers gathered together from the slums of the four quarters of the earth. The time of the story is the present, the scene is the eastern shore of Maryland. The narrative is so realistic in its incident, and so well told, that it has the ring and conviction of truth. And yet you will find in it as strange and romantic a chain of happenings as you can find anywhere. All of which goes to show that the spirit of romance has not been killed by modern science, and that there are opportunities for real adventures on all sides of us.

RUNCIE'S Cowardice," by W. B. M. Ferguson, which will appear in the January POPULAR, is a story of college life and athletics. We have been promising, for some time, a series of college stories, and, meanwhile, we have been searching for the right man to tell the stories. Runcie, in Mr. Ferguson's story, is a young man with the frame of a gladiator, and undoubtedly one of the best athletes in the college. He is strangely lacking in college spirit, and refuses consistently to play upon the football-team, which sadly needs him. At the critical moment in the big game of the season his classmates find out what has been the matter with him. Runcie is a strong character and well worth knowing.

WE urged you a month ago to read "The Hemlock Avenue Mystery." We are gratified to know that you have taken our advice, and the knowledge is all the more gratifying since it comes in the form of numerous requests for the advance proofs of the other two instalments of the story. The third and best part of this novel will be found in the January issue.

DON'T fail to read Egerton's two-part story, "Weapons of Women." The first half appears in the present issue of the magazine. By this time you know that J. Kenilworth Egerton is an author who can absolutely be depended upon to always write a good story. You will find the present adven-

ture of Mr. Tommy Williams fully up to previous stories in interest and excitement.

IMAGINE yourself in possession of an up-to-date, high-powered automobile—one of the fastest in the country. Also imagine that you have no money and no other possession save a good training in the art of handling and running a motor-car. What would you do? Would you sell the car and hunt for a job, or would you try and make the car earn your living for you? In the new series of stories, "The Exploits of the Red Meteor," the first of which will appear next month, the central figure is confronted with a problem of this kind. He chooses to stick to the automobile, and sets out in the world, a modern knight-errant, mounted in a big red car instead of on a charger. His first adventure has to do with the kidnaping of a young lady of some prominence. We enjoyed reading the story so much that we do not want to spoil it for you by telling you too much in advance.

"THE Pride of a Man," by A. M. Chisholm, which will also appear next month, is a story of the lumber region of the Canadian northwest. In "The Boss of the Bonnechere," Mr. Chisholm has already shown how great is his knowledge of the big, primitive characters of this country, and how vividly he can make them live for the reader. We do not say that "The Pride of a Man" is a better story than "The Boss of the Bonnechere." We considered that just about as good, in its way, as any story we have read in a long time. We know, however, that "The Pride of a Man" will make a personal appeal to a great many people for whom the previous tale had nothing more than the pleasurable interest aroused by a very good story. In "The Pride of a Man" Mr. Chisholm has hit upon one of the underlying principles of human nature. No man who has won and lost fights with himself and with the world can escape its message.

NEED we say that we will offer you a collection of unusually good Western stories in the next issue of THE POPULAR? We believe that you have grown to expect that with every issue of the magazine. If we ever disappoint you—but we won't disappoint you, so why discuss the results of a contingency which we do not anticipate? "In the Smoky Hills," by Bertrand Sinclair; "The Deserter," by B. M. Bower, and "On Manzanita Hill," by Charles Kroth Moser, are all stories with a Western setting, but differing widely in plot, character and manner of treatment.

IN THE POPULAR for January you will read the first instalment of "The Yellow Face," by Fred M. White, who has never written for any magazine before, but whose books have had a wide sale. This is a mystery story of the highest type, a tale in which event follows event with breathless rapidity, and which confronts the reader with a puzzle that grows more difficult and fascinating until the very close.

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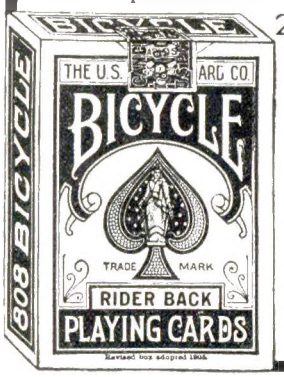

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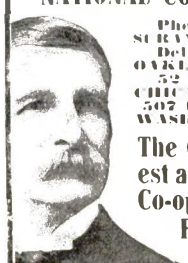

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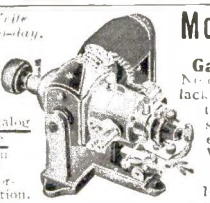

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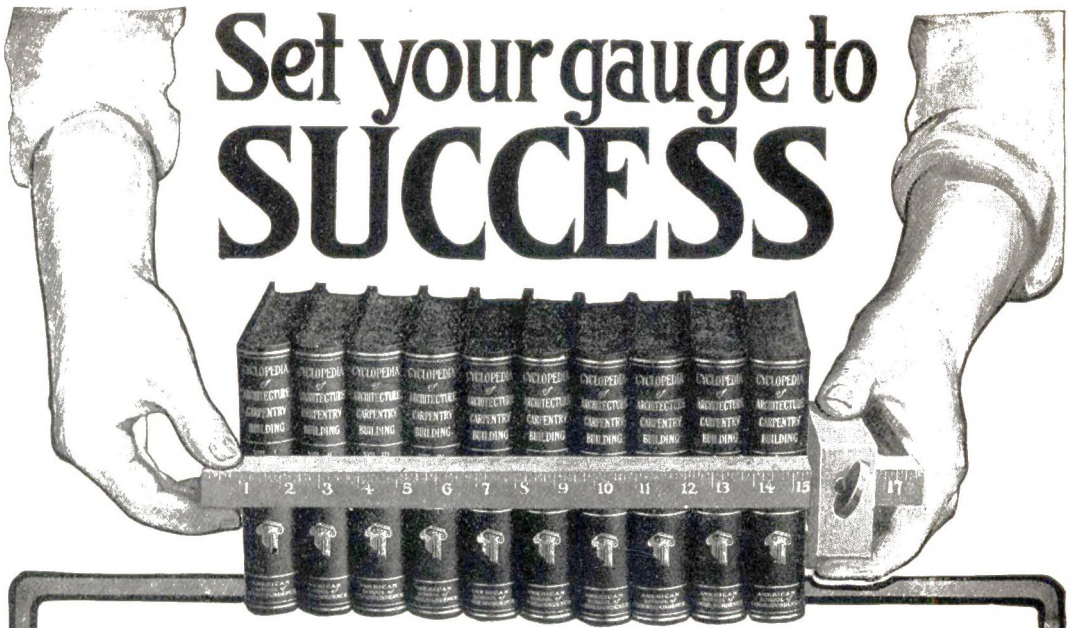

¶ If you are a young man the training you are getting **now** will determine your success or failure in later life. You should let no opportunity slip by to make yourself master of your own trade or profession. If you have no regular trade or profession now, this is an exceptional opportunity to acquire the special training that you need. ***Set your gauge to su c ss and turn the clamp down hard.***

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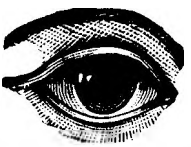

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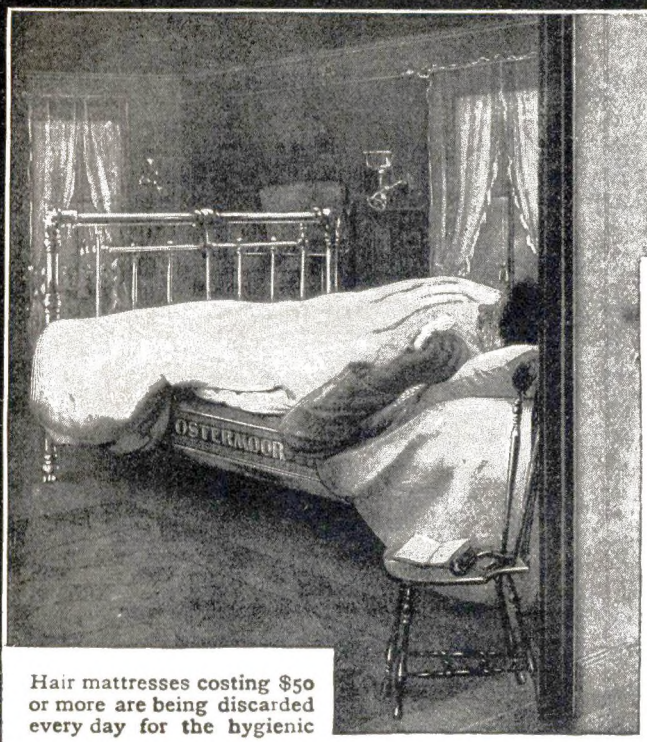

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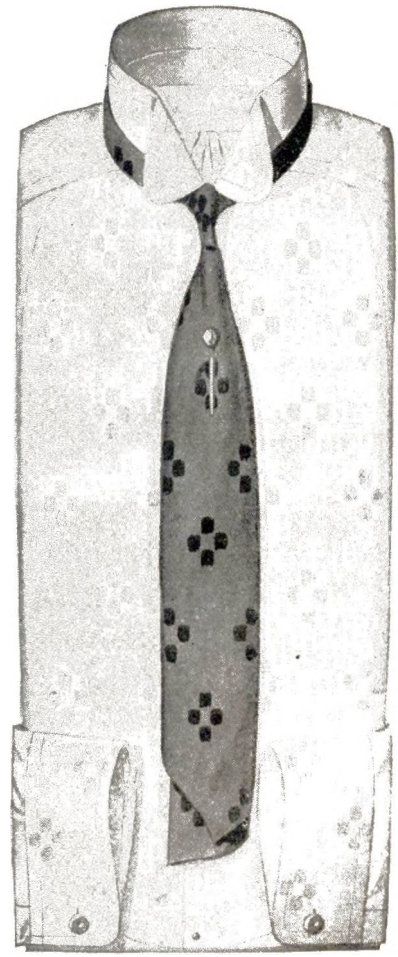
THE UP-TO-DATE MAN

FASHION simply means a judicious union of good form and good taste in dress. Good form is what the majority of men accept as the best usage. Good taste is choosing that cut, color, and cloth most becoming to the individual. The average man falls into the easy error of trying to dress in "the height of fashion," unmindful of the fact that this requires time, money, and many natural advantages of stature, poise, and good looks. Extreme modes always render the wearer conspicuous, and unless everything that he has on be in complete keeping, he appears as out of his element as a fish on land. For example, notice how closely you scrutinize a man dressed in ceremonious afternoon clothes—frock coat, silk hat, and so on. Almost unconsciously, your keen eye searches out every detail and is quick to find an incongruity here or a discrepancy there, which ordinarily would be overlooked. Unless that man be impeccable from head to heel, you promptly conclude that he is not a "fashionable," but rather a clumsy imitator. Dressing, then, in the height of fashion is not desirable for the average man, because he cannot carry out in every particular the impression of extreme modishness which he seeks to convey.

But every man may dress with good taste and follow good form in its broad sense. Certain colors are becoming to some of us and unbecoming to others. Stripes tend to make the small man look taller, whereas, plaids only accentuate his lack of height. Pronounced cravat colors like red, and delicate shades like heliotrope, are totally unsuited to him whose complexion is sallow, though they appear to advantage on those of us whose color is high and whose skin is clear. Paying heed to these considerations may seem finical, but it is the seeming trifles which count for

Correct Winter Sack Coat

most in making a man well-dressed. All things cannot in reason be adapted to all men. As individuals differ in stature, coloring, and cast of features, so must their clothes differ to achieve an agreeable, becoming effect. If a man makes any pretense to following the fashion, he should always study what



Correct Winter Shirt and Tie.

is safe for him to take up and what is best to let alone. And the results attendant upon a little thought and taste are well worth while.

The sack coat illustrated this month pictures the fashionable cut for winter. It is not radically new, but then the mode never changes by revolution, but by evolution. The softly rolled lapels, buttons set closely together, and

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rounded front are well-balanced and symmetrical. In colors, it is all green, brown, and their offshoots. In patterns, it is all stripes. Checks and plaids have lost the spice of novelty. Notably good form are designs variously known as shadow, masked, feather, or mystic stripes. These are almost invisible to the eye unless the light shines upon the cloth at a certain angle.

Never have so many of what are called "high colors" been used in sack suits as this winter. One finds at the best tailors such curious shades as mustard and deep purple. Certain it is that after a long reign of subdued colors our clothes are taking on a sprightliness—I had almost said "giddiness"—that ought to find favor among those who have been heatedly declaiming against the "inky gloom" of men's dress.

Since many well-dressed men continue partial to a fancy waistcoat with the business suit, the tailors have designed a new sack coat which is something of an innovation. It is known as the "cutaway sack," and, as its name implies, is decidedly cut away at the bottom in front to show a good bit of the fancy waistcoat. As the lapels are cut extremely low, the waistcoat peeps out both above and beneath, lending a pleasing dash of color to lounge dress. The "cutaway sack" has only two front buttons, the lower of which is not fastened. The topmost button is only used to give a sort of pivot or anchorage to the coat, which sits easily on the shoulders and fits roomily across the chest. A single front button may be substituted for two, if the wearer so desires, though this subjects that button to a severe strain.

Scarfs are narrow and tied into a slim, tapering knot. While the wing collar is again an aspirant for favor, the fold or turn-over collar with edges meeting closely in front is still preferred to accompany the sack suit. Green and brown are fashionable cravat colors to harmonize with the colors most approved in suitings. In both the essentials and incidentals of dress it is to be a season of stripes, stripes, stripes. Suits, shirts, cravats, even hose clearly show the all-embracing vogue of striped patterns.

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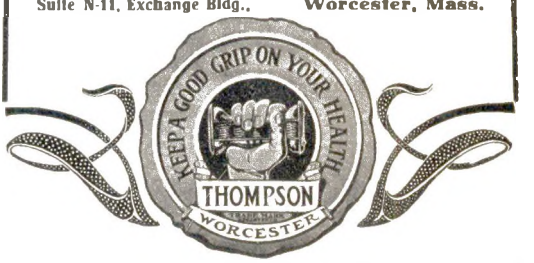

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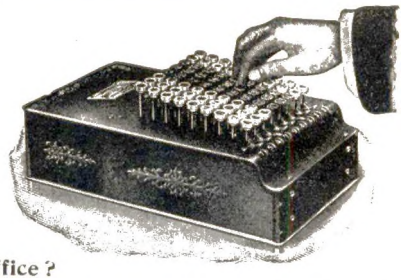

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THE YUKON BASIN GOLD DREDGING COMPANY is an international company organized under the territorial laws of the United States, registered and sanctioned by the strict laws of the Dominion of Canada. Its properties are 105 miles river frontage, or more than 10,000 acres on the famous Stewart River, the richest gold bearing placer field in the world. Title absolute from the Canadian Government through William Ogilvie, former governor of Yukon Territory and now president and actual field manager of the Yukon Basin Gold Dredging Company.

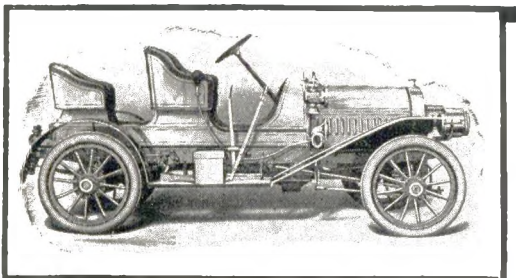
THE GOLD DREDGE A WONDERFUL MODERN INVENTION Each dredge put in the field will do the work of 1,000 men, and we propose to install twelve as rapidly as it is possible to make the arrangements. The ground is fully tested and immensely valuable.

This is the biggest gold dredging proposition in America. Careful tests covering 30 miles of our leaseholds averaged more than $1.05 per yard. Fabulous fortunes are being made dredging in California on ground averaging only 15c per yard.

$10.00 FOR EVERY $1.00 INVESTED. We consider this stock intrinsically worth par, and that in a reasonable length of time it will be paying large dividends on that amount. A limited amount of full paid, non-assessable stock will be sold for development purposes at **10 CENTS** per share; **soon to be advanced to 25 cents. Par value $1.00.** Stock may be had on ten monthly installment payments.

Write for prospectus containing minutest details. Write and ask questions. Address

YUKON BASIN GOLD DREDGING CO., **207 SCARRITT BLDG., KANSAS CITY, MO.**



¶ Wheel base, 98 inches; weight, 1750 pounds; 24 horse power; La Coste magneto. Price, $2300.

The World's Record Sealed Bonnet Hero

Mora

MECHANICALLY RIGHT.

Has run over 6000 miles with Bonnet sealed, and without repairs to Power Plant

¶ **You win** if before purchase you examine mechanical construction.

¶ **You lose** if you decide on purchase from exterior appearance alone.

¶ **The Sealed Bonnet** tells the world's record of strenuous reliability only possible through mechanical perfection. It's free for the asking; it's worth consideration.

Have you heard of the

Mora Tourer six *Mora Racytype six*

Reliability unquestionable. Highest power in proportion to weight of any (bar none). Material and workmanship unsurpassable. Investigate.

See it; Sec. D., A. C. A. Show, New York, October 24th to 31st.

Mora Motor Car Company

8 Mora Place

Newark, New York, U. S. A.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

The Incarnation of Efficiency

Thanks to the Oliver Typewriter, the word "Efficiency" is not a mere symbol, but *a living thing.*

The Oliver is the embodiment—the very *incarnation* of *efficiency.* It came into being little more than a decade ago—born of the resistless spirit of Chicago's great *"I Will!"*

It bloomed into perfection in the electric atmosphere of *"Do It Now!"*

Deep rooted in the soil of Practical Experience, it drew to itself the best thought and highest skill of men of genius and originality, hence its inherent ability to *"Do It Right!"*

The outward symmetry and beauty of the New Model Oliver No. 5 are reflected in its inner mechanism.

In the simplicity, precision and perfect unison of its working parts lies the "open secret" of the Oliver's world-wide fame.

"Comparisons are odious"—to competitors—but we must make them, because the Oliver is the *standard* of comparison by which all typewriters are judged.

It stands, in splendid isolation, apart from all other writing machines both new and old.

From the tip of its U-shaped type bars to its non-vibrating base it is *different* and *better.*

Who ever heard of "Visible Writing" until the Oliver made it a *reality?*

Who ever thought of a "Disappearing Indicator" until the advent of Oliver No. 5?

Where else will you find a "Ruling Device"—a "Balance Shift"—a "Double Release"—an "Automatic Paper Register" on a typewriter?

Who ever dreamed that a mere *machine* could do all that the Oliver does?

The OLIVER Typewriter

The Standard Visible Writer

is first of all a Correspondence Machine, but it does the work of many others.

It has no "speed limit." You can tell a letter written on the Oliver by the "watermark" of *neatness.* There's *style* and *character* in every line and *beauty* on every page.

Its "carbons" are clear and readable, and it prints up to 20 copies at a time.

The business whose typewriting needs are most exacting is the one that most needs the Oliver.

Any employer or operator desiring a free demonstration of the Oliver Typewriter can secure same, without obligation of any sort, by communicating with any of our Branch Offices or with the General Offices in Chicago.

Christmas Souvenir FREE

The carnation is the official flower of the Oliver Typewriter Company. Our appreciation of the record-breaking business of the year, expressed in the form of illuminated copies of "The Symphony of Success" (suitable for framing) with carnation decoration will be mailed to any address, postpaid, upon request. Address promptly—

The Oliver Typewriter Company

27 Oliver Typewriter Building, Chicago

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

This photograph is directly from the goods, and shows *their exact size.*

M 683: Solid Gold Brooch, 6 Pearls $5.50
M 684: Solid Gold Brooch, 1 Pearl 3.25
M 685: Solid Gold Brooch, 1 Pearl 3.00
M 686: Solid Gold Elk's Button 1.50
M 687: Solid Gold Brooch, 1m. Amethyst 6.50
M 688: Solid Gold Cuff Buttons 2.75
M 689: Solid Silver Elk's Bag Tag 1.25
M 690: Solid Gold Waist Set, 3 Pins 4.50
M 691: Solid Gold Pendant, 6 Pearls, 1 Peridot 3.75
M 692: Solid Gold Cross, Roman Finish 2.50
M 693: Diamond Ring, Carved Mounting 10.00
M 694: Solid Gold Handy Pin, 10 Pearls 2.00
M 695: Solid Gold Scarf Pin, Garnet 3.25
M 696: Solid Gold Masonic Charm 2.50
M 697: Solid Gold Locket, Diamond 10.00
M 698: Solid Gold Scarf Pin, 1 Pearl 2.00
M 699: Solid Gold Scarf Pin, Baroque Pearl 4.00
M 700: Solid Silver Birthmonth Spoon, Any Month 1.25
M 701: Solid Silver Hat Marker .50
M 702: Gold Signet Scarf Pin.. 2.00

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No other gift is quite so certain to gratify its recipient. It is at once recognized that the donor was satisfied to give only the best. Any of the above pieces will be sent promptly, charges prepaid, upon receipt of price. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned without argument. Goods will be sent C. O. D., subject to examination, if desired.

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It is no ordinary book. It is handsome, of course, but its real value is in the *service* it gives—the *accuracy* of its presentation of what is admittedly the world's greatest stock of strictly high class Jewelry, Diamonds, Silver, Plated Wares, Cut Glass, China and Leather Things, and the *integrity of its descriptions* renders it an absolutely *safe* guide at any distance. It is enlarged to 224 pages (large 12mo) and contains more than 6,000 "portraits from life" of things for every imaginable gift occasion. They are reproduced *photographs direct from the goods—not* clever drawings. It exhibits items ranging from 25 cents to $1,200—*every article* guarded by the historic "Peacock Guaranty," 70 years in service. Write at once for "Shopping Guide No. 11"; it will go promptly and without charge to any point in the world. A postal suffices.

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Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

'Ever-Ready' 12 Bladed Safety Razor $1

The razor that has "made good" a million times

Photo of $1.00 Set with 12 Blades

We **guarantee** with a guarantee that returns you your money after trial—that the **new "Ever Ready" 12 Bladed Dollar Safety Razor** will shave you best of **all** safety razors. This means $5.00 ones and it goes with lesser priced sorts without saying.

No other razor blade in existence is so capable of its shaving mission as the **Ever-Ready** blade and there are **twelve** (12) **Ever-Ready blades** in each set complete for **$1.00**. A Million **Ever-Ready** Safety Razors are giving that sought-for, easy, safety shave to a million users. This proves conclusively the pre-eminence of the **dollar Ever-Ready** over high priced makes or poor imitations. Each **Ever-Ready** set is complete at $1.00, containing handsome safety frame, **12** intensely sharp **Ever-Ready** blades, handle and Blade stropper all in compact case.

Extra "Ever-Ready" Blades 10 for 50c.

You don't throw dull blades away—**Ever-Ready** blades are too good for that. You simply strop back the keen edge or exchange **10 dull blades for 10 new ones upon payment of 35 cents.** The **Ever-Ready** is least priced of all—the least priced to maintain and the finest ever.

"Ever-Ready" blades to fit "Yankee," "Star," and "Gem" frames or to add to your **"Ever-Ready"** set—**10 for 50 cents.**

Sold by **Hardware, Cutlery, Department Stores, Jewelers** and **Druggists** throughout America and the World.

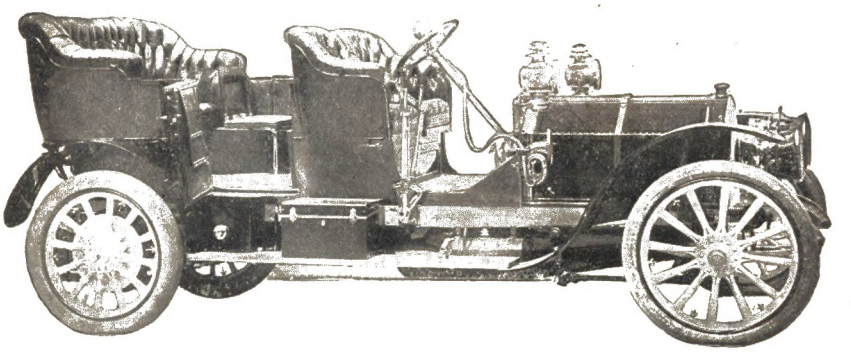
Mail Orders prepaid upon receipt of $1.00.

AMERICAN SAFETY RAZOR CO., Inc., *Makers*, **320 Broadway, NEW YORK**

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you. I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

FIAT

AUTOMOBILE COMPANY



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COMPLETE, $6000.00

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Touring Bodies, $1000.00, Closed Bodies, $1500.00

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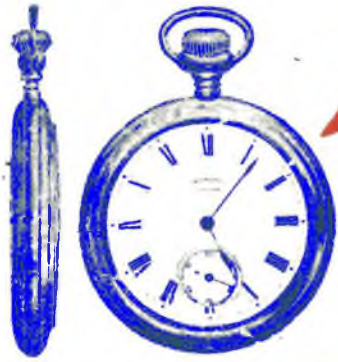
Responsible Agents Wanted in All Principal Cities



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The New "Junior" Thin-Model Ingersoll Watch

This newest Ingersoll meets the most exacting modern demand for extremely small, thin-model watches—yet it costs but a fractional part of the price of any other thin-model watch on the market. The beauty of its case lines and finish (nickel, gun metal or "gold") can only be fully appreciated by seeing this watch and handling it—by finding out how easily and unobtrusively it fits in the pocket. Its fine mechanism and adjustment produce unusual close-timing, and like all Ingersolls, it is a *guaranteed* time-keeper.

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