

JAN., 1905

194 PAGES CHOICE FICTION

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# The Popular Magazine



DRAWN BY  
HAMILTON KING

A COMPANION STORY TO "SHE" BY H. RIDER HAGGARD IN THIS NUMBER

# H. Rider Haggard's long-expected Companion Story to "She" Begins in This Number.

VOL. III.

NO. 3

## The Popular Magazine

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# THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. III.

JANUARY, 1905.

No. 3.

## AYESHA

### THE FURTHER HISTORY OF SHE-WHO-MUST-BE-OBEYED

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD

*Author of "She," "Allan Quatermain," "King Solomon's Mines," Etc.*

**NOTE.**—It is with great pleasure that we present herewith the first installment of what is destined to prove the most important serial scheduled for publication in the United States in 1905. This serial is the long-looked-for sequel to "She," H. Rider Haggard's masterpiece, which was the most popular novel of the Nineteenth Century. Since that time, when Mr. Haggard awoke to find that his story, "She-Who-Must-Be-Obed," had made him famous in a single night, he has been importuned by publishers the world over to write a sequel. Mr. Haggard steadfastly refused until at last, feeling a desire to write something that would serve as a capstone to his remarkable literary career, he produced "Ayesha," the sequel to his best known novel.

The original "She" has been read by many millions of people in all parts of the globe. It has been translated into eight languages, and is still one of the most popular novels in the libraries of America and England. The marvelous details of the journey of Horace Holly and Leo Vincey into the mysterious regions of Central Africa where dwelt "She-Who-Must-Be-Obed," the royal queen, who, bathed in the flames of the Pillar of Life, had won immortality, are as fresh in the memory of the reading public of to-day as are the happenings of yesterday.

How many have forgotten the culminating scene when "She" bathed again in the Pillar of Life, and in view of her lover, Leo Vincey, dropped in the rose-colored flames her youth and wondrous beauty as one drops a garment from the body? And how many have forgotten "She's" last words, "Forget me not—have pity on my shame. I die not. I shall come again and shall once more be beautiful. I swear it—it is true!"

In "Ayesha" is described the reincarnation, and the further adventures of "She" and Leo Vincey and Horace Holly, their devoted friend. As a work of literature it is more mature and even more fascinating than the original book.—THE EDITORS.

### INTRODUCTION.

VERILY and indeed it is the unexpected that happens! Probably if there was one person upon the earth from whom the editor of this, and of a certain previous history, did not expect to hear again, that person was Ludwig Horace Holly. This, too, for a good reason; he believed him to have taken his departure from the earth.

When Mr. Holly last wrote, many, many years ago, it was to transmit the manuscript of "She," and to announce that he and his ward, Leo Vincey, the beloved of the divine Ayesha, were about to travel to Central Asia in the hope, I suppose, that there she would fulfill her promise and appear to them again.

Often I have wondered, idly enough, what happened to them there; whether

they were dead, or perhaps droning their lives away as monks in some Thibetan lamasery, or studying magic and practicing asceticism under the tuition of the Eastern Masters in the hope that thus they would build a bridge by which they might pass to the side of their adored Immortal.

Now at length, when I had not thought of them for months, without a single warning sign, out of the blue, as it were, comes the answer to these wonderings!

To think—only to think—that I, the editor aforesaid, from its appearance suspecting something quite familiar and without interest, pushed aside that dingy, unregistered, brown-paper parcel directed in an unknown hand, and for two whole days let it lie forgotten. Indeed, there it might be lying now, had not another person been moved to curiosity, and opening it, found within a bundle of manuscript badly burned upon the back, and with this two letters addressed to myself.

Although so great a time has passed since I saw it, and it was shaky now from the author's age or sickness, I knew the writing at once—nobody ever made an "H" with that peculiar twirl under it except Mr. Holly. I tore open the sealed envelope, and, sure enough, the first thing my eye fell upon was the signature, *L. H. Holly*. It is long since I read anything so eagerly as I did that letter. Here it is:

"MY DEAR SIR: I have ascertained that you still live, and, strange to say, I still live also—for a little while.

"As soon as I came into touch with civilization again I found a copy of your book '*She*,' or rather of my book, and read it—first of all in a Hindostani translation. My host—he was a minister of some dissenting body, a man of worthy but prosaic mind—expressed wonder that a 'wild romance' should absorb me so much. I answered that those who had wide experience of the hard facts of life often found interest in romance. Had he known what were the facts to which I alluded, I wonder what that excellent person would have said?

"I see that you carried out your part of the business well and faithfully. Every instruction has been obeyed, nothing has been added or taken away. Therefore, to you, to whom some twenty years ago I intrusted the beginning of the history, I wish to intrust its end also. You were the first to learn of *She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed*, who from century to century sat alone, clothed with unchanging loveliness in the sepulchers of Kôr, waiting till her lost love was born again, and destiny brought him back to her.

"It is right, therefore, that you should be the first to learn also of Ayesha, Hesea of the Mountain, the priestess of that oracle which since the time of Alexander the Great has reigned between the flaming pillars in the sanctuary, the last holder of the scepter of Hes or Isis upon the earth. It is right, also, that to you first among men I should reveal the mystic consummation of the wondrous tragedy which began at Kôr, or perchance earlier in Egypt and elsewhere.

"I am very ill; I have struggled back to this old house of mine to die, and my end is at hand. I have asked the doctor here, after all is over, to send you the record—that is, unless I change my mind and burn it first. You will also receive, if you receive anything at all, a case containing several rough sketches which may be of use to you, and a *sistrum*, the instrument that has been always used in the worship of Isis and Hathor, which you will see is as ancient as it is beautiful. I give it to you for two reasons; as a token of my regard, and as the only piece of evidence that is left to me of the literal truth of what I have written in the accompanying manuscript, where you will find it often mentioned. Perhaps, also, you will value it as a souvenir of, I suppose, the strangest and loveliest being who ever was, or rather, is. It was her scepter, the rod of her power, with which I saw her salute the shadows in the sanctuary, and her gift to me.

"It has virtues, also; some part of Ayesha's might yet haunts the symbol to which even spirits bowed, but if you



should discover them, beware how they are used.

"I have neither the strength nor the will to write more. The record must speak for itself. Do with it what you like, and believe it or not as you like. I care nothing who know that it is true, and who depart to solve its inner mysteries. I wish you happiness and good fortune. Farewell to you and to all.

"L. HORACE HOLLY."

I laid the letter down, and, filled with sensations that it is useless to attempt to analyze, opened the second envelope of which I also print the contents, omitting only certain irrelevant portions, and the name of the writer, as, it will be noted, he requests me to do.

This letter, that was dated from a remote place upon the shores of Cumberland, ran as follows:

"DEAR SIR: As the doctor who attended Mr. Holly in his last illness, I am obliged, in obedience to a promise that I made to him, to become an intermediary in a somewhat strange business, although in truth it is one of which I know very little, however much it may have interested me. Still, I do so only on the strict understanding that no mention is to be made of my name in connection with the matter, or of the locality in which I practice.

"About ten days ago I was called in to see Mr. Holly at an old house upon the cliff that for many years remained untenanted except by the caretakers, but which I believe was his property, and had been in his family for generations. The housekeeper who summoned me told me that her master had but just returned from abroad, somewhere in Asia, she said, and that he was very ill with his heart—dying, she believed; both of which suppositions proved to be accurate.

"I found the patient sitting up in bed—to ease his heart—and a strange-looking old man he was. He had dark eyes, small but full of fire and intelligence, a magnificent and snowy-white beard, that covered a chest of extraordinary breadth, and hair also white which encroached upon his forehead and face so

much that it met the whiskers upon his cheeks. His arms were remarkable for their length and strength, but one of them seemed to have been much torn by some animal. He told me that a dog had done this, but if so it must have been a dog of unusual power. He was a very ugly man, and yet, forgive the bull, beautiful. I cannot describe what I mean better than by saying that his face was not like the face of any ordinary mortal whom I have met in my limited experience. Were I an artist who wished to portray a wise and benevolent but rather grotesque spirit, I should take that countenance as a model.

"Mr. Holly was somewhat vexed at my being called in, which had been done without his knowledge, but soon we became friendly enough, and he expressed gratitude for the relief that I was able to give him, though I could not hope to do more. At different times he talked to me a good deal of the various countries in which he had traveled, apparently for very many years, upon some strange quest that he never clearly defined to me. Twice, also, he became light-headed, and spoke for the most part in languages that I identified as Greek and Arabic; occasionally in English also, when he appeared to be addressing himself to a being who was the object of his veneration, I might almost say of his worship. What he said, however, I prefer not to repeat, for I heard it in my professional capacity.

"One day he pointed to a rough box made of some foreign wood—the same that I have now duly dispatched to you by train—and, giving me your name and address, said that without fail it was to be forwarded to you after his death. Also, he asked me to do up a manuscript, which, like the box, was to be sent to you.

"He saw me looking at the last sheets, which had been burned away, and said—I repeat his exact words:

"'Yes, yes, that can't be helped now, it must go as it is. You see, I made up my mind to burn it, after all, and it was already on the fire when the command came—the clear, unmistakable command—and I snatched it off again.'

"What Mr. Holly meant by this 'command' I do not know, for he would speak no more of the matter.

"I pass on to the last scene. One night about eleven o'clock, knowing that his end was near, I went up to see him, proposing to inject some strychnine to keep the heart going a little longer. Before I reached the house I met the caretaker coming to seek me in a great fright, and asked her if her master was dead. She answered 'No; but he was gone—had got out of bed, and, just as he was, barefooted, had left the house, and was last seen by her grandson among the very Scotch firs where we were talking. The lad, who was terrified out of his wits, for he thought that he beheld a ghost, had told her so.

"The moonlight was very brilliant that night, especially as fresh snow had fallen, which reflected its rays. I was on foot, and began to search among the firs, till presently, just outside of them, I found the track of naked feet in the snow. Of course I followed, calling to the housekeeper to go and wake her husband, for no one else lives near by. The spoor proved very easy to trace across the clean sheet of snow. It ran up the slope of a hill behind the house.

"Now, on the crest of this hill is an ancient monument of upright monoliths set there by some primeval people, known locally as the Devil's Ring—a sort of miniature Stonehenge, in fact. I had seen it several times, and happened to have been present not long ago at a meeting of an archæological society when its origin and purpose were discussed. I remember that one learned but somewhat eccentric gentleman read a short paper upon a rude and hooded bust and head which is cut within the chamber of a tall, flat-topped cromlech, or dolmen, which stands alone in the center of the ring.

"He said that it was a representation of the Egyptian goddess, Isis, and that this place had once been sacred to some form of her worship, a suggestion that the other learned gentlemen treated as absurd. They declared that Isis had never traveled into Britain, though for my part I do not see why the Phœni-

cians, or even the Romans, who adopted her cult, more or less, should not have brought it here. But I know nothing of such matters, and will not discuss them.

"I remembered also that Mr. Holly was acquainted with this place, for he had mentioned it to me on the previous day, asking if the stones were still uninjured as they used to be when he was young. He added, also, and the remark struck me, that yonder was where he would like to die. When I answered that I feared he would never take so long a walk again, I noted that he smiled a little.

"Well, this conversation gave me a clew, and without troubling more about the footprints I went on as fast as I could to the ring, half a mile or so away. Presently I reached it, and there—yes, there—standing by the cromlech, bareheaded, and clothed in his night things only, stood Mr. Holly in the snow, the strangest figure, I think, that ever I beheld.

"Indeed never shall I forget that wild scene. The circle of rough, single stones pointing upward to the star-strewn sky, intensely lonely and intensely solemn; the tall trilithon towering above them in the center, its shadow, thrown by the bright moon behind it, lying long and black upon the dazzling sheet of snow, and there, standing clear of the shadow so that I could distinguish his every motion, and even the rapt look upon his dying face, the white-draped figure of Mr. Holly. He appeared to be uttering some invocation—in Arabic, I think—for long before I reached him I could catch the tones of his full sonorous voice, and see his waving, outstretched arms. In his right hand he held the looped scepter which, by his express wish, I send to you with the drawings. I could catch the flash of the jewels strung upon the wires, in the stillness hear the tinkling of its golden bells.

"Presently, too, I seemed to become aware of another presence, and now you will understand why I desire and must ask that my identity should be suppressed. Naturally enough, I do not

wish to be mixed up with a superstitious tale which is, on the face of it, impossible and absurd. Yet under all the circumstances I think it right to tell you that I saw, or thought I saw, something gather in the shadow of the central dolmen, or emerge from its rude chamber—I know not which for certain—something bright and glorious that gradually took the form of a woman upon whose forehead burned a star-like fire.

"At any rate, the vision or reflection, or whatever it was, startled me so much that I came to a halt under the lee of one of the monoliths, and found myself unable even to call to the distraught man whom I pursued.

"While I stood thus it became clear to me that Mr. Holly also saw something. At least he turned toward the radiance and the shadow, uttered one cry; a wild, glad cry, stepped forward, then seemed to fall *through it* onto his face.

"When I reached the spot the light had vanished, and all I found was Mr. Holly, his arms still outstretched, and the scepter gripped tightly in his hand, lying stone dead in the shadow of the tall trilithon."

The rest of the doctor's letter need not be quoted, as it deals only with certain very improbable explanations of the origin of the figure of light, the details of the removal of the body, and of how he managed to satisfy the coroner that no inquest was necessary.

The box of which he speaks arrived safely. Of the drawings in it I need say nothing, and of the *sistrum* or scepter only a few words. It was fashioned of crystal to the well-known shape of the *crux ansata*, or the emblem of life of the Egyptians; the rod, the cross and the loop combined in one. From side to side of this loop ran golden wires, and on these were strung gems of three colors, glittering diamonds, sea-blue sapphires, and blood-red rubies, while to the fourth wire, that at the top, hung four little golden bells.

When I took hold of it first my arm shook slightly with excitement, and those bells began to sound; a sweet, faint music like to that of chimes heard

far away at night in the silence of the ocean. I thought, too, but doubtless this was fancy, that a thrill passed from the hallowed and beautiful thing into my body.

On the mystery itself, as it is recorded in the manuscript, I make no comment. Of it and its inner significations every reader must form his or her own judgment. One thing alone is clear to me—on the hypothesis that Mr. Holly tells the truth as to what he and Leo Vincey saw and experienced, which I at least believe—that though sundry interpretations of that mystery were advanced by Ayesha and others, none of them are at all satisfactory.

Indeed, like Mr. Holly, I incline to the theory that *She*, if I may still call her by that name, although it is not given to her in these pages, put forward some of them, such as the vague Isis myth, and the wondrous picture story of the mountain fire, as mere veils to hide the truth which it was her purpose to reveal in the song she never sang.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE DOUBLE SIGN.

Hard on twenty years have gone by since that night of Leo's Vision—the most awful years that were ever endured by men—twenty years of search and hardship ending in soul-shaking wonder and amazement.

I, Ludwig Horace Holly, have been very ill; they carried me, more dead than alive, down those mountains whose lowest slopes I can see from my window, for I write this on the northern frontiers of India. Indeed, any other man had long since perished, but destiny kept my breath in me, perhaps that a record might remain. I must bide here a month or two till I am strong enough to travel homeward, for I have a fancy to die in the place where I was born. So while I have strength I will put the story down, or at least those parts of it that are most essential, for much can, or at any rate must, be omitted.

I will begin with the Vision.

After Leo Vincey and I came back from Africa in 1885, desiring solitude, which indeed we needed sorely to recover from the fearful shock we had experienced, and to give us time and opportunity to think, we went to an old house upon the shores of Cumberland that has belonged to my family for many generations. This house, unless somebody has taken it, believing me to be dead, is still my property and thither I travel to die.

Those whose eyes read the words I write, if any should ever read them, may ask—What shock?

Well, I am Horace Holly, and my companion, my beloved friend, my son in the spirit whom I reared from infancy was—nay, is—Leo Vincey.

We are those men who, following an ancient clew, traveled to the Caves of Kôr in Central Africa, and there discovered her whom we sought, the immortal *She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed*. In Leo she found her love, that re-born Kallikrates, the Grecian priest of Isis whom some two thousand years before she had slain in her jealous rage. In her also I found the divinity whom I was doomed to worship from afar, not with the flesh, for that is all lost and gone from me, but, what is sorer still, because its burden is undying, with the will and soul which animate a man throughout the countless æons of his being. The flesh dies, or at least it changes, and its passions pass, but that other passion of the spirit—that longing for oneness—is undying as itself.

It will be remembered that in Kôr we found the immortal woman. There before the flashing rays and vapors of the Pillar of Life she declared her love, and then in our very sight was swept to a death so horrible that even now, after all which has been and gone, I shiver at its recollection. Yet what were her last words? "*Forget me not . . . have pity on my shame. I die not. I shall come again and shall once more be beautiful. I swear it—it is true.*"

In that house upon the desolate seashore of Cumberland, we dwelt a year,

mourning the lost, seeking an avenue by which it might be found again and finding none. Here our strength came back to us, and Leo's hair, that had been whitened in the Caves, grew again from gray to golden. His beauty returned to him also, so that his face was as it had been, only purified and saddened.

Well I remember that night—and the hour of illumination. We were heart-broken, we were in despair. We sought signs and could find none. The dead remained dead to us and no answer came to all our crying.

It was a sullen August evening, and after we had dined we walked upon the shore, listening to the slow surge of the waves and watching the lightning flicker from the bosom of a distant cloud. In silence we walked, till at last Leo groaned—it was more of a sob than a groan—and clasped my arm.

"I can bear it no longer, Horace," he said—for so he called me now—"I am in torment. The desire to see her once more saps my brain. Without hope I shall go mad. And I am strong, I may live another fifty years."

"What then can you do?" I asked.

"I can take a short road to knowledge—or to peace," he answered, solemnly. "I can die, and die I will—yes, to-night."

I turned upon him angrily, for his words filled me with fear.

"It is a crime," I said, "the greatest insult you can offer to the Power that made you, to cast back the gift of life as a thing outworn, contemptible and despised. A crime, I say, that will bring with it worse punishment than any you can dream; perhaps even the punishment of everlasting separation."

"Does a man stretched in some torture den commit a crime if he snatches a knife and kills himself, Horace? Perhaps; but surely that sin should find forgiveness—if torn flesh and quivering nerves may plead for mercy. I am such a man, and I will use that knife and take my chance. Ayesha is dead, and in death at least I shall be nearer her."

"Why so, Leo? For aught you know she may be living."

"No; for then she would have given



me some sign. My mind is made up, so talk no more, or, if talk we must, let it be of other things."

Then I pleaded with him.

"Leo," I said, "are you so heartless that you would leave me here alone? Do you pay me thus for all my love and care, and wish to drive me to share your sin? Do so if you will, and my blood be on your head."

"Your blood! Why your blood, Horace?"

"Because that road is broad and two can travel it. We have lived long years together and together endured much; I am not minded that we should separate at the last."

Then the tables were turned and he plied me with my own arguments, but I would not be moved.

"If you go, I follow," I said.

So Leo gave way. "Well," he exclaimed, suddenly, "I promise you it shall not be to-night. Let us give Life another chance."

"Good," I answered; but I went to my bed full of fear. For I was sure that this desire of death, having once taken hold of him, would grow and grow, until at length it became too strong, and then—then I should be drawn through the same evil gate. I threw out my soul toward that of her who was departed.

"Ayesha!" I cried in my bitterness, "if you have any power, if in any way it is permitted, show that you still live, and save us from this sin. Have pity on his sorrow and breathe hope into his heart, for without hope he cannot live, and without him I cannot live." Then, worn out, I slept.

I was aroused by the voice of Leo speaking to me in low, excited tones.

"Horace," he said, "Horace, my friend, my father, listen!"

In an instant I was wide awake, every nerve and fiber of me, for the tones of his voice told me that something had happened which bore upon our destinies.

"Let me light a candle first," I said.

"Never mind the candle, Horace; I would rather speak in the dark. I went to sleep, and I dreamed the most vivid

dream that ever came to me. I seemed to stand under the vault of heaven; it was black, black, not a star shone in it, and a great loneliness possessed me. Then suddenly high up in the vault, miles and miles away, I saw a little light and thought that a planet had appeared to keep me company. The light began to descend slowly, like a floating flake of fire. Down it sank, and down and down, till it was but just above me, and I perceived that it was shaped like a tongue or fan of flame. At the height of my head from the ground it stopped and stood steady, and by its ghostly radiance I saw that beneath was the shape of a woman, and that the flame burned upon her forehead. The radiance gathered strength and now I saw the woman.

"Horace, it was Ayesha herself, her eyes, her lovely face, her cloudy hair, and she looked at me sadly, reproachfully, I thought, as one might who says: 'Why did you doubt?'"

"I tried to speak to her, but my lips were dumb. I tried to advance and embrace her; my arms would not move. There was a barrier between us. She lifted her hand and beckoned as though bidding me to follow her.

"Then she glided away, and, Horace, my spirit seemed to loose itself from the body and to be given the power to follow. We passed eastward, over lands and seas, and—I knew the road. At one point she paused and I looked downward. Beneath, shining in the moonlight, appeared the ruined palaces of Kôr, and there, not far away, was the gulf we trod together.

"Across the sea again, across the sandy deserts, across more sea, and the shores of India lay beneath us. Then northward, ever northward, above the plains, till we reached a place of mountains capped with eternal snow. We passed them and stayed a while above a building set upon the brow of a precipice. It was a monastery, for old monks droned prayers upon its terrace. I shall know it again, for it is built in the shape of a half moon, and in front of it is the gigantic, ruined statue of a god who gazes eternally across the desert. I knew, how I cannot say, that

now we were far past the furthest borders of Thibet and that in front of us lay untrodden lands. More mountains stretched beyond that desert, a sea of snowy peaks, hundreds and hundreds of them.

"Near to the monastery, jutting out into the plain like some rocky headland, rose a solitary hill, higher than all behind. We stood upon its snowy crest and waited, till presently, across the mountains and the desert at our feet, shot a sudden beam of light, that beat upon us like some signal flashed across the sea. On we went, floating down the beam—on across the desert, above the mountains, across a great flat land beyond, in which were many villages and a city on a mound, till we lit upon a towering peak. Then I saw that this peak was loop-shaped like the Symbol of Life of the Egyptians—the *crux ansata*—and supported by a lava stem hundreds of feet in height. Also I saw that the fire which shone through it rose from the crater of a volcano beyond. Upon the very crest of this loop we rested a while, till the Shadow of Ayesha pointed downward with its hand, smiled and vanished. Then I awoke.

"Horace, I tell you that the sign has come to us."

His voice died away in the darkness, but I sat still, brooding over what I had heard. Leo groped his way to me and, seizing my arm, shook it.

"Are you asleep?" he asked, angrily. "Speak, man, speak!"

"No," I answered, "never was I more awake. Give me time."

Then I rose, and going to the open window, drew up the blind and stood there staring at the sky, which grew pearl-hued with the first faint tinge of dawn. Leo came also, and leaned upon the window sill, and I could feel that his body was trembling as though with cold. Clearly he was much moved.

"You talk of a sign," I said to him, "but in your sign I see nothing but a wild dream."

"It was no dream," he broke in, fiercely; "it was a vision."

"A vision, then, if you will, but there

are visions true and false, and how can we know that this is true? Listen. What is there in all that wonderful tale which could not have been fashioned in your own brain, distraught as it is almost to madness with your sorrow and your longings? You dreamed that you were alone in the vast universe. Well, is not every living creature thus alone? You dreamed that the shadowy shape of Ayesha came to you. Has she ever left your side? You dreamed that she led you over sea and land, past places haunted by your memory, above the mysterious mountains of the Unknown to an undiscovered peak. Does she not lead you through life to that peak which lies beyond the Gates of Death? You dreamed——"

"Oh! no more of it," he exclaimed. "What I saw I saw, and that I will follow. Think as you will, Horace, and do what you will. To-morrow I start for India, with you if you choose to come; if not, without you."

"You speak roughly, Leo," I said. "You forget that I have had no sign, and that the nightmare of a man so near to madness that but a few hours ago he was determined upon suicide, will be a poor staff to lean on when we are perishing in the snows of Central Asia. A mixed vision, this of yours, Leo, with its mountain peak shaped like a *crux ansata* and the rest. Do you suggest that Ayesha is reincarnated in Central Asia—as a female Grand Lama or something of that sort?"

"I never thought of it, but why not?" asked Leo, quietly. "Do you remember a certain scene in the Caves of Kôr yonder, when the living looked upon the dead, and dead and living were the same? And do you remember that Ayesha swore that she would come again—yes, to this world; and how could that be except by re-birth, or, what is the same thing, by the transmigration of the spirit?"

I did not answer this argument. I was struggling with myself.

"No sign has come to me," I said, "and yet I have had a part in the play, humble enough, I admit, and I believe that I have still a part."

"No," he said, "no sign has come to you. I wish that it had. Oh! how I wish you could be convinced as I am!"

Then we were silent for a long while; silent, with our eyes fixed upon the sky.

It was a stormy dawn. Clouds in fantastic masses hung upon the ocean. One of them was like a great mountain, and we watched it idly. It changed its shape, the crest of it grew hollow like a crater. From this crater sprang a projecting cloud, a rough pillar with a knob or lump resting on its top. Suddenly the rays of the risen sun struck upon this mountain and the column and they turned white like snow. Then, as though melted by those fiery arrows, the center of the excrescence above the pillar thinned out and vanished, leaving an enormous loop of cloud.

"Look," said Leo, "that is the shape of the mountain which I saw in my vision. There upon it is the black loop, and there through it shines the fire. *It would seem that the sign is for both of us, Horace.*"

I looked and looked again till presently the vast loop vanished into the blue of heaven. Then I turned, and said:

"I will come with you to Central Asia, Leo."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LAMASERY.

Sixteen years had passed since that night vigil in the old Cumberland house, and, behold! we were still traveling, still searching for that mountain peak shaped like the Symbol of Life which never, never could be found.

Five years we spent in Thibet, for the most part as guests of various monasteries, where we studied the law and traditions of the Lamas.

Leaving Thibet, we wandered east and west and north, thousands and thousands of miles, sojourning among many tribes in Chinese territory, and elsewhere, learning many tongues, enduring much hardship. We would hear a legend of a place, say nine hundred miles away, and spend two years in

reaching it, to find when we came there, nothing.

And so the time went on. Yet never once did we think of giving up the quest and returning, since, before we started, we had sworn on oath that we would achieve or die. Indeed, we ought to have died a score of times, yet always were preserved, most mysteriously preserved.

Now we were in country where, so far as I could learn, no European had ever set a foot. In a part of the vast land called Turkestan there is a great lake named Balhkas, of which we visited the shores. Two hundred miles or so to the westward is a range of mighty mountains marked on the maps as Arkarty-Tau, on which we spent a year, and five hundred or so to the eastward other mountains called Cherga, whither we journeyed at last, having explored the triple ranges of the Tau.

Here it was that at last our true adventures began. On one of the spurs of these awful Cherga Mountains—it is unmarked on any map—we well-nigh perished of starvation. The winter was coming on and we could find no game. The last traveler we had met, hundreds of miles south, told us that on that range was a monastery inhabited by Lamas of surpassing holiness. He said that they dwelt in this wild land, over which no power claimed dominion and where no tribes lived, to acquire "merit," with no other company than that of their own pious contemplations. We did not believe in its existence, still we were searching for that monastery, driven onward by the blind fatalism which was our only guide through all these endless wanderings. As we were starving and could find no "argals"—that is, fuel with which to make a fire—we walked all night by the light of the moon, driving between us a single yak—for now we had no attendant, the last having died a year before.

He was a noble beast, that yak, and had the best constitution of any animal I ever knew, though now, like his masters, he was near his end. Not that he was overladen, for some rifle cartridges, about a hundred and fifty, the remnant

of a store which we had fortunately been able to buy from a caravan two years before, some money in gold and silver, a little tea and a bundle of skin rugs and sheepskin garments were his burden. On, on we trudged across a plateau of snow, having the great mountains on our right, till at length the yak gave a sigh and stopped. So we stopped also, because we must, and wrapping ourselves in the skin rugs, sat down in the snow to wait for daylight.

The dawn came, and by its light we looked at one another anxiously, each of us desiring to see what strength was left to his companion. Wild creatures we should have seemed to the eyes of any civilized person. Leo was now over forty years of age, and certainly his maturity had fulfilled the promise of his youth, for a more magnificent man I never knew. Very tall, although he seemed spare to the eye, his girth matched his height, and the long years of desert life had turned his muscles to steel. His hair had grown long, like my own, for it was a protection from sun and cold, and hung upon his shoulders, a curling, golden mane, as his great beard hung upon his breast, spreading outward almost to the massive shoulders. The face too—what could be seen of it—was beautiful, though burned brown with weather; refined and full of thought, somber almost, and in it, clear as crystal, steady as stars, shone his large, gray eyes.

And I—I was what I have always been—ugly and hirsute, iron-gray now also, but in spite of my sixty odd years, still wonderfully strong, for my strength seemed to increase with time, and my health was perfect. In fact, during all this period of rough travels, although now and again we had met with accidents which laid us up for a while, neither of us had known a day of sickness. Hardship seemed to have turned our constitutions to iron and made them impervious to every human ailment. Or was this because we alone among living men had once inhaled the breath of the Essence of Life?

Our fears relieved—for notwithstanding our foodless night, as yet neither

of us showed any signs of exhaustion—we turned to contemplate the landscape.

As the golden rays of the rising sun touched the snows of the mountains to splendor, I saw Leo's eyes become troubled. Swiftly he turned and looked along the edge of the desert.

"See there!" he said, pointing to something dim and enormous. Presently the light reached it also. It was a mighty mountain not more than five miles away, that stood out by itself among the sands. Then he turned once more, and with his back to the desert stared at the slope of the hills, along the base of which we had been traveling. There, on the edge of a plateau, looking out solemnly across the waste, sat a great ruined idol, a colossal Buddha, while to the rear of the idol, built of yellow stone, appeared the low, crescent-shaped mass of a monastery.

"At last!" cried Leo, "oh, Heaven! at last!" and, flinging himself down, he buried his face in the snow as though to hide it there, lest I should read something written on it which he did not desire that even I should see.

I let him lie a space, understanding what was passing in his heart, and indeed, in mine also.

At last he rose, brushed the snow from his beard and garments, and came to help me to lift the yak to its feet, for the worn-out beast was too stiff and weak to rise of itself. Glancing at him covertly, I saw on Leo's face a very strange and happy look; a great peace appeared to possess him.

We plunged upward through the snow slope, dragging the yak with us, to the terrace where the monastery was built. Nobody seemed to be about there, nor could I discern any footprints. Was the place but a ruin? We had found many such; indeed, this ancient land is full of buildings that had once served as the homes of men, learned and pious enough after their own fashion, who lived and died hundreds, or even thousands, of years ago, long before our Western civilization came into being.

My heart, also my stomach, which was starving, sank at the thought, but while I gazed doubtfully, a little coil of

blue smoke sprang from a chimney, and never, I think, did I see a more joyful sight. In the center of the edifice was a large building, evidently the temple, but near to us I saw a smaller door, almost above which the smoke appeared. To this door I went, and knocked, calling aloud:

"Open! open, holy Lamas. Strangers seek your charity." After a while there was a sound of shuffling feet, and the door creaked upon its hinges, revealing an old, old man, clad in tattered, yellow garments.

"Who is it? Who is it?" he exclaimed, blinking at me through a pair of horn spectacles. "Who comes to disturb our solitude, the solitude of the holy Lamas of the mountains?"

"Travelers, Sacred One, who have had enough of solitude," I answered, in his own dialect, with which I was well acquainted. "Travelers who are starving, and who seek your charity, which," I added, "by the rule you cannot refuse."

He stared at us through his horn spectacles, and, able to make nothing of our faces, let his glance fall to our garments, which were as ragged as his own, and of much the same pattern.

"Are you Lamas?" he asked, doubtfully, "and if so, of what monastery?"

"Lamas, sure enough," I answered, "who belong to a monastery called the world, where, alas! one grows hungry."

The reply seemed to please him, for he chuckled a little, then shook his head, saying:

"It is against our custom to admit strangers unless they be of our own faith, which I am sure you are not."

"And much more is it against your rule, holy Khubilghan," for so these abbots are entitled, "to suffer strangers to starve;" and I quoted a well-known passage from the sayings of Buddha which fitted the point precisely.

"I perceive that you are instructed in the books," he exclaimed, with wonder on his yellow, wrinkled face, "and to such we cannot refuse shelter. Come in, brethren of the monastery called the world."

The abbot, who was named Kou-en,

led us into the living room or rather the kitchen of the monastery, for it served both purposes. Here we found the rest of the monks, about twelve in all, gathered around the fire of which we had seen the smoke, and engaged, one of them in preparing the morning meal, and the rest in warming themselves.

They were all old men; the youngest could not have been less than sixty-five. To these we were solemnly introduced as "Brethren of the monastery called the world, where folk grow hungry," for the Abbot Kou-en could not make up his mind to part from this little joke.

They stared at us, they rubbed their thin hands, they bowed and wished us well, and evidently were delighted at our arrival. This was not strange, however, seeing that ours were the first new faces they had seen for four long years.

Nor did they stop at words, for while they made water hot for us to wash in, two of them went to prepare a room, and others drew off our rough hide boots and thick outer garments, and brought us slippers for our feet. Then they led us to the guest chamber, which they informed us was a "propitious place," for it had once been slept in by a noted saint. Here a fire had been lit, and, wonder of wonders! clean garments, including linen, all of them ancient and faded, but of good quality, were brought for us to put on.

So we washed—yes, actually washed all over—and having arrayed ourselves in the robes, which were somewhat small for Leo, struck the bell that hung in the room, and were conducted by a monk, who answered it, back to the kitchen, where the meal was now served. It consisted of a kind of porridge, to which was added new milk brought in by the "Master of the Herds," dried fish from a lake and buttered tea, the last two luxuries produced in our special honor. Never had food tasted more delicious to us, and, I may add, never did we eat more. Indeed, at last I was obliged to request Leo to stop, for I saw the monk staring at him, and heard the old abbot chuckling to himself:

"Oh, ho! The monastery called the world, where folk grow *hungry*," to



which another monk, who was called the "Master of the Provisions," replied uneasily, that if we went on like this, their store of food would scarcely last the winter. So we finished at length, feeling as some book of maxims which I can remember in my youth said that all polite people should do—that we could eat more, and much impressed our hosts by chanting a long Buddhist grace.

After this we asked leave to retire to our chamber in order to rest, and there, upon very good imitations of beds, we slept solidly for four and twenty hours, rising at last perfectly refreshed and well.

Such was our introduction to the Monastery of the Mountains—for it had no other name—where we were destined to spend the next six months of our lives.

Immediately after, indeed, on the very day of our arrival at the monastery, the winter set in in earnest with bitter cold and snowstorms, so heavy and frequent that all the desert was covered deep. Very soon it became obvious to us that here we must stay until the spring, since to attempt to move in any direction would be to perish. With some misgivings we explained this to the Abbot Kou-en, offering to remove to one of the empty rooms in the ruined part of the building, supporting ourselves with fish that we could catch by cutting a hole in the ice of the lake above the monastery, and if we were able to find any, with game, which we might trap or shoot in the scrublike forest of stunted pines and junipers that grew around its border. But he would listen to no such thing. We had been sent to be their guests, he said, and their guests we should remain for so long as might be convenient. Would we lay upon them the burden of the sin of inhospitality?

But though the time passed in comfort, and, indeed, compared to many of our experiences, in luxury, oh! our hearts were hungry, for in them burned the consuming fire of our quest. But here we must wait; there was nothing else to be done.

One alleviation we found, and only one. In a ruined room of the monastery was a library of many volumes, placed there, doubtless, by the monks who were massacred in times bygone. These had been more or less cared for and re-arranged by their successors, who gave us liberty to examine them as often as we pleased.

What proved most interesting to us was a diary in many tomes that for generations had been kept by the Khubilghans or abbots of the old lamasery, in which every event of importance was recorded in great detail. Turning over the pages of one of the last volumes of this diary, written apparently about two hundred and fifty years earlier, and shortly before the destruction of the monastery, we came upon an entry of which the following—for I can only quote from memory—is the substance:

"In the summer of this year, after a very great sandstorm, a brother—the name was given, but I forget it—found in the desert a man of the people who dwell beyond the Far Mountains, of whom rumors have reached this lamasery from time to time. He was living, but beside him were the bodies of two of his companions who had been overwhelmed by sand and thirst. He was very fierce-looking. He refused to say how he came into the desert, telling us only that he had followed the road known to the ancients before communication between his people and the outer world ceased. We gathered, however, that his brethren with whom he fled had committed some crime for which they had been condemned to die, and that he had accompanied them in their flight. He told us that there was a fine country beyond the mountains, fertile, but plagued with droughts and earthquakes, which latter, indeed, we often feel here.

"The people of that country were, he said, warlike and very numerous, and followed agriculture.

"The stranger-man told us also that his people worshiped a priestess called Hesor the Hesea, who is said to rule from generation to generation. She lives in a great mountain, apart, and is feared and adored by all, but is not the

queen of the country, in the government of which she seldom interferes. To her, however, sacrifices are offered, and he who incurs her vengeance dies, so that even the monarchs of that land are afraid of her. Still their subjects often fight, for they hate each other.

"We answered that he lied when he said that this woman was immortal—for that was what we supposed he meant—since nothing is immortal; also we laughed at his tale of her power. This made the man very angry, so that he declared that our Buddha was not so strong as this priestess, and that she would show it by being avenged upon us.

"After this we gave him food and turned him out of the lamasery, and he went, saying that when he returned we should learn who spoke the truth. We do not know what became of him, and he refused to reveal to us the road to his country, which lies beyond the desert and the Far Mountains. We think that perhaps he was an evil spirit sent to frighten us, in which he did not succeed."

Such is a *precis* of this strange entry, the discovery of which, vague as it was, thrilled us with hope and excitement. Nothing more appeared about the man or his country, but within a little over a year from that date the diary of the abbot came to a sudden end without any indication that unusual events had occurred or were expected.

We wondered whether the man from beyond the mountains was as good as his word and had brought down the vengeance of the priestess called the Hesea upon the community that sheltered him. Also we wondered—ah! how we wondered—who and what this Hesea might be.

On the day following this discovery we prayed the Abbot Kou-en to accompany us to the library, and, having read him the passage, asked if he knew anything of the matter. He swayed his wise old head, which always reminded me of that of a tortoise, and answered:

"A little. Very little, and that mostly about the army of the Greek king who is mentioned in the writing."

We inquired what he could possibly know of this matter, whereon Kou-en replied, calmly:

"In those days when the faith of the Holy One was still young, I dwelt as a humble brother in this very monastery, which was one of the first built, and I saw the army pass, that is all. That," he added, meditatively, "was in my nineteenth incarnation—no, I am thinking of another army—in my twenty-third."

Here Leo began a great laugh, but I managed to kick him beneath the table and he turned it into a sneeze. This was fortunate, as it would have hurt the old man's feelings terribly. After all, also, as Leo himself had once said, surely we were not the people to mock at the theory of reincarnation, which, by the way, is the first article of faith among nearly one quarter of the human race, and that not the most foolish quarter.

"How can that be—I ask for instruction, learned One—seeing that memory perishes with death?"

"Ah!" he answered, "Brother Holly, it may seem to do so, but oftentimes it comes back again. For instance, until you read this passage, I had forgotten all about that army, but now I see it passing, passing, and myself with other monks standing by the statue of the big Buddha in front yonder, and watching it pass. The general of the army, a swarthy man—I wish that I could remember his name, but I cannot.

"Well," he went on, "that general came up to the lamasery and demanded a sleeping place for his wife and children, also provisions and medicines, and guides across the desert. The abbot of that day told him it was against our law to admit a woman under our roof, to which he answered that if we did not, we should have no roof left, for he would burn the place and kill every one of us with the sword. Now, as you know, to be killed by violence means that we must pass many incarnations in the forms of animals, a horrible thing, so we chose the lesser evil and gave way, and afterward obtained absolution for our sins from the Great Lama. Myself I did not see this queen, but I saw the

priestess of their worship—alas! alas!" and Kou-en beat his breast.

"Why, alas?" I asked, as unconcernedly as I could, for this story interested me strongly.

"Why? Oh! because I may have forgotten the army, but I have never forgotten that priestess, and she has been a great hindrance to me through many incarnations, delaying me upon my journey to the Other Side, to the Shore of Salvation. I, as a humble Lama, was engaged in preparing her apartment when she entered and threw aside her veil; yes, and perceiving a man, spoke to me, asking many questions, and even if I was not glad to look again upon a woman."

"What—what was she like?" asked Leo, anxiously.

"What was she like? Oh! she was all loveliness in one shape; she was like the dawn upon the snows; she was like the evening star above the mountains; she was like the first flower of the spring. Brother, ask me not what she was like; nay, I will say no more. Oh! my sin, my sin! I am slipping backward and you draw my black shame out into the light of day. Nay, I will confess it that you may know how vile a thing I am—I whom perhaps you have thought holy—like yourselves. That woman, if woman she were, lit a fire in my heart which will not burn out, oh! and more, more," and he rocked himself to and fro upon his stool while tears of contrition trickled from beneath his horn spectacles, "*she made me worship her!*"

"For first she asked me of my faith and listened eagerly as I expounded it, hoping that the light would come into her heart; then, after I had finished, she said:

"So your Path is Renunciation and your Nirvana a most excellent Nothingness which some would think it scarce worth while to strive so hard to reach. Now I will show you a more joyous way and a goddess more worthy of your worship."

"What way, and what goddess?" I asked of her.

"The way of Love and Life," she

answered, 'that makes all the world to be, that made you, O seeker of Nirvana, and the goddess called Nature.'

"Again I asked where is that goddess, and behold! she drew herself up, looking most royal, and touching her ivory breast, she said: 'I am she. Now kneel you down and do me homage.'

"My brethren, I knelt, yes, I kissed her foot, and then I fled away ashamed and broken-hearted, and as I went she laughed, and cried: 'Remember me when you reach Nirvana, O servant of the Buddha saint, for though I change, I do not die, and even there I shall be with you who once have given me worship.'

"And it is so, my brethren, it is so; for though I obtained absolution for my sin and suffered much for it through many existences, yet I cannot be rid of her, and for me Nirvana is still far, far away."

And Kou-en placed his withered hands before his face and sobbed.

When his calm was somewhat restored we tried to extract further information from him, but with poor results, so far as the priestess was concerned.

He said that he did not know to what religion she belonged, and did not care, but thought that it must be an evil one. She went away the next morning with the army, and he never saw or heard of her any more. Yes, he had heard one thing, for the abbot of that day had told the brethren. This priestess was the real general of the army, not the king or the queen, the latter of whom hated her. It was by her will that they pushed on northward across the desert to some country beyond the mountains, where she desired to establish herself and her worship.

We asked if there really was any country beyond the mountains, and he answered wearily that he believed so. Either in this or in some previous existence he had heard that people lived there who worshiped fire. Then the memory of that fancied transgression again began to afflict Kou-en's innocent old heart, and he crept away lamenting and was seen no more for a week. Nor

would he ever speak again to us of this matter. But we spoke of it much with hope and wonder, and made up our minds that we would at once ascend this mountain.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BEACON LIGHT.

A week later came our opportunity of making this ascent of the mountain, for now in midwinter it ceased storming, and hard frost set in, which made it possible to walk upon the surface of the snow. Learning from the monks that at this season *ovis poli* and other kinds of big-horned sheep and game descended from the mountains to take refuge in certain valleys, where they scraped away the snow to find food, we announced that we were going out to hunt.

So, having manufactured a rough tent from skins, and laden our old yak, now in the best of condition, with food and garments, one still morning we started as soon as it was light. Under the guidance of an old monk, who, notwithstanding his years, walked very well, we reached the northern slope of the peak before midday. Here we found a great cave of which the opening was protected by an overhanging ledge of rock. Evidently this cave was the favorite place of shelter for game at certain seasons of the year, since in it were heaped vast accumulations of their droppings, which removed any fear of a lack of fuel.

The rest of that short day we spent in setting up our tent in the cave, in front of which we lit a large fire, and in a survey of the slopes of the mountain, for we told the monk that we were searching for the tracks of wild sheep. Then we turned into the tent and huddled together for warmth, as the temperature must have been many degrees below zero. The old monk rested well enough, but neither Leo nor I slept overmuch, for wonder as to what we might see from the top of that mountain banished sleep.

Next morning at the dawn, the weather being still favorable, our companion returned to the monastery,

whither we said we would follow him in a day or two.

Now at last we were alone, and without wasting an instant began our ascent of the peak. It was many thousand feet high and in some places steep enough, but the deep, frozen snow made climbing easy, so that by midday we reached the top. Hence the view was magnificent. Beneath us stretched the desert, and beyond it a broad belt of fantastically shaped, snow-clad mountains, hundreds and hundreds of them; in front, to the right, to the left, as far as the eye could reach.

"They are just as I saw them in my dreams so many years ago," muttered Leo; "the same, the very same."

"And where was the fiery light?" I asked.

"Yonder, I think," and he pointed north by east.

"Well, it is not there now," I answered, "and this place is cold."

So, since it was dangerous to linger, lest the darkness should overtake us on our return journey, we descended the peak again, reaching the cave about sunset. The next four days we spent in the same way. Every morning we crawled up those wearisome banks of snow, and every afternoon we slid and tobogganed down them again, till I grew heartily tired of the exercise.

On the fourth night, instead of coming to sleep in the tent, Leo sat himself down at the entrance to the cave. I asked him why he did this, but he answered impatiently, because he wished it, so I left him alone.

In the middle of the night I was awakened by Leo shaking me and saying:

"Come here; I have something to show you."

Reluctantly enough I crept from between the rugs and out of the tent. To dress there was no need, for we slept in all our garments. He led me to the mouth of the cave and pointed northward. I looked. The night was very dark; but far, far away appeared a faint patch of light upon the sky, such as might be caused by the reflection of a distant fire.

"What do you make of it?" he asked, anxiously.

"Nothing in particular," I answered, "it may be anything. The moon—no, there is none; dawn—no, it is too northerly, and it does not break for three hours. Something burning, a house, or a funeral pyre, but how can there be such things here? I give it up."

"I think it is a reflection, and that if we were on the peak we should see the beam of light," said Leo, slowly.

"Well, we are not and cannot get there in the dark."

"Then, Horace, we must spend a night there."

"It will be our last in this incarnation," I answered with a laugh; "that is, if it comes on to snow."

"We must risk it, or I will risk it. Look, the light has faded;" and there at least he was right, for undoubtedly it had. The night was as black as pitch.

"Let's talk it over, to-morrow," I said, and went back to the tent, for I was sleepy and incredulous; but Leo sat on by the mouth of the cave.

At dawn I awoke and found breakfast already cooked.

"I must start early," Leo explained.

"Are you mad?" I asked. "How can we camp on that place?"

"I don't know, but I am going. I must go, Horace."

"Which means that we both must go. But how about the yak?"

"Where we can climb, it can follow," he answered.

So we strapped the tent and other baggage, including a good supply of cooked meat, upon the yak's back, and started. Reaching the summit at length, we dug a hole, and there pitched the tent, piling the excavated snow about it. By this time it began to grow dark, and having descended into the tent, yak and all, we ate our food and waited.

For some hours we watched, as indeed we must, since to sleep would mean to die, yet saw nothing save the lonely stars, and heard nothing in that awful silence, for here even the wind made no noise as it slid across the snows. Accustomed as I was to such exposure, my faculties began to grow

numb and my eyes to shut, when suddenly Leo said:

"Look, below the red star!"

I looked, and there high in the sky was the same curious glow which we had seen upon the previous night. There was more than this, indeed, for beneath it, almost on a line with us and just above the crests of the intervening peaks, appeared a faint sheet of fire and revealed against it, something black. While we watched the fire widened, spread upward and grew in power and intensity. Now against its flaming background the black object became clearly visible, and lo! it was the top of a soaring pillar surmounted by a loop. Yes, we could see its every outline. It was the *cruz ansata*, the Symbol of Life itself.

The symbol vanished, the fire sank. Again it blazed up more fiercely than before and the loop appeared afresh, then once more disappeared. A third time the fire shone, and with such intensity, that no lightning could surpass its brilliance. Then it was gone as swiftly as it came. Gone too was the symbol and the veil of flame behind it, only the glow lingered a little on the distant sky.

For a while there was silence between us, then Leo said:

"Do you remember, Horace, when we lay upon the Rocking Stone where her cloak fell upon me"—as he said the words the breath caught in his throat—"how the ray of light was sent to us in farewell, and to show us a path of escape from the Place of Death? Now I think that it has been sent again in greeting to point out the path to the Place of Life where Ayesha dwells, whom we have lost."

"It may be so," I answered shortly, for the matter was beyond speech or argument, beyond wonder even. But I knew then, as I know now, that we were players in some mighty, predestined drama, that our parts were written and we must speak them, as our path was prepared and we must tread it to the end unknown.

Now we feared no more, not even when with the dawn rose the roaring



wind, through which we struggled down the mountain slopes, as it would seem in peril of our lives at every step; not even as hour by hour we fought our way onward through the whirling snowstorm, that made us deaf and blind. For we knew that those lives were charmed. We could not see or hear, yet we were led. Clinging to the yak, we struggled downward and homeward, till at length out of the turmoil and the gloom its instinct brought us unharmed to the door of the monastery, where the old abbot embraced us in his joy, and the monks put up prayers of thanks. For they were sure that we must be dead. Through such a storm, they said, no man had ever lived before.

It was still midwinter, and, oh! the awful weariness of those months of waiting. In our hands was the key, yonder among the mountains lay the door, but not yet might we set that key within its lock. For between us and these stretched the great desert, where the snow rolled like billows, and until that snow melted we dare not attempt its passage. So we sat in the monastery, and schooled our hearts to patience.

Still even to these wilds of Central Asia spring comes at last. One evening the air felt warm, and that night there were only a few degrees of frost. The next the clouds banked up, and in the morning not snow was falling from them, but rain, and we found the old monks preparing their instruments of husbandry, as they said that the season of sowing was at hand. For three days it rained, while the snows melted before our eyes. On the fourth, torrents of water were rushing down the mountain and the desert was once more brown and bare, though not for long, for within another week it was carpeted with flowers. Then we knew that the time had come to start.

"But whither go you? Whither go you?" asked the old abbot in dismay. "Are you not happy here? Is not everything that we have your own? Oh! why would you leave?"

"We are wanderers," we answered, "and when we see mountains in front of us we must cross them."

Kou-en looked at us shrewdly, then asked:

"What do you seek beyond the mountains?"

"Holy abbot," I said, "a while ago yonder in the library you made a certain confession to us."

"Oh! remind me not of it," he said, holding up his hands. "Why do you wish to torment me?"

"Far be the thought from us, most kind friend and virtuous man," I answered. "But, as it chances, your story is very much our own, and we think that we have experience of this same priestess."

"Say on," he said, much interested.

So I told him the outlines of our tale; for an hour or more I told it while he sat opposite to us, swaying his head like a tortoise and saying nothing. At length it was done.

"Now," I added, "let the lamp of your wisdom shine upon our darkness. Do you not find this story wondrous, or do you perchance think that we are liars?"

"Brethren of the great monastery called the world," Kou-en answered, with his customary chuckle, "why should I think you liars who, from the moment my eyes fell upon you, knew you to be true men? Moreover, why should I hold this tale so very wondrous? You have but stumbled upon the fringe of a truth with which we have been acquainted for many, many ages.

"Because in a vision she showed you this monastery, and led you to a spot beyond the mountains where she vanished, you hope that this woman whom you saw die is reincarnated yonder. Why not? In this there is nothing strange to those who are instructed in the truth, though the lengthening of her last life was strange and contrary to experience. Doubtless you will find her yonder as you expect, and doubtless her *khama*, or identity, is the same as that which in some earlier life of hers once brought me to sin.

"Only be not mistaken, she is no immortal; nothing is immortal. She is but a being held back by her own pride, her own greatness if you will, upon the path toward Nirvana. That pride will

be humbled, as already it has been humbled; that brow of majesty will be sprinkled with the dust of change and death, that sinful spirit will be purified by sorrows and by separations. Brother Leo, if you win her, it will be but to lose, and then the ladder must be reclinbed. Brother Holly, for you as for me loss is our only gain, since thereby we are spared much woe. Oh! bide here and pray with me."

"Nay," answered Leo, "we are sworn to a tryst, and we do not break our word."

"Then, brethren, go keep your tryst, and when you have reaped its harvest think upon my sayings, for I am sure that the wine you crush from the vintage of your desire will run red like blood, and that in its drinking you will find neither forgetfulness nor peace." And with a deep sigh the old man turned and left us.

"I do not think that he knows anything of Ayesha and her destiny," said Leo, looking after him.

"Who can tell?" I answered. "Moreover, what is the use of reasoning! Leo, we have no choice; we follow our fate. To what that fate may lead us we shall learn in due season."

Then we went to rest, for it was late, though I found little sleep that night.

A strange theory, that of Kou-en's, that Ayesha was the goddess in old Egypt to whom Kallikrates was priest, or at least her representative. That the Princess Amenartas, with whom he fled, seduced him from the goddess to whom he had sworn. That this goddess incarnate in Ayesha—or using the woman Ayesha and her passions as her instruments—was avenged upon them both at Kôr, and that there in an after age the bolt she shot fell back upon her own head.

Well, I had often thought as much myself. Only I was sure that *She* herself could be no divinity, though she might be a manifestation of one, a priestess, a messenger, charged to work its will, to avenge or to reward, and yet herself a human soul, with hopes and passions to be satisfied, and a destiny to fulfill. In truth, writing now,

when all is past and done with, I find much to confirm me in, and little to turn me from, that theory, since life and powers of a quality that are more than human, do not alone suffice to make a soul divine. But of all these things I hope to speak in their season.

Meanwhile, what lay beyond the mountains? Should we find her there who held the scepter and upon earth wielded the power of the outraged goddess, and with her, that other woman who wrought the wrong? And if so, would the dread, inhuman struggle reach its climax around the person of the sinful priest? In a few months, a few days even, we might begin to know. Thrilled by this thought, at length I fell asleep.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE AVALANCHE.

On the morning of the second day from that night the sunrise found us already on our path across the desert. There, nearly a mile behind us, we could see the ruined statue of Buddha seated in front of the ancient monastery, and in that clear atmosphere could even distinguish the bent form of our friend, the old abbot, Kou-en, leaning against it until we were quite lost to sight.

On the evening of the fourth day of our journey we reached the bottom slopes of the opposing mountains, without having experienced either accident or fatigue. As Leo said, things were "going like clockwork," but I reminded him that a good start often meant a bad finish. Nor was I wrong, for now came our hardships. To begin with, the mountains proved to be exceeding high; it took us two days to climb their lower slopes. Also, the heat of the sun had softened the snow, which made walking through it laborious, while, accustomed though we were to such conditions through long years of traveling, its continual glitter affected our eyes.

The morning of the seventh day found us in the mouth of a defile which wound away into the heart of the mountains. As it seemed the only possible path, we followed it, and were much

cheered to discover that here must once have run a road. Not that we could see any road, indeed, for everything was buried in snow. But that one lay beneath our feet we were certain, since, although we wound along the edge of precipices, our path, however steep, was always flat; moreover, the rock upon one side of it had often been scarped by the hand of man. Of this there could be no doubt, for as the snow could not cling here, we saw the tool marks upon its bare surface.

At length on the tenth day we reached the end of the defile, and as night was falling, camped there in the most bitter cold. Those were miserable hours, for now we had no fuel with which to boil water, and must satisfy our thirst by eating frozen snow, while our eyes smarted so sorely that we could not sleep, and notwithstanding all our wraps and the warmth that we gathered from the yak in the little tent, the cold caused our teeth to chatter like castanets.

The dawn came, and, after it, the sunrise. We crept from the tent, and leaving it standing a while, dragged our stiffened limbs a hundred yards or so to a spot where the defile took a turn, in order that we might thaw in the rays of the sun, which at that hour could not reach us where we camped.

Leo was round it first, and I heard him utter an exclamation. In a few seconds I reached his side, and, lo! before us lay our Promised Land.

Far beneath us, ten thousand feet at least—for it must be remembered that we viewed it from the top of a mountain—it stretched away and away till its distances met the horizon. In character it was quite flat, an alluvial plain that probably, in some primeval age, had been the bottom of one of the vast lakes of which a number exist in Central Asia, most of them now in process of desiccation. One object only relieved this dreary flatness, a single, snow-clad and gigantic mountain, of which even at that distance—for it was very far away from us—we could clearly see the outline. Indeed, we could see more, for from its rounded top rose a great plume of smoke, showing that it was an active

volcano, and on the hither lip of the crater an enormous pillar of rock, whereof the top was formed to the shape of a loop.

Yes, there it stood before us, the symbol of our vision which we had sought these many years, and at the sight of it our hearts beat fast.

Yes, there before us stretched the Promised Land, and there rose the mystic Mount, so that all we had to do was to march down the snow slopes and enter it where we would.

Thus we thought in our folly, little guessing what lay before us and what weary suffering we must endure before we stood at length beneath the shadow of the Symbol.

Our fatigues forgotten, we returned to the tent, hastily swallowed some of our dried food, which we washed down with lumps of snow that gave us toothache and chilled us inside, but which thirst compelled us to eat, dragged the poor yak to its feet, loaded it up and started.

All this while, so great was our haste and so occupied was each of us with his own thoughts that, if my memory serves me, we scarcely interchanged a word. Down the snow slopes we marched swiftly and without hesitation, for here the road was marked for us by means of pillars of rock set opposite to each other at intervals. These pillars we observed with satisfaction, for they told us that we were still upon a highway which led to the Promised Land.

Those slopes were longer than we thought; indeed, when darkness closed in we had not reached the foot of them. So we were obliged to spend another night in the snow, pitching our tent in the shelter of an overhanging rock.

Again the still dawn came, throwing its red garment over the lonesome, endless mountains, and we dragged ourselves to our numbed feet, ate some of our remaining food, and started onward. Now we could no longer see the country beneath, for it and even the towering volcano were hidden from us by an intervening ridge that seemed to be pierced by a single narrow gully, toward which we headed.

Between us and the mouth of the gully rose, or rather sank, an absolutely sheer precipice that seemed to be three or four hundred feet in depth, and at its foot we could hear the sound of water.

So we turned to the right, and marched along the edge of the precipice till, a mile or so away, we came to a small glacier, of which the surface was sprinkled with large stones frozen into its substance. This glacier hung down the face of the precipice like a petrified waterfall, but whether or no it reached the foot we could not discover. At any rate, to think of attempting its descent was out of the question. From this point onward we could see that the precipice increased in depth, and far as the eye could reach was absolutely sheer.

So we went back again, and searched to the left of the road. Here the mountains receded, so that above us was a mighty, dazzling slope of snow and below us that same pitiless, unclimbable gulf. As the light began to fade we perceived, half a mile or more in front, a bare-topped hillock of rock, which stood on the verge of the precipice, and hurried to it, thinking that from its crest we might be able to discover a descending path.

When at length we had struggled to the top, it was about a hundred and fifty feet high; what we did discover was that, here also, as beyond the glacier, the gulf was infinitely deeper than at the spot where the road ended, so deep, indeed, that we could not see its bottom, although from it rose the sound of roaring water. Moreover, it was quite half a mile in width.

While we stared round us the sinking sun vanished behind a mountain, and, the sky being heavy, the light went out like that of a candle.

Unloading the yak, we pitched our tent under the lee of the topmost knob of rock, and ate a couple of handfuls of dried fish and corncake. This was the last of the food that we had brought with us from the lamasery, and we reflected with dismay that unless we could shoot something, our commissariat was now represented by the carcass of our

old friend the yak. Then we wrapped ourselves up in our thick rugs and fur garments, and forgot our miseries in sleep.

It cannot have been long before daylight when we were awakened by a sudden and terrific sound like the crack of a great cannon, followed by thousands of other sounds, which might be compared to the fusillade of musketry.

"Great Heaven! What is that?" I said.

We crawled from the tent, but as yet could see nothing, while the yak began to low in a terrified manner. But if we could not see we could hear and feel. The cracking had ceased, and was followed by a soft, grinding noise, the most sickening sound, I think, to which I ever listened. This was accompanied by a strange, steady, unnatural wind, which seemed to press upon us as water presses. Then the dawn broke and we saw.

The mountain side was moving down on us in a vast avalanche of snow.

Oh! what a sight was that. On from the crest of the steep slopes above, two miles or more away, it came, a living thing, rolling, sliding, gliding; piling itself in waves, hollowing itself into valleys, like a tempest-driven sea, while above its surface hung a powdery cloud of frozen spray.

As we watched, clinging to each other terrified, the first of these waves struck our hill, causing the mighty mass of solid rock to quiver like a yacht beneath the impact of an ocean roller, or an aspen in a sudden rush of wind. It struck and slowly separated, then with a majestic motion flowed like water over the edge of the precipice on either side, and fell with a thudding sound into the unmeasured depths beneath. And this was but a little thing, a mere forerunner, for after it, with a slow, serpentine movement, rolled the body of the avalanche.

It came in waves, it came in level floods. It piled itself against our hill, yes, to within fifty feet of the crest of it, till we thought that even that rooted rock must be torn from its foundations and hurled like a pebble to the deeps be-

neath. And the turmoil of it all! The screaming of the blast caused by the compression of the air, the everlasting thudding of the fall of millions of tons of snow as they rushed through space and ended their journey in the gulf.

Nor was this the worst of it, for as the deep snows above thinned, great boulders that had been buried beneath them, perhaps for centuries, were loosened from their resting places and began to thunder down the hill. The boulders hurtled over and past us; one of them fell full upon the little peak, shattering its crest and bursting into fragments, which fled away, each singing its own wild song. We were not touched, but when we looked behind us it was to see the yak, which had risen in its terror, lying dead and headless. Then in our fear we lay still, waiting for the end, and wondering dimly whether we should be buried in the surging snow or swept away with the hill, or crushed by the flying rocks, or lifted and lost in the hurricane.

How long did it last? We never knew. It may have been ten minutes or two hours, for in such a scene time loses its proportions. Only we became aware that the wind had fallen, while the noise of grinding snow and hurtling boulders ceased. Very cautiously we gained our feet and looked.

In front of us the mountain side, for a depth of about two miles, by the width of one or more, which had been covered by many feet of snow, was now bare rock. Piled up against the face of our hill, almost to its summit, was a tongue of snow, pressed to the consistency of ice and spotted over with boulders that had lodged there. The peak itself was torn and shattered, so that it revealed great gleaming surfaces and pits, in which glittered mica, or some other metal. The vast gulf behind was half filled with the avalanche and its débris. But for the rest, it seemed as though nothing had happened, for the sun shone sweetly overhead and the solemn snows reflected back its rays from the sides of a hundred hills. And we had endured it all and were still alive; yes, and unhurt.

But what a position was ours? We dared not attempt to descend the mount, lest we should sink into the loose snow and be buried there. Moreover, all along the breadth of the path of the avalanche boulders from time to time still thundered down the rocky slope, and with them came patches of snow that had been left behind by the big slide, small in themselves it is true, but each of them large enough to kill a hundred men. It was obvious, therefore, that until these conditions changed, or death released us, we must abide where we were on the crest of the hillock.

So there we sat, foodless and frightened, wondering what our old friend Kou-en would say if he could see us now. By degrees hunger mastered all our other sensations and we began to turn longing eyes upon the headless body of the yak.

"Let's skin him," said Leo; "it will be something to do, and we shall want his hide to-night."

So with affection, and even reverence, we performed this office for the dead companion of our journeyings, rejoicing the while that it was not we who had brought him to his end.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GLACIER.

Even that day came to an end at last, and after a few more lumps of yak, our tent being gone, we drew his hide over us and rested as best we could, knowing that at least we had no more avalanches to fear. That night it froze sharply, so that had it not been for the yak's hide and the other rugs and garments, which fortunately we were wearing when the snow slide began, it would, I think, have gone hard with us. As it was, we suffered a great deal.

"Horace," said Leo at the dawn, "I am going to leave this. If we have to die, I would rather do so moving; but I don't believe that we shall die."

"Very well," I said, "let us start. If the snow won't bear us now, it never will."



So we tied up our rugs and the yak's hide in two bundles and, having cut off some more of the frozen meat, began our descent.

All went well until we were within twenty paces of the bottom, where we must cross a soft mound formed of the powdery dust thrown off by the avalanche in its passage. Leo slipped over safely, but I, following a yard or two to his right, of a sudden felt the hard crust yield beneath me. An ill-judged but quite natural flounder and wriggle, such as a newly landed flat-fish gives upon the sand, completed the mischief, and with one piercing but swiftly stifled yell I vanished.

Anyone who has ever sunk in deep water will know that the sensation is not pleasant, but I can assure him that to go through the same experience in soft snow is infinitely worse; mud alone could surpass its terrors. Down I went, and down, till at length I seemed to reach a rock, which alone saved me from disappearing forever. Now I felt the snow closing above me and with it came darkness and a sense of suffocation. So soft was the drift, however, that before I was overcome I contrived with my arms to thrust away the powdery dust from about my head, thus forming a little hollow into which air filtered slowly. Getting my hands upon the stone, I strove to rise, but could not, the weight upon me was too great.

Then I abandoned hope and prepared to die. The process proved not altogether unpleasant. I did not see visions from my past life as drowning men are supposed to do, but—and this shows how strong was her empire over me—my mind flew back to Ayesha. I seemed to behold her and a man at her side, standing over me in some dark, rocky gulf. She was wrapped in a long traveling cloak, and her lovely eyes were wild with fear. I rose to salute her, and make report, but she cried in a fierce, concentrated voice:

"What evil thing has happened here? Thou livest then; where is my lord? Speak, man, and say where thou hast hid my lord—or die."

The vision was extraordinarily real

and vivid, I remember, and, considered in connection with a certain subsequent event, in all ways most remarkable, but it passed as swiftly as it came.

Then my senses left me.

I saw light again. I heard a voice, that of Leo! "Horace," he cried, "Horace, hold fast to the stock of the gun." Something was thrust against my outstretched hand. I gripped it despairingly, and there came a strain. It was useless, I did not move. Then, bethinking me, I drew up my legs and by chance or the mercy of Heaven, I know not, got my feet against a ridge of the rock on which I was lying. Again I felt the strain, and thrust with all my might. Of a sudden the snow gave, and out of that hole I shot like a fox from its earth.

I struck something. It was Leo straining at the gun, and I knocked him backward. Then down the steep slope we rolled, landing at length upon the very edge of the precipice. I sat up, drawing in the air with great gasps, and oh! how sweet it was!

"How long was I in there?" I gasped to Leo, who sat at my side, wiping off the sweat that ran from his face in streams.

"Don't know. About twenty minutes I should think."

"Twenty minutes! It seemed like twenty centuries. How did you get me out? You could not stand upon the drift dust."

"No; I lay upon the yak skin where the snow was harder and tunneled toward you through the powdery stuff with my hands, for I knew where you had sunk and it was not far off. At last I saw your finger tips; they were so blue that for a few seconds I took them for rock, and thrust the butt of the rifle against them. Luckily you still had life enough to catch hold of it, and you know the rest. Were we not both very strong, it could never have been done."

"Thank you, old fellow," I said, simply.

"Why should you thank me?" he asked, with one of his quick smiles. "Do you suppose that I wished to continue this journey alone? Come, if you have

got your breath, let us be getting on. You have been sleeping in a cold bed and want exercise. Look, my rifle is broken and yours is lost in the snow. Well, it will save us the trouble of carrying the cartridges," and he laughed drearily.

Then we began our march, heading for the spot where the road ended four miles or so away, for to go forward seemed useless. In due course we reached it safely.

There was the end of the road, and there were our own footprints and the impress of the yak's hoof in the snow. The sight of them affected me, for it seemed strange that we should have lived to look upon them again. We stared over the edge of the precipice. Yes, it was sheer and absolutely unclimbable.

"What are we to do?" I asked. "In front of us death. Behind us death, for how can we recross those mountains without food or guns to shoot it with? Here death, for we must sit and starve. We have striven and failed. Leo, our end is at hand. Only a miracle can save us."

"A miracle," he answered. "Well, what was it that led us to the top of the mount so that we were able to escape the avalanche? And what was it which put that rock in your way as you sank into the bed of dust, and gave me wit and strength to dig you out of your grave of snow? And what is it that has preserved us through seventeen years of dangers such as few men have known and lived? Some directing power. Some destiny that will accomplish itself in us. Why should the power cease to guide? Why should the destiny be balked at last?"

He paused, then added, fiercely: "I tell you, Horace, that even if we had guns, food and yaks, I would not turn back upon our spoor, since to do so would prove me a coward and unworthy of her. I will go on."

"How?" I asked.

"By that road," and he pointed to the glacier.

"It is a road to death!"

"Well, if so, Horace, it would seem

that in this land men find life in death, or so they believe. If we die now, we shall die traveling our path, and in the country where we perish we may be born again. At least I am determined, so you must choose."

"I have chosen long ago. Leo, we began this journey together and we will end it together. Perhaps Ayesha knows and will help us," and I laughed drearily. "If not—come, we are wasting time."

Then we took counsel, and the end of it was that we cut the yak's tough hide into strips and knotted these together into short, serviceable ropes, which we fastened about our middles, leaving one end loose, for we thought that they might help us in our descent.

Next we bound fragments of one of our skin rugs about our legs and knees to protect them from the chafing of the ice and rocks, and for the same reason put on our thick leather gloves. This done, we took the remainder of our rugs and heavy robes and, having placed stones in them, threw them over the brink of the precipice, trusting to find them again, should we ever reach its foot. Now our preparations were complete, and it was time for us to start upon perhaps one of the most desperate journeys ever undertaken by men of their own will.

Yet we stayed a little, looking at each other in a piteous fashion, for we could not speak. Only we embraced, and I confess I think I wept a little. No, I don't think that I thought of myself then, but I thought a great deal of Leo, and when I saw his determined face and flashing eye as he nerved himself to the last endeavor, I was proud of him.

Then side by side we began the terrible descent. At first it was easy enough, although a slip would have hurled us to eternity. But we were strong and skillful, accustomed to such places, moreover, and made none.

Thus at length we came to the bend, which was more than halfway down the precipice, being, so far as I could judge, about two hundred and fifty feet from its lip, and say one hundred and fifty from the darksome bottom of the nar-

row gulf. Here were no stones, but only some rough ice, on which we sat to rest.

"We must look," said Leo, presently.

But the question was, how to do this. Indeed, there was only one way, to hang over the bend and discover what lay below. We read each other's thought without the need of words, and I made a motion as though I would start.

"No," said Leo, "I am younger and stronger than you. Come, help me," and he began to fasten the end of his rope to a strong, projecting point of ice. "Now," he said, "hold my ankles."

It seemed an insanity, but there was nothing else to be done, so, fixing my heels in a niche, I grasped them and slowly he slid forward till his body vanished to the middle. What he saw does not matter, for I saw it all afterward, but what happened was that suddenly all his great weight came upon my arms with such a jerk that his ankles were torn from my grip.

Or, God knows, perhaps in my terror I loosed them, obeying the natural impulse which prompts a man to save his own life. If so, may I be forgiven, but had I held on, I must have been jerked into the abyss. Then the rope ran out and remained taut.

"Leo!" I screamed, "Leo!" and I heard a muffled voice saying, as I thought, "Come." What it really said was: "Don't come." But indeed—and may it go to my credit—I did not pause to think, but face outward, just as I was sitting, began to slide down the ice.

In two seconds I had reached the curve, in three I was over it. Beneath was what I can only describe as a great icicle broken off short, and separated from the cliff by about four yards of space. This icicle was not more than fifteen feet in length and sloped outward, so that my descent was not sheer. Moreover, at the end of it the trickling of water, or some such accident, had worn away the ice, leaving a little ledge as broad, perhaps, as a man's hand. There were roughnesses on the surface below the curve, upon which my clothing caught, also I gripped them desperately with my fingers. Thus it came

about that I slid down quite gently and, my heels landing upon the little ledge, remained almost upright, with outstretched arms, like a person crucified to a cross of ice.

Then I saw everything, and the sight curdled the blood within my veins. Hanging to the rope, four or five feet below the broken point, was Leo, out of reach of it, and out of reach of the cliff, as he hung turning slowly round and round, much as—for in a dreadful, inconsequent fashion the absurd similarity struck me even then—a joint turns before the fire. Below yawned the black gulf, and at the bottom of it, far, far beneath, appeared a faint white sheet of snow. That is what I saw.

Think of it! Think of it! I crucified upon the ice, my heels resting upon a little ledge; my fingers grasping excrescences on which a bird could scarcely have found a foothold; round and below me dizzy space. To climb back whence I came was impossible, to stir even was impossible, since one slip and I must be gone.

And below me, hung like a spider to its cord, Leo turning slowly round and round.

I could see that rope of green hide stretch beneath his weight and the knots in it slip and tighten. Agony took hold of me; a cold sweat burst from every pore, I could feel it running down my face like tears; my hair bristled on my head. And below, in utter silence, Leo turned round and round, and each time he turned his up-cast eyes met mine with a look that was horrible to see.

The silence was the worst of it, the silence and the helplessness. If he had cried out, if he had struggled, it would have been better. But to know that he was alive there, with every nerve and perception at its utmost stretch. Oh! my God! Oh! my God!

Then blackness gathered round me, and in the blackness visions—of the living, resistless avalanche, of the snow-grave into which I had sunk—oh! years and years ago; of Ayesha demanding Leo's life at my hands. Blackness and silence, through which I could only hear the cracking of my muscles.

Suddenly in the blackness a flash, and in the silence a sound. The flash was the flash of a knife which Leo had drawn. He was hacking at the cord with it fiercely, fiercely, to make an end. And the sound was that of the noise he made, a ghastly noise, half shout of defiance and half yell of terror, as at length it parted.

I saw it part. The hide was half cut through, and its severed portion curled upward and downward like the upper and lower lips of an angry dog, while that which was unsevered stretched out slowly till it grew quite thin. Then it snapped, so that the rope flew upward and struck me across the face like the blow of a whip.

Another instant and I heard a crackling, thudding sound. Leo had struck the ground below. Leo was dead, a mangled mass of flesh and bone as I had pictured him. I could not bear it. My nerve and human dignity came back. I would not wait until, my strength exhausted, I slid from my perch as a wounded bird falls from a tree. No, I would follow him at once, of my own act.

I let my arms fall against my sides, and rejoiced in the relief from pain that the movement gave me. Then balanced upon my heels, I stood upright, took my last look at the sky, muttered my last prayer. For an instant I remained thus poised.

Shouting, "I come," I raised my hands above my head and dived as a bather dives, dived into the black gulf beneath.

## CHAPTER VI.

### IN THE GATE.

Oh! that rush through space! Folk falling thus are supposed to lose consciousness, but I can assert that this is not true. Never were my wits and perceptions more lively than while I traveled from the broken glacier to the ground, and never did a short journey seem to take a longer time. I saw the white floor, like some living thing, leaping up through empty air to meet me, then—*finis!*

Crash! Why, what was this? I still lived. I was in water, for I could feel its chill, and going down, down, till I thought I should never rise again. But rise I did, though my lungs were nigh to bursting first. As I floated up toward the top I remembered the crash, which told me that I had passed through ice. Therefore I should meet ice at the surface again. Oh! to think that after surviving so much I must be drowned like a kitten and beneath a sheet of ice. My hands touched it. There it was above me, shining white like glass. Heaven be praised! My head broke through; in this low and sheltered gorge it was but a film no thicker than a penny formed by the light frost of the previous night. So I rose from the deep and stared about me, treading water with my feet.

Then I saw the gladdest sight that ever my eyes beheld, for on the right, not ten yards away, the water running from his hair and beard, was Leo. Leo alive, for he broke the thin ice with his arm as he struggled toward the shore from the deep river. He saw me also, and his gray eyes seemed to start out of his head.

"Still living, both of us, and the precipice passed!" he shouted in a ringing, exultant voice. "I told you we were led."

"Ay, but whither?" I answered as I, too, fought my way through the film of ice.

Then it was I became aware that we were no longer alone, for on the bank of the river, some thirty yards from us, stood two figures, a man leaning upon a tall staff and a woman. He was a very old man, for his eyes were horny, his snow-white hair and beard hung upon the bent breast and shoulders, and his sardonic, wrinkled features were yellow as wax. They might have been those of a death mask cut in marble. There, clad in an ample, monkish robe, and leaning upon the staff, he stood still as a statue and watched us. I noted it all, every detail, although at the time I did not know that I was doing so, as we broke our way through the ice toward them and afterward the picture came

back to me. Also I saw that the woman, who was very tall, pointed to us.

Nearer the bank, or rather the rock edge of the river, its surface was free of ice, for here the stream ran swiftly. Seeing this, we drew close together and swam on side by side to help each other if need were. There was much need, for in the fringe of the current the strength that had served me so long seemed to desert me, and I became helpless; numbed, too, with the icy coldness of the water. Indeed, had not Leo grasped my clothes I think that I should have been swept away by the stream to perish. Thus aided we fought on a while, till he said:

"I am going under. Hold to the rope end."

So I gripped the strip of yak's hide that was still fast about him, and, his hand thus freed, he made a last splendid effort to keep us both, cumbered as we were with the thick, soaked garments that dragged us down like lead, from being sucked beneath the surface. Moreover, he succeeded where any other swimmer of less strength must have failed. Still, I think that we should have drowned, since here the torrent ran like a mill race, had not the man upon the shore, seeing our plight and urged thereto by the woman, run with surprising swiftness in one so aged, to a point of rock that jutted some yards into the stream, past which we were being swept, and seating himself, stretched out his staff toward us.

With a desperate endeavor Leo grasped it as we went by, rolling over and over each other, and held on. Round we swung into the eddy, found our feet, were knocked down again, rubbed and pounded on the rocks. But still gripping that staff of salvation, to his end of which the old man clung like a limpet to a stone, while the woman clung to him, we recovered ourselves, and, sheltered somewhat by the rock, floundered toward the shore. Lying on his face—for we were still in great danger—the man extended his arm. We could not reach it; and worse, suddenly the staff was torn from him; we were being swept away.

Then it was that the woman did a noble thing, for springing into the water—yes, up to her armpits—and holding fast to the old man by her left hand, with the right she seized Leo's hair and dragged him shoreward. Here he found his feet for a moment, and throwing one arm about her slender form, steadied himself thus, while with the other he supported me. Now followed a long, confused struggle, but the end of it was that the three of us, the old man, Leo and I, rolled in a heap upon the bank and lay there gasping.

Presently I looked up. The woman stood over us, water streaming from her garments, staring like one in a dream at Leo's face, smothered as it was with blood, from a deep cut in his head. Even then I noticed how stately and beautiful she was. Now she seemed to awake and, glancing at the robes that clung to her splendid shape, said something to her companion, turned and ran toward the cliff.

As we lay before him, utterly exhausted, the old man contemplated us solemnly with his dim eyes. He spoke, but we did not understand. Again he tried another language and without success. A third time and our ears were opened, for the tongue he used was Greek; yes, there in Central Asia he addressed us in Greek, not very pure, it is true, but still Greek.

"Are you wizards," he said, "that you have lived to reach this land?"

"Nay," I answered in the same tongue, though in broken words—since of Greek I had thought little for many a year—"for then we should have come otherwise," and I pointed to our hurts and the precipice behind us.

"They know the ancient speech; it is as we were told from the mountain," he muttered to himself. Then he asked: "Strangers, what seek you?"

Now I grew cunning and did not answer, fearing lest, should he learn the truth, he would thrust us back into the river. But Leo had no such caution, or rather all reason had left him; he was light-headed.

"We seek," he stuttered out—his Greek, which had always been feeble,



now was simply barbarous and mixed with various Thibetan dialects—"we seek the land of the Fire Mountain that is crowned with the Sign of Life."

The man stared at us. "So you know," he said, then broke off and added, "and *whom* do you seek?"

"Her," answered Leo, wildly, "the queen." I think that he meant to say the priestess, or the goddess, but could only think of the Greek for queen, or rather something resembling it. Or perhaps it was because the woman who had gone looked like a queen.

"Oh!" said the man, "you seek a queen—then you *are* those for whom we were bidden to watch. Nay, how can I be sure?"

"Is this a time to put questions?" I asked, angrily. "But who are you?"

"I? Strangers, I am the Guardian of the Gate, and the lady who was with me is the Khania of Kaloon."

At this point Leo began to faint.

"That man is sick," said the guardian, "and now that you have got your breath again, you must have shelter, both of you, and at once. Come, help me."

So, supporting Leo on either side, we dragged ourselves away from that accursed cliff and Styx-like river up a narrow, winding gorge. Presently it opened out and there, stretching across the glade, we saw the gate. Of this all I observed then, for my memory of the details of this scene and of the conversation that passed is very weak and blurred, was that it seemed to be a mighty wall of rock in which a pathway had been hollowed where doubtless once passed the road. On one side of this passage was a stair, which we began to ascend with great difficulty, for Leo was now almost senseless and scarcely moved his legs. Indeed at the head of the first flight he sank down in a heap, nor did our strength suffice to lift him.

While I wondered feebly what was to be done, I heard footsteps, and looking up, saw the woman who had saved him descending the stair, and after her two robed men with a Tartar cast of countenance, very impassive, small eyes and yellowish skin. Even the sight of us

did not appear to move them to astonishment. She spoke some words to them, whereon they lifted Leo's heavy frame, apparently with ease, and carried him up the steps.

We followed, and reached a room that seemed to be hewn from the rock above the gateway, where the woman called Khania left us. From it we passed through other rooms, one of them a kind of kitchen, in which a fire burned, till we came to a large chamber, evidently a sleeping place, for in it were wooden bedsteads, mattresses and rugs. Here Leo was laid down, and with the assistance of one of his servants, the old guardian undressed him, at the same time motioning me to take off my own garments. This for the first time during many days I did gladly enough, though with great difficulty, to find that I was a mass of wounds and bruises.

Presently our host blew upon a whistle, and the other servant appeared bringing hot water in a jar, with which we were washed over. Then the guardian dressed our hurts with some soothing ointment, and wrapped us round with blankets. After this broth was brought, into which he mixed medicine, and giving me a portion of it to drink where I lay upon one of the beds, he took Leo's head upon his knee and poured the rest of it down his throat. Instantly a wonderful warmth ran through me, and my aching brain began to swim. Then I remembered no more.

After this we were very, very ill. What may have been the exact medical definition of our sickness, I do not know, but in effect it was such as follows loss of blood, extreme exhaustion, paralyzing shock to the nerves and extensive cuts and contusions. These taken together produced a long period of semi-unconsciousness, followed by another period of fever and delirium. All that I can recall of those weeks while we remained the guests of the Guardian of the Gate, may be summed up in one word—dreams, that is until at last I recovered my senses.

The dreams themselves are forgotten,

which is perhaps as well, as they were very confused, and for the most part awful; a hotch-potch of nightmares, reflected without doubt from vivid memories of our recent and fearsome sufferings. At times I would wake up from them a little, I suppose when food was administered to me, and receive impressions of whatever was passing in the place. Thus I can recollect that yellow-faced old guardian standing over me like a ghost in the moonlight, stroking his long beard, his eyes fixed upon my face, as though he would search out the secrets of my soul.

"They are the men," he muttered to himself, "without doubt they are the men," then walked to the window and looked up long and earnestly, like one who studies the stars.

After this I remember a disturbance in the room, and dominating it, as it were, the rich sound of a woman's voice and the rustle of a woman's silks sweeping the stone floor. I opened my eyes and saw that it was she who had helped to rescue us, who *had* rescued us in fact, a tall and noble-looking lady with a beauteous, weary face and liquid eyes that seemed to burn. From the heavy cloak she wore I thought that she must have just returned from a journey.

She stood above me and looked at me, then turned away with a gesture of indifference, if not of disgust, speaking to the guardian in a low voice. By way of answer he bowed, pointing to the other bed where Leo lay asleep, and thither she passed with slow, imperious movements. I saw her bend down and lift the corner of a wrapping which covered his wounded head, and heard her utter some smothered words before she turned round to the guardian as though to question him further.

But he had gone, and being alone, for she thought me senseless, she drew a rough stool to the side of the bed, and seating herself studied him who lay thereon with an earnestness that was almost terrible, for her soul seemed to be concentrated in her eyes, and to find expression through them. Long she gazed thus, then rose and began to walk swiftly up and down the chamber, press-

ing her hands now to her bosom and now to her brow, a certain passionate perplexity stamped upon her face, as though she struggled to remember something and could not.

"Where and when?" she whispered. "Oh! where and when?"

Of the end of that scene I know nothing, for although I fought hard against it, oblivion mastered me. After this I became aware that the regal-looking woman called Khania was always in the room, and that she seemed to be nursing Leo with great care and tenderness. Sometimes even she nursed me when Leo did not need attention, and she had nothing else to do, or so her manner seemed to suggest. It was as though I excited her curiosity, and she wished me to recover that it might be satisfied.

Again I awoke, how long after I cannot say. It was night, and the room was lighted by the moon only, now shining in a clear sky. Its steady rays entering at the window place fell on Leo's bed, and by them I saw that the dark, imperial woman was watching at his side. Some sense of her presence must have communicated itself to him, for he began to mutter in his sleep, now in English, now in Arabic. She became intensely interested; as her every movement showed. Then rising suddenly she glided across the room on tiptoe to look at me. Seeing her coming I feigned to be asleep, and so well that she was deceived.

For I was also interested. Who was this lady whom the Guardian had called the Khania of Kaloon? Could it be she whom we sought? Why not? And yet if I saw Ayesha, surely I should know her, surely there would be no room for doubt.

Back she went again to the bed, kneeling down beside Leo, and in the intense silence that followed—for he had ceased his mutterings—I thought that I could hear the beating of her heart. Now she began to speak, very low and in that same bastard Greek tongue mixed here and there with Mongolian words such as are common to the dialects of Central Asia. I could not hear or understand

all she said, but some sentences I did understand, and they frightened me not a little.

"Man of my dreams," she murmured, "whence come you? Who are you? Why did the Hesea bid me meet you?" Then some sentences I could not catch. "You sleep; in sleep the eyes are opened. Answer and say what is the bond between you and me? Why have I dreamed of you? Why do I know you? Why——?" and the sweet, rich voice died slowly from a whisper into silence, as though she were ashamed to utter what was on her tongue.

As she bent over him a lock of her hair broke loose from its jeweled fillet and fell across his face. At its touch he seemed to wake, for he lifted his gaunt, white hand, and touched the hair, then said, in English:

"Where am I? Oh! I remember," and their eyes met as he strove to lift himself and could not. Then he spoke again in his broken, stumbling Greek: "You are the lady who saved me from the water. Say, are you also that queen whom I have sought so long and endured so much to find?"

"I know not," she answered, in a voice as sweet as honey, a low, trembling voice; "but true it is I am a queen—if a Khania is a queen."

"Say then, queen, do you remember me?"

"We have met in dreams," she answered; "I think that we have met in a past that is far away. Yes; I knew it when I saw you first there by the river. Stranger with the well-remembered face, tell me, I pray you, how you are named?"

"Leo Vincey."

She shook her head, whispering:

"I know not the name, yet you I know."

"You know me! How do you know me?" he said, heavily, and seemed to sink again into slumber or swoon.

She watched him for a while very intently. Then as though some force that she could not resist drew her, I saw her bend down her head over his sleeping face. Yes; and I saw her kiss him swiftly on the lips, then spring back

crimson to the hair, as though overwhelmed with shame at this victory of her mad passion.

Now it was that she discovered me.

Bewildered, fascinated, amazed, I had raised myself upon my bed, not knowing it, I suppose that I might see and hear the better. It was wrong, doubtless, but no common curiosity overmastered me, who had my part in all this story. More, it was foolish, but illness and wonder had killed my reason.

Yes, she saw me watching them, and such fury seemed to take hold of her that I thought my hour had come.

"Man, have you dared——?" she said, in an intense whisper, and snatching at her girdle. Now in her hand shone a knife, and I knew that it was destined for my heart. Then in this sore danger my wit came back to me and as she advanced I stretched out my shaking hand, saying:

"Oh! of your pity, give me to drink. The fever burns me, it burns," and I looked round like one bewildered who sees not, repeating: "Give me drink, you who are called guardian," and I fell back exhausted.

She stopped as a hawk stops in its swoop, and swiftly sheathed the dagger. Then taking a bowl of milk that stood on a table near her, she held it to my lips, searching my face the while with her flaming eyes, for indeed passion, hate and fear had lit them till they seemed to flame. I drank the milk in great gulps, though never in my life did I find it more hard to swallow.

"You tremble," she said; "have dreams haunted you?"

"Ay, friend," I answered, "dreams of that fearsome precipice and of the last leap."

"Aught else?" she asked.

"Nay; is it not enough? Oh! what a journey to have taken to befriend a queen!"

"To befriend a queen," she repeated, puzzled. "What means the man? You swear you have had no other dreams?"

"Ay, I swear by the Symbol of Life and the Mount of the Wavering Flame,

and by yourself, O queen from the ancient days!"

Then I sighed and pretended to swoon, for I could think of nothing else to do. As I closed my eyes I saw her face that had been red as dawn turn pale as eve, for my words and all that might lie behind them had gone home. Moreover, she was in doubt, for I could hear her fingering the handle of the dagger. Then she spoke aloud, words for my ears if they still were open.

"I am glad," she said, "that he dreamed no other dreams, since had he done so and babbled of them it would have been ill-omened, and I do not wish that one who has traveled far to visit us should be hurled to the death dogs for burial; one, moreover, who although old and hideous, still has the air of a wise and silent man."

Now while I shivered at these unpleasant hints—though what the "death dogs" in which people were buried might be, I could not conceive—to my intense joy I heard the foot of the guardian on the stair, heard him, too, enter the room and saw him bow before the lady.

"How go these sick men, niece\*?" he said, in his cold voice.

"They swoon, both of them," she answered.

"Indeed, is it so? I thought otherwise. I thought they woke."

"What have you heard, Shaman?" she asked, angrily.

"I? Oh! I heard the grating of a dagger in its sheath and the distant baying of the death hounds."

"And what have you seen, Shaman," she asked, again, "looking through the gate you guard?"

"Strange sights, Khania, my niece. But—men awake from swoons."

"Ay," she answered, "so while this one sleeps, bear him to another chamber, for he needs change, and the lord yonder needs more space and untainted air."

The guardian, whom she called "Sha-

man," or Magician, held a lamp in his hand, and by its light it was easy to see his face, which I watched out of the corner of my eye. I thought that it wore a very strange expression, one, moreover, that alarmed me somewhat. From the beginning I had misdoubted me of this old man, whose cast of countenance was vindictive as it was able; now I was afraid of him.

"To which chamber, Khania?" he said, with meaning.

"I think," she answered, slowly, "to one that is healthful, where he will recover. The man has wisdom," she added, as though in explanation; "moreover, having the word from the mountain, to harm him would be dangerous. But why do you ask?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I tell you I heard the death hounds bay, that is all. Yes, with you I think that he has wisdom, and the bee which seeks honey should suck the flower—before it fades! Also, as you say, there are commands with which it is ill to trifle, even if we cannot guess their meaning."

Then going to the door he blew upon his whistle, and instantly I heard the feet of his servants upon the stairs. He gave them an order, and gently enough they lifted the mattress on which I lay and followed him down sundry passages and past some stairs into another chamber shaped like that we had left, but not so large, where they placed me upon a bed.

The guardian watched me a while to see that I did not wake. Next he stretched out his hand and felt my heart and pulse; an examination the results of which seemed to puzzle him, for he uttered a little exclamation and shook his head. After this he left the room, and I heard him bolt the door behind him. Then, being still very weak, I fell asleep in earnest.

When I awoke it was broad daylight. My mind was clear and I felt better than I had done for many a day, signs by which I knew that the fever had left me and that I was on the high road to recovery. Now I remembered all the events of the previous night and was

\*I found later that the Khania, Atene, was not Simbri's niece, but his great-niece, on the mother's side.—L. H. H.

able to weigh them carefully. This, to be sure, I did for many reasons, among them that I knew I had been, and still was, in great danger.

I had seen and heard too much, and this woman called Khania guessed that I had seen and heard. Indeed, had it not been for my hints about the Symbol of Life and the Mount of Flame, after I had disarmed her first rage by my artifice, I felt sure that she would have ordered the old guardian, or Shaman, to do me to death in this way or the other; sure also that he would not have hesitated to obey her. I had been spared partly because she was afraid to kill me for some unknown reason, and partly that she might learn how much I knew, although the "death hounds had bayed," whatever that might mean. Well, up to the present I was safe, and for the rest I must take my chance. Moreover, it was necessary to be cautious, and, if need were, to feign ignorance. So, dismissing the matter of my own fate from my mind, I fell to considering the scene which I had witnessed and what might be its purport.

Was our quest at an end? Was this woman Ayesha? Leo had so dreamed, but he was still delirious, therefore here was little light. What seemed more to the point was that she herself evidently appeared to think that there existed some tie between her and this sick man. Why had she embraced him? I was sure that she could be no wanton, nor indeed would any woman indulge for its own sake in such folly with a stranger who hung between life and death. What she had done was done because irresistible impulse, born of knowledge, or at least of memories, drove her on, though mayhap the knowledge was imperfect and the memories were undefined. Who save Ayesha could have known anything of Leo in the past? None who lived upon the earth to-day.

And yet, why not, if what Kou-en, the abbot, and tens of millions of his fellow worshipers believed were true? If the souls of human beings were in fact strictly limited in number and became the tenants of an endless suc-

cession of physical bodies which they change from time to time as we change our garments, why should not others have known him? For instance, that daughter of the Pharaohs who "caused him through love to break the vows that he had vowed" knew a certain priest of "Isis whom the gods cherish and the demons obey," even Amenartas, the mistress of magic.

Oh! now a light seemed to break upon me, a terrible light. What if Amenartas and this Khania, this woman with royalty stamped on every feature, should be the same? Would not that "magic of my own people that I have" of which she wrote upon the Sherd, enable her to pierce the darkness of the past and recognize the man whom she had bewitched to love her, snatching him out of the very hand of the goddess? What if it were not Ayesha, but Amenartas reincarnate who ruled this hidden land and once more sought to make the man she loved break through his vows? If so, knowing the evil that must come, I shook even at its shadow. The truth must be learned, but how?

While I wondered the door opened, and the sardonic, inscrutable, old-faced man, whom this Khania had called Magician, and who called the Khania niece, entered and stood before me.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FIRST ORDEAL.

The Shaman advanced to my side and asked me courteously how I fared.

I answered: "Better. Far better, oh, my host—but how are you named?"

"Simbri," he answered, "and my title is Hereditary Guardian of the Gate. By profession I am the royal physician in this land."

"Did you say physician or magician?" I asked, carelessly, as though I had not caught the word. He gave me a curious look.

"I said physician, and it is well for you and your companion that I have some skill in my art. Otherwise I think, perhaps, you would not have been alive to-day, O my guest!—but how are you named?"

"Holly," I said.

"Oh! my guest, Holly."

"Had it not been for the foresight that brought you and the lady Khania to the edge of yonder darksome river, certainly we should *not* have been alive, venerable Simbri, a foresight that seems to me to savor of magic in such a lonely place. That is why I thought you might have described yourself as a magician, though it is true that you may have been but fishing in those waters."

"Certainly I was fishing, stranger Holly—for men, and I caught two."

"Fishing by chance, host Simbri?"

"Nay, by design, guest Holly. My trade of physician includes the study of future events, for I am the chief of the Shamans or Seers of this land, and, having been warned of your coming quite recently, I awaited your arrival."

"Indeed, that is strange, most courteous also. So here physician and magician mean the same."

"You say it," he answered, with a grave bow; "but tell me, if you will, how did you find your way to a land whither visitors do not wander?"

"Oh!" I answered, "perhaps we are but travelers, or perhaps we also have studied—medicine."

"I think that you must have studied it deeply, since otherwise you would not have lived to cross those mountains in search of—now, what did you seek? Your companion, I think, spoke of a queen—yonder, on the banks of the river."

"Did he? Did he, indeed? Well, that is strange since he seems to have found one, for surely that royal-looking lady, named Khania, who sprang into the water and saved us, must be a queen."

"A queen she is, and a great one, for in our land Khania means queen, though how, friend Holly, a man who has lain senseless can have learned this, I do not know. Nor do I know how you come to speak our language."

"That is simple, for the tongue you talk is very ancient, and as it chanced in my own country it has been my lot to study and to teach it. It is Greek, but

how it reached these mountains I cannot tell."

"I will tell you," he answered. "Many generations ago a great conqueror of the nation that spoke this tongue fought his way through the country to the south of us. He was driven back, but a general of his of another race advanced and crossed the mountains, and overcame the people of this land, bringing with him his language and his worship. Here he established his dynasty, and here it remains, for being ringed in with deserts and with pathless mountain snows, it holds no converse with the outer world."

"Yes, I know some of that story; and the conqueror was named Alexander, was he not?" I asked.

"He was so named, and the name of the general was Ra-sen, a native of a country called Egypt, or so our records tell us. His descendants hold the throne to this day, and Khania is of his blood."

"Was the goddess whom he worshiped called Isis?"

"Nay," he answered, "she was called Hes."

"Which," I interrupted, "is another title for Isis. Tell me, is her worship continued here? I ask because it is now dead in Egypt, which was its home."

"There is a temple on the mountain yonder," he replied, indifferently, "and in it are priests and priestesses who practice some ancient cult. But the real god of this people now, as long before the day of Ra-sen their conqueror, is the fire that dwells in that same mountain, which from time to time breaks out and slays them."

"And does the goddess dwell in the fire?" I asked.

Again he searched my face with his cold eyes, then answered:

"Stranger Holly, I know nothing of any goddess. That mountain is sacred, and to seek to learn its secrets is to die. Why do you ask such questions?"

"Only because I am curious in the matter of old religions, and seeing the Symbol of Life upon yonder peak, came hither to study yours, of which indeed a tradition still remains among the learned."



"Then abandon that study, friend Holly, for the road to it runs through the jaws of the death hounds, and the spears of savages. Nor indeed is there anything to learn."

"And what, physician, are the death hounds?"

"Certain dogs to which, according to our ancient custom, all offenders against the law or the will of the Khan, are cast to be torn to pieces."

"The will of the Khan! Has this Khania of yours a husband, then?"

"Ay," he answered, "her cousin, who was the ruler of half the land. Now they and the land are one. But you have talked enough; I am here to say that your food is ready," and he turned to leave the room.

"One more question, friend Simbri. How came I to this chamber, and where is my companion?"

"You were borne hither in your sleep, and see, the change has bettered you. Do you remember nothing?"

"Nothing, nothing at all," I answered, earnestly. "But what of my friend?"

"He also is better. The Khania Atene nurses him."

"Atene?" I said. "That is an Egyptian name. It means the Dish of the Sun, and a woman who bore it thousands of years ago was famous for her beauty."

"Well, and is not my niece Atene beautiful?"

"How can I tell, O uncle of the Khania," I answered, wearily, "who have scarcely seen her?"

Then he departed, and presently his yellow-faced, silent servants brought me my food.

Later in the morning the door opened again, and through it, unattended, came the Khania Atene, who shut and bolted it behind her. This action did not reassure me, still, rising in my bed, I saluted her as best I could, although at heart I was afraid. She seemed to read my doubts, for she said:

"Lie down, and have no fear. At present you will come by no harm from me. Now, tell me what is the man called Leo to you? Your son? Nay, it

cannot be, since—forgive me—light is not born of darkness."

"I have always thought that it was so born, Khania. Yet you are right; he is but my adopted son, and a man whom I love."

"Say, what seek you here?" she asked.

"We seek, Khania, whatsoever fate shall bring us on yonder mountain, that which is crowned with flame."

Her face paled at the words, but she answered in a steady voice:

"Then there you will find nothing but doom, if indeed you do not find it before you reach its slopes, which are guarded by savage men. Yonder is the College of Hes, and to violate its sanctuary is death to any man, death in the ever-burning fire."

"And who rules this college, Khania—a priestess?"

"Yes, a priestess, whose face I have never seen, for she is so old that she veils herself from curious eyes."

"Ah! she veils herself, does she?" I answered, as the blood went thrilling through my veins, I who remembered another who also was so old that she veiled herself from curious eyes. "Well, veiled or unveiled, we would visit her, trusting to find that we are welcome."

"That you shall not do," she said, "for it is unlawful, and I will not have your blood upon my hands."

"Which is the stronger," I asked of her, "you, Khania, or this priestess of the mountain?"

"I am the stronger, Holly, for so you are named, are you not? Look you, at my need I can summon sixty thousand men in war, while she has naught but her priests and the fierce, untrained tribes."

"The sword is not the only power in the world," I answered. "Tell me, now, does this priestess ever visit the country of Kaloon?"

"Never, never, for by the ancient pact, made after the last great struggle long centuries ago between the college and the people of the plain, it was decreed and sworn to that should she set her foot across the river, this means war to the end between us, and rule for the victor over both. Likewise, save when

unguarded they bear their dead to burial, or for some such high purpose, no Khan or Khania of Kaloon ascends the mountain."

"Which, then, is the true master—the Khan of Kaloon or the head of the College of Hes?" I asked again.

"In matters spiritual, the priestess of Hes, who is our oracle and the voice of Heaven. In matters temporal, the Khan of Kaloon."

"The Khan. Ah! you are married, lady, are you not?"

"Ay," she answered, her face flushing. "And I will tell you what you soon must learn, if you have not learned it already, I am the wife of a madman, and he is—hateful to me."

"I have learned the last already, Khania."

She looked at me with her piercing eyes.

"What! Did my uncle, the Shaman, he who is called guardian, tell you? Nay, you saw, as I knew you saw, and it would have been best to slay you, for, oh! what must you think of me?"

I made no answer, for in truth I did not know what to think, also I feared lest rash admissions should be followed by swift vengeance.

"You must believe," she went on, "that I, who have ever hated men, that I—I swear that it is true—whose lips are purer than those mountain snows, I, the Khania of Kaloon, whom they name Heart-of-Ice, am but a shameless thing." And, covering her face with her hand, she moaned in the bitterness of her distress.

"Nay," I said, "there may be reasons, explanations, if it pleases you to give them."

"Wanderer, there are such reasons; and since you know so much, you shall learn them also. Like that husband of mine, I have become mad. When first I saw the face of your companion, as I dragged him from the river, madness entered me, and I—I——"

"Loved him," I suggested. "Well, such things have happened before to people who were not mad."

"Oh!" she went on, "it was more than love; I was possessed, and that

night I knew not what I did. A power drove me on; a destiny compelled me, and to the end I am his, and his alone. Yes, I am his, and I swear that he shall be mine," and with this wild declaration, dangerous enough under the conditions, she turned and fled the room.

She was gone, and after the struggle—for such it was—I sank back exhausted. How came it that this sudden passion had mastered her? Who and what was this Khania, I wondered, and—this was more to the point, who and what would Leo believe her to be? If only I could be with him before he said words or did deeds impossible to recall.

Three days went by, during which time I saw no more of the Khania, who, or so I was informed by Simbri, the Shaman, had returned to her city to make ready for us, her guests. I begged him to allow me to rejoin Leo, but he answered politely, though with much firmness, that my foster-son did better without me. Now, I grew suspicious, fearing lest some harm had come to Leo, though how to discover the truth I knew not. In my anxiety I tried to convey a note to him, written upon a leaf of a water-stained pocketbook, but the yellow-faced servant refused to touch it, and Simbri said, dryly, that he would have naught to do with writings which he could not read. At length, on the third night, I made up my mind that whatever the risk, with leave or without it, I would try to find him.

By this time I could walk well, and indeed was almost strong again. So about midnight, when the moon was up, for I had no other light, I crept from my bed, threw on my garments, and taking a knife, which was the only weapon I possessed, opened the door of my room and started.

Now, when I was carried from the rock chamber where Leo and I had been together, I took note of the way. First, reckoning from my sleeping place, there was a passage thirty paces long, for I had counted the footfalls of my bearers. Then came a turn to the left, and ten more paces of passage, and lastly near certain steps running to

some place unknown, another sharp turn to the right which led to our old chamber.

Down the long passage I walked stealthily, and although it was pitch dark, found the turn to the left, and followed it till I came to the second sharp turn to the right, that of the gallery from which rose the stairs. I crept round it only to retreat hastily enough, as well I might, for at the door of Leo's room, which she was in the act of locking on the outside, as I could see by the light of the lamp that she held in her hand, stood the Khania herself.

My first thought was to fly back to my own chamber, but I abandoned it, feeling sure that I should be seen. Therefore I determined, if she discovered me, to face the matter out and say that I was trying to find Leo, and to learn how he fared. So I crouched against the wall, and waited with a beating heart. I heard her sweep down the passage, and—yes—begin to mount the stair.

Now, what should I do? To try to reach Leo was useless, for she had locked the door with the key she held. Go back to bed? No, I would follow her, and if we met would make the same excuse. Thus I might get some tidings, or perhaps—a dagger thrust.

So round the corner and up the steps I went, noiselessly as a snake. They were many and winding, like those of a church tower, but at length I came to the head of them, where was a little landing, and opening from it a door. It was a very ancient door; the light streamed through cracks where its panels had rotted, and from the room beyond came voices, those of the Shaman Simbri and the Khania.

"Have you learned aught, my niece?" I heard him say, and also heard her answer:

"A little. A very little."

Then in my thirst for knowledge I grew bold, and stealing to the door, looked through one of the cracks in its wood. Opposite to me, in the full flood of light thrown by a hanging lamp, her hand resting on a table at which Simbri was seated, stood the Khania. Truly

she was a beauteous sight, for she wore robes of royal purple, and on her brow a little coronet of gold, beneath which her curling hair streamed down her shapely neck and bosom. Seeing her I guessed at once that she had arrayed herself thus for some secret end, enhancing her loveliness by every art and grace that is known to woman. Simbri was looking at her earnestly, with fear and doubt written on even his cold, impassive features.

"What passed between you, then?" he asked, peering at her.

"I questioned him closely as to the reason of his coming to this land, and wrung from him the answer that it was to seek some beauteous woman—he would say no more. I asked him if she were more beauteous than I am, and he replied with courtesy—nothing else, I think—that it would be hard to say, but that she had been different. Then I said that though it behooved me not to speak of such a matter, there was no lady in Kaloon whom men held to be so fair as I; moreover, that I was its ruler, and that I and no other had saved him from the water. Ay, and I added that my heart told me I was that woman whom he sought."

"Have done, niece," said Simbri, impatiently. "I would not hear of the arts you used—well enough, doubtless. What then?"

"Then he said that it might be so, since he thought that this woman was born again, and studied me a while, asking me if I had ever 'passed through fire.' To this I replied that the only fires I had passed were those of the spirit, and that I dwelt in them now. He said, 'Show me your hair,' and I placed a lock of it in his hand. Presently he let it fall, and from that satchel which he wears about his neck drew out another tress of hair—oh! Simbri, my uncle, the loveliest hair that ever eyes beheld, for it was soft as silk, and reached from my coronet to the ground. Moreover, no raven's wing in the sunshine ever shone as did that fragrant tress.

"'Yours is beautiful,' he said, 'but see, they are not the same.'

"‘Mayhap,’ I answered, ‘since no woman ever wore such locks.’

"‘You are right,’ he replied, ‘for she whom I seek was more than a woman.’

"And then—and then—though I tried him in many ways he would say no more, so, feeling hate against this unknown rising in my heart, and fearing lest I should utter words that were best unsaid, I left him. Now I bid you, search the books that are open to your wisdom and tell me of this woman whom he seeks, who she is, and where she dwells. Oh! search them—search them swiftly, that I may find her and—kill her if I can."

"Ay, if you can," answered the Shaman, "and if she lives to kill. But say, where shall we begin our quest? Now, this letter from the mountain that the head priest Oros sent to your court a while ago?"—and he selected a parchment from a pile which lay upon the table and looked at her.

"Read," she said. "I would hear it again."

So he read:

*From the Hesea of the House of Fire, to Atene, Khania of Kaloon.*

MY SISTER: Warning has reached me that two strangers of a western race journey to your land, seeking my oracle, of which they would ask a question. On the first day of the next moon, I command that Simbri, your great-uncle, the wise Shaman, Guardian of the Gate, shall be at his post watching the river in the gulf at the foot of the ancient road, for by that steep path the strangers travel. Let him aid them in all things and bring them safely to the mountain, knowing that in this matter I shall hold him and you to account. Myself I will not meet them, since to do so would be to break the pact between our powers, which says that the Hesea of the Sanctuary visits not the territory of Kaloon, save in war. Also their coming is otherwise appointed.

"It would seem," said Simbri, laying down the parchment, "that these are no chance wanderers, since Hes awaits them."

"Ay, they are no chance wanderers, since my heart awaited one of them also. Yet the Hesea cannot be that woman, for reasons which are known to you."

"There are many women on the mountain," suggested the Shaman in a

dry voice, "if indeed any woman has to do with this matter."

"I at least have to do with it, and he shall not go to the mountain."

"Hes is powerful, my niece, and beneath these smooth words of hers lies a dreadful threat. I say that she is mighty from of old and has servants in the earth and air. I know it, who hate her, and to the royal house of Rassen it has been known for many a generation. Therefore thwart her not lest ill befall us all. She says that it is appointed that they shall go——"

"And I say it is appointed that he shall not go. Let the other go if he desires."

"Atene, be plain, what will you with the man called Leo—that he should become your lover?" asked the Shaman.

She stared him straight in the eyes, and answered boldly:

"Nay, I will that he should become my husband."

"First he must will it, too, who seems to have no mind that way. Also, how can a woman have two husbands?"

She laid her hand upon his shoulder and said:

"I have no husband. You know it well. I charge you by the close bond of blood between us, brew me another draught——"

"That we may be bound yet closer in a bond of murder! Nay, Atene, I will not; already your sin lies heavy on my head. You are very fair; take the man in your own net, if you may, or let him be, which is better far."

"I cannot let him be. Would that I were able. I must love him as I must hate the other whom he loves, yet some power hardens his heart against me. Oh! great Shaman, you who can read the future and the past, tell me what you have learned from your stars and your divinations."

"Already I have sought through many a secret, toilsome hour and learned this, Atene," he answered. "You are right, the fate of yonder man is intertwined with yours, but between you and him there rises a mighty wall that my vision cannot pierce nor my familiars climb. Yet I am warned that in death you and

he—ay, and I also, shall be very near together.”

“Then come death,” she exclaimed with sullen pride, “for thence at least I’ll pluck out my desire.”

“Be not so sure,” he answered, “for I think that the power follows us even down that dark gulf of death. I think also that I feel the eyes of Hes watching our secret souls.”

“Then blind them—as you can. Tomorrow send a messenger to the mountain and tell the Hesea that two old strangers have arrived—mark you, *old*—but that they are very sick, that their

limbs were broken in the river, and that when they have healed again I will send them to ask the question of her oracle—that is, some three moons hence. Perchance she may believe you, and be content to wait; or if she does not, at least no more words. I must sleep or my brain will burst. Give me that medicine which brings dreamless rest, for never did I need it more, who also feel eyes upon me,” and she glanced toward the door.

Then I left, and not too soon, for as I crept down the darksome passage I heard it open behind me.

**In the next installment Mr. Haggard describes with wonderful vividness certain adventures befalling Leo Vincey and Horace Holly in their search for the Fire Mountain where they hope to meet Ayesha.**

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## TONY AND THE MOOSE

BY JAMES OTIS

*The strange result of a deputy sheriff's efforts to discourage law-breaking in the Maine woods*

“YES, I reckon that was the liveliest night put in near about the Alagash River by any man; but if you’ve ever heard tell before of a bull moose cuttin’ in to rescue a prisoner from the sheriff, then there’s no call for me to open my face.”

It was Joe Champlin, the well-known Maine guide, who spoke, and any man—hunter, tenderfoot or logger—who ever found Joe in the humor for telling a story would have insisted, as did I, that he “open his face” without delay.

We—Joe and I—were encamped half a dozen miles north of Chamberlain Lake, in Maine. Since three o’clock in the morning we had been following the trail of a moose I had wounded the night previous, and the chase did not come to an end until near nightfall,

when we succeeded in bringing down the huge beast.

Camp, which consisted of a small lean-to, no more than sufficient to shelter the upper portions of our bodies, was put up near where the moose fell. A generous fire had been built, by the aid of which a couple of large steaks were broiled to a turn, and we were smoking the after-supper pipes with that sense of enjoyment such as can be felt only by men in similar circumstances.

It was my first experience in hunting big game, and that I had succeeded in hiring Joe Champlin, the best guide in northern Maine, was due rather to luck than good wit. When we set out I had no idea what a treasure in the way of guides was to be my companion; but at Kineo I had been told that if Joe ever

proposed to tell a story I should give him the opportunity, even though at the moment we might be hot on the trail of the biggest moose or caribou to be found in the country.

"Go ahead with the yarn, Joe, and make it good and strong," I told him, settling down in front of the roaring fire in a yet more luxurious fashion.

"I couldn't make it stronger than it really was if I split my mouth," Joe replied, as he threw another log on the flaming pile of fuel. "'Cause, you see, there's no man hereabouts with top enough to think sich a yarn out er nothin' but his head. He'd have to see the whole thing, as I did, an' even then there'd be times in after years when he'd ask hisself if it was all really true.

"I reckon you never did hear tell of Tony Lebrun, though his first name was Antoine, which folks around here shortened down into Tony. Never, eh? Waal, he was a terror, an' no mistake, afraid of neither beast nor the devil, an' a wildcat for fightin'; ready to tackle anything, even before the sheriffs got after him."

"What crime had he committed, Joe?" I asked, lazily.

"Waal, it wasn't a crime, so to speak, though stickin' to it down here in Maine is likely to carry a fellow to jail. Tony sold whisky to the lumbermen, an' made a good many dollars out of it, too. The loggin' bosses got after him, 'cause the men allers come away from Tony's camp fightin' drunk, an' wasn't much good at the work for two or three days. So they had him indicted—I reckon that's what the lawyers call it—for sellin' rum, an' sent Jim Beals, the nerviest deputy sheriff in the State, to take him.

"Tony had a camp on the Allaguash about five miles from the Ashland road, an' it was a corker—made of hewn logs plastered in great shape with clay, a pitched roof covered with splints, an' cedar boughs to keep the heat in, though when he had started up business with a lively gang of loggers, I allow nobody inside needed a great deal of warm air. There wasn't any floor, as a matter of course, but the soil had been beaten down hard as a soft rock, an' the fire-

place was in the middle of the ten-by-twelve room, with a good sized hole in the roof to play the part of chimney. In one corner he had a wide splint board set up on hosses made of saplin's, which he called the bar, an' behind it, when Tony was at home, you'd allers find a barrel of whisky on tap. Good stuff that Kanuck sold, too, an' he wasn't bothered much 'bout gettin' it, 'cause, you see, he brought it across the line from Canada, where sellin' rum ain't a crime.

"How would he find his customers? Why, bless you, lad, there wasn't a lumberman within fifty miles of the camp that didn't know when Tony tapped his barrel, an' you could bet good, big money that every mother's son of 'em counted on havin' two or three reg'lar blowouts at Tony's before the season ended, whether the bosses kicked or not. The fact was that everybody far an' near, guides an' hunters as well as loggers, got to learn when Tony had in a new stock, an' he didn't need any steam whistle to call up them as were willin' to fire in what cash they had.

"It was 'long 'bout this time in the year, when the moose were beginnin' to call in great shape, an' consequently uglier than thunder. I was camped on Muddy Bear pond, not more'n six miles from Tony's place, bein' there to get a caribou's head for a dude who counted on havin' it mounted to show as somethin' he'd killed. The snow was near to ten inches deep on the level, with here an' there big drifts in the open what called for snowshoes whether a man wanted to tote 'em or not. I had settled down for the night, same's we have, an' was leg-weary from a long tramp that had 'mounted to nothin' in the way of caribou, when who should come moseyin' erlong but Jim Beals an' Injun Charley, a guide from Oldtown. It didn't need any great lookin' for me to see that Jim had important business on hand, though why he'd pulled up at my camp was more'n I could tell till he asked, after lightin' his pipe an' sittin' by for a spell, ef I knew the location of Tony's camp.

"Of course I told him as how I did, for it's a mighty good man who'll take



the chances of lyin' to Jim Beals, an' then he out with his business, which same kind er started the hair on my head. If you'll believe it, he counted on takin' Tony single-handed an' carryin' him to Bangor. I'd as soon thought of goin' out allowin' to ketch a wildcat by the tail. Waal, Jim reckoned that I'd have to guide him to Tony's camp, seein's how Charley didn't know where it was, an' I've allers noticed that them Oldtown Injuns ain't worth a hurrah except to take pay for guidin' them what know less'n the average six-year-old youngster.

"I didn't make any bones of tellin' Jim that he was a fool for so much as thinkin' he could take Tony out er his own camp when, most likely, he had a gang of half-drunken lumbermen around who'd love to kick up a row; but the deputy allers was headstrong, an' he allowed that I must show him the road whether I wanted to or not. I didn't try to argify, for Jim had the law on his side, an' might make it hot for me when I showed up at Kineo or Greenville.

"I took my rifle, Jim had a revolver, an' that fool Injun was totin' an old army musket that wasn't worth at the rate of a shillin' a dozen. We had snowshoes, seein's how it wasn't safe to go without 'em, an' when the scrimmage should come—for I knowed it was due within four seconds after Jim sighted Tony—they'd hinder us mightily.

"It was nigh erbout seven o'clock in the evenin' when we got started, an' we'd get to Tony's camp, barrin' accidents, jest erbout the time the fun was at its height, in case he had customers, which was likely. If he was alone, Jim didn't have the ghost of a chance to carry out his plan, for the Kanuck could stand off twenty men, an' was certain to be on the watch.

"Waal, we toddled erlong, an' except for a couple of miles snowshoein' over dry, loose snow, got within sight of the camp in good, easy time. Tony wasn't alone. Guessin' from the noise, I'd say there was more'n a hundred loggers, everyone of 'em tryin' to see who could make the biggest row, which last give

us to understand that they'd been buyin' stuff of Tony in good style.

"Jim allowed that we'd creep up an' get a good look at the inside before decidin' how to begin business, an' he'd no more'n said so when Injun Charley took a quick sneak; he wasn't hankerin' for a tussle with the Frenchman, an', to tell the truth, I didn't blame him very much, though I held my ground rather than let Jim think I was erfraid. It wasn't any trick to get up to the door of the camp, which had been left open on account of the heat inside, an' there we saw an Allaguash River barroom in full blast.

"It looked to me as if the camp was plumb full of men, an' Tony was drawin' off tin cups full of whisky as fast as he knew how. Trade wouldn't need to keep up a great while at that rate before the barrel was bound to be empty, an', as I figgered it out, the loggers wouldn't leave till the stuff or their money come to an end. A dozen or more were playin' cards, with a short, half-hewn log for a table, an' the rest of the crowd were makin' it lively for Tony. How he ever found time to take pay for the drinks was more'n I could make out. A lantern was slung to the roof of the shanty, an' another hung just over the whisky barrel, so you can guess that it wouldn't have been easy to find a needle in a haystack, if there'd been any hay near by, an' it turned out that the darkness was jest what give Jim Beals an idee.

"We'll leave the snowshoes outside, so's they won't give us any bother, an' tumble right in as if we belonged to the gang,' Beals said to me, after we'd taken in the whole thing for a minute or two. 'If you get a chance to smash that lantern where those fellows are playin' cards, do it after you see me light on Tony.'

"I tried to make him see what a fool trick it was to tackle a crowd of thirty or more, an' all of 'em most likely armed as well as we; but he was pig-headed. He had come there for Tony, an' was goin' to make one try at takin' him, no matter how big the odds against us. Now, I've been in some tough places

since I got through wearin' petticoats, but I never tried to bite off anythin' as risky as followin' Jim Beals into the thick of that half-drunken crowd. There was thirty of 'em at the lowest figger, an' every mother's son achin' for a row. When it comes to that, they were already beginnin' to squabble over the cards, an' it stood to reason that before a great while the inside of that camp would be somethin' too much like a wasp's nest to suit me exactly.

"I've got to say for Jim Beals that he never turned a hair, so far as I could see. After givin' me fair warnin', in he walked, pushin' this man an' that out of his way to the bar, as if all he wanted in this wide world was some of that Canadian whisky, an' he's bound to give me credit for followin' him, though I'm free to say I was scared out er a full year's growth.

"Waal, we walked right up to the bar, an' Jim, kind er keepin' his head down so his face couldn't be seen any too plain, called for two drinks. Tony never so much as looked up, but swung around an' bent over the barrel to draw the stuff. He passed up one cup half full without seemin' to know who was behind him, an' jest at that minute the row among the card players broke out. One man called another a liar, swearin' he had been cheatin', an' before you could so much as wink crossways the whole mob of 'em was hard at it, like a drove of cats.

"The lantern hangin' over the card table was shivered the first pop, which saved me the trouble of lookin' after it. Jim Beals didn't even squint around to see what the trouble was; but over the table he went, spry as a squirrel, lightin' square on Tony's shoulders. I didn't need any kick to tell me what to do; but, makin' a pass with my rifle, knocked the stuffin' out er the lantern behind the bar, an' then jumped for Beals an' the Kanuck, who were rollin' 'round in front of the whisky barrel in fine style, judgin' from what I could hear, for it stands to reason that you couldn't see your hand before your face. The loggers kept right on at their own bakin', never thinkin' there was any visitor around to

make trouble, an' you can bet Jim an' I 'tended strictly to business, for it was a question of finishin' our job an' gettin' out before the other row had come to an end, else we was likely to stay in that section of the country till old Gabriel came around tootin' his horn for the folks to wake up.

"Now, you must understand that Tony isn't any little runt, like the general run of French Canadians, but a strappin' big six-footer, an' built right up in shape. If he hadn't been taken off his guard he could have trounced Jim an' me without half tryin'; but, you see, a man can't naterally do his best when a couple of fellows are on his back. As it was, we had our work cut out; an' don't you forget it. Tony put up the fight of his life, an' more than once came near turnin' so that he could land one of us a knockout blow.

"How long did we tussle with him? Waal, now, I can't even guess. All I had in mind was that if we didn't finish the job before the other row was over, we'd be in a mighty tight place, an' I kept rig'ht on workin' hard without tryin' to figger whether it was two minutes or ten. I knowed, however, that the card players was doin' themselves proud in the way of scratchin', clawin' an' yellin', which, as I said before, was the only thing that could help us.

"After a while Jim Beals got Tony's head jammed between the barrel an' the logs it was hossed up on, after which I heard a sharp click even amidst all the racket, which told that the sheriff had slipped the bracelets onto the worst man in the Maine woods. After that it wasn't hard to handcuff Tony's legs, an' then Jim stuffed an old moccasin that laid handy into the Kanuck's mouth, so's he couldn't yell for help. Up to this time, you must bear in mind, neither one of us three had so much as yipped.

"'Get hold an' drag him out before the crowd sees us!' Jim Beals says to me, an' I yanked the best I knew how, as likewise did the sheriff. It wasn't no-ways an easy job to get through the crowd; it seemed to me as if them loggers were two or three deep all over the floor, an' didn't they maul us without

knowin' it! I got a couple of clips that near made me silly, an' it stands to reason that Tony didn't come out of it with a whole skin.

"Once clear of the camp—I havin' left my rifle behind 'cause there wasn't any earthly way of findin' it in the dark, seein's how I dropped it once the lantern was smashed—we made tracks, draggin' Tony feet first, till we'd put a good half mile between us an' that crowd of screechin', yellin' drunkards. Then we stopped to ketch our wind, an' Jim Beals pulled out of Tony's mouth the mocassin he'd stuffed in to keep him quiet.

"Say, that Kanuck didn't yip at first; but the way he looked at me made the cold shivers run down my back, for I could see my everlastin' finish if he an' I ever met alone after this little business was over, an' I knowed you couldn't keep a man in jail forever jest 'cause he'd been sellin' rum, even if this is the State of Maine.

"It was a case of handlin' you pretty rough, Tony,' Jim Beals said, friendly-like, as soon as he could ketch his breath; 'but you're mostly to blame for it, seein's how you've made your brags that any man who come after you would be carried home feet first.'

"'You've got me, an' there's no kick comin' 'bout that,' the Kanuck answered like as if he'd been talkin' to his brother. 'What makes me mighty sore is that Joe Champlin should mix hisself up in it. This ain't his funeral, an' he's got no call to be playin' sich funny business, 'less he's gone into the sheriff job.'

"'An officer of the law has the right to call on any man for assistance when he's servin' a warrant, an' Joe couldn't help hisself. He hated to come bad enough; but, once in the muss, it was only square dealin' for him to do his prettiest.'

"'He don't feel so bad now as he will after we meet agi'n,' Tony said, with a look at me that wasn't pleasant, an' then he shut his face. Not another word would he say, an' it come to my mind that even yet he had us in short quarters if he took it into his head not to walk after the handcuffs had been taken from his legs. We couldn't have lugged him

ten miles in ten days, an' I allers wonder why he didn't think of that fact.

"He didn't, though. When Jim loosed his legs an' told him to stand up an' move on ahead, he did it like a little man; but it wasn't any sure thing to me that he hadn't some plan in his head for givin' us the slip later on.

"When we started off toward the tote road you could hear the gang back at the camp yellin' an' screechin' bad as ever, so we knew the row hadn't come to an end, an' I wasn't botherin' my head about their followin' us, for, once it was known that Tony had slipped away, the whole crowd would set erbout emptyin' the barrel, seein's how it might be done without the bother of puttin' up good money for the stuff.

"Waal, as I've said before, Injun Charley had sneaked off when he got the first sight of Tony's camp, so we didn't have him to bear a hand in gettin' the prisoner down the road, though it ain't any certain thing he'd have counted for much, anyway; but one thing he surely could have done, though his body was full of lazy bones, an' that would have been to help us through the heavy snow, for, as you can guess, we hadn't time to gather up our snowshoes when we came away, an' it was tirin' work to wade through the drifts that were to be found in the opens. You see, Tony couldn't help hisself to any great extent, seein's how his hands were made fast, an' we did a pile of high an' lofty tumblin' when we struck the deepest snow.

"I don't know as I've said that this happened erlong the middle of October, near erbout the beginnin' of the ruttin' season, an' as we floundered erlong I could hear the bull moose callin', first on one side an' then the other, until it seemed as if the woods must be full of 'em. Howsomever, I didn't think much of that, except to feel hot because I had lost my rifle, an' even if I'd had it, you couldn't hardly say it was the time to do any huntin', when we was obleeged to get Tony out er the woods before any of the loggers knowed what was up; for they'd given him a hand, sheriff or no sheriff, if he'd called for help, an' we was bound to get him in to Jim Beals'

team, which same was stabled down at the Ryerson camps, ten miles or more away, before mornin'.

"To tell the straight truth, I was a good deal like a bear with a sore head, on account first of havin' been dragged into a scrape which would likely cost me dear when Tony got out er jail, an', second, 'cause I'd lost a good rifle worth twenty dollars or more. The longer I thought the matter over, the sorer I got, till when we was flounderin' in the deepest snowdrift I let out to Jim Beals, askin' him if he thought it was fair play which I was gettin'.

"'You'll be paid for your rifle, Joe, an' get day's wages while we're takin' Tony in,' Jim said, soothin'-like, though it wasn't easy talkin' while we plowed waist deep in the drift.

"'He won't need a rifle very long, Beals, so you needn't spend good money buyin' one, unless you're a little short on guns yourself,' Tony said, laughin' in a way that wasn't pleasant to hear, an' I knowed that he never forgot either a good turn or a bad one; but it wasn't for me to answer him back, seein's how he was likely to stay quite a considerable spell in Bangor jail.

"Jest then we'd worked ourselves through the drift into a small clearin' where, two or three years before, there had been a camp, an' had no more'n shaken off the snow that clung thick from neck to heels, than I heard a bull moose bellow. I'm bound to say that he must have been a big one, 'cordin' to the noise he made; but, bless you, that didn't feaze either of us, seein's how we'd heard the same kind of a call, though perhaps not so loud, time an' time agin'. We hadn't more'n got ready to push on when a second moose called, not over ten yards away, an' Jim Beals said, with a laugh:

"'Seems like as if we was findin' plenty of game when we can't take care of it.'

"'Them was both bulls that bellowed, an' that's two too many to meet at this season of the year, unless there's a cow close by,' Tony said, with another of them queer laughs that shook me up, an' he hadn't more'n spoken before the big-

gest bull I ever saw come out from the shadows of the trees, his head down, an' he pawin' the snow in great shape.

"'There's like to be trouble eround here for somebody,' I says as I let go of Tony to feel for my rifle, forgettin' that it was back at the Allaguash barroom, an' then it was that Jim Beals did the biggest fool trick I ever knowed him, or anyone else for that matter, to be guilty of doin'.

"He whipped out his revolver an' fired twice at the bull before I could stop him. Things wouldn't have been so bad if Jim had missed his aim; but that was somethin' he was never known to do, an' he'd pulled trigger when there wasn't any hopes of sendin' a bullet where it would do any good.

"Waal, that big bull got a couple of balls where they didn't 'mount to much more'n wasp stings; but it was enough to make him forget the other fellow that had been stumpin' him to a fight.

"Now, if you ever come across moose or caribou in the ruttin' season, remember that, big as they are, they're quick as a cat an' twice as ugly, all of which was known to us three.

"'It's a case of takin' to the timber!' Jim cried, as he started toward a big hemlock, draggin' Tony behind him, an' I heard the Kanuck say, like as if he was frightened close on to death:

"'I can't do any climbin' with these bracelets on, Jim Beals,' an' what he said was true, while at the same time I knowed that if he didn't roost high in mighty short order he'd never sell any more smuggled whisky, for the bull would have made short work of him, seein's how the only way open in case we were foolish enough to run, was straight into that big drift agin', where the moose would have had the whole gang of us in a couple of shakes.

"I wasn't spendin' much time watchin' what Tony an' the sheriff were doin', 'cause I had a hurry-up call jest then which I couldn't put off; but I did see out er the tail of my eye that Jim had stopped to unlock the handcuffs, which was the least he could do, seein's how it would be certain death if Tony wasn't given a chance to shin the hemlock. An'

it stood to reason that he would take to the tree, even though it was to follow the sheriff, for he couldn't go anywhere else.

"You can set it down for certain that Jim moved mighty lively while he was givin' Tony a chance to use his hands, for the big bull was comin' up pawin' an' snortin', movin' a little too quick to suit me, though I allow that the sheriff an' his prisoner might er got into a tree if there'd been only a single critter around, for a moose likes to make a big show at the start, which same has saved the lives of more'n one guide or hunter in these 'ere woods.

"I'd got into the hemlock, an' high enough up to feel that the bull couldn't strike me, even though, as I afterward come to know, he had horns that measured three feet two inches, which is quite a considerable length even for the Allaguash region. Then I turned to see if I could lend Jim or Tony a hand, an' both of 'em were makin' for the same tree in which I was roostin'. They wasn't six feet from the foot of it, with the big bull four or five yards away, when the second critter broke cover, comin' with all steam on to have a whack at the fellow that had been darin' him to fight.

"Now, I shall never believe that this last moose had any idee of tacklin' Jim or Tony; he only wanted to get at the other bull, an' it so happened that the two men were in his road. It seemed as if he hadn't more'n come into the open before the sheriff an' his prisoner were knocked into the air like jumpin' jacks, an' when they struck the ground agin' it was with a thud that must have shook 'em up in great shape.

"I was lookin' around to make out if they were alive, for men that have been tossed by moose horns don't, as a general rule, live to tell much erbout it, when the two bulls come together with a whoof an' a bellow that might er been heard back at Tony's camp. Talk erbout fightin'! Say, you don't know what it is till you've seen a couple of ugly moose at work! It's like steam engines comin' together at full speed, an' their bellowin' ain't equaled anywhere.

"Now was the time when I might er slipped away, an' I knew it, for while them big fellows were fightin' to the finish I wouldn't have been noticed. My idee was that the three of us could leg it through the woods, an' not take to the trees agin' till we struck another drift, but things wasn't to be that way.

"I dropped to the ground mighty cautious, keepin' the hemlock between myself an' the bulls, an' whistled for Jim. The first thing he said to tell me where he had stopped, was to let out a groan, an' then I knowed he'd been done up on the first round.

"'Where's Tony?' I asked, creepin' erlong to where the groans came from, for after all the trouble we'd had it wasn't in my mind to lose the prisoner, more pertic'larly since I didn't want him hangin' around loose to pay off the score he had agin' me.

"Here he is, an' I reckon he's done up for keeps,' Jim said, an' then I saw the Kanuck layin' stiff, half buried in the loose snow.

"'Are you hurt much?' I asked, feelin' kind er relieved at believin' that Tony was out of this world for good an' all.

"That cussed bull ran one prong of his horns a full four inches into my leg, an' I reckon I'm bleedin' to death. Can you get me into the tree before them infernal brutes come nosin' around agin'?"

"It didn't seem as if I could, for Jim Beals ain't any infant to handle; but when he's put to it sharp a man can do pretty considerable, an' I tackled the job, Jim helpin' with his hands.

"Waal, to make a long story short, I got him into the hemlock, an' between us we managed to buckle my belt around his leg well up toward the thigh, tight enough to check the blood, an' I packed snow over it good an' hard, which is erbout the best thing that can be done in the woods for a wound, an' don't you forget it.

"Do you know for a fact whether Tony is dead?' Jim asked, when he was patched up as I've said, an' it come to my mind that, seein's how we'd hauled the poor chap into the scrape, it was my duty to make certain the corpse had a fair show, so down I slips from the tree.

"All this time the bulls had been fightin' worse'n any tigers ever could fight, an' it was easy to see that the big fellow was gettin' the best of it. He had more science than the other, which was a young one who'd jest begun to feel his oats, an' was outpointin' him all eround, though I didn't stop to umpire the game, not carin' to make any great show of myself.

"Waal, I toddled over to where I counted on findin' the corpse; but it wasn't there to any great extent, an' I was so thick-headed that it was more'n five minutes before I tumbled to Tony's racket. He'd seen that his time had come to play trumps, an' most likely wasn't hurt much, seein's how Jim took the brunt of the moose's rush; but did the possum business with a good chance of turnin' the trick to his own benefit.

"You can bet that I remembered all the promises he'd made to me, an' I knew we was bound to run across one another mighty soon ef I kept on guidin' cheap sportsmen. I knowed Tony would keep his word, an' the sweat stood out in big drops on the back of my neck. \*

"I clean forgot the bulls, an' shouted to Jim that the prisoner had given us the slip, which caused him to cuss terribly for one who was in sich bad shape, an' before I could get back to the tree he was pepperin' the fightin' moose with all the catridges he had erbout him, jest as a means of blowin' off his bad temper.

"I got into the hemlock ag'in in short order, hopin' to stop Jim from bein' so foolish; but there was no call for me to say very much. Jest by chance he'd managed to put two balls inter the big bull, an' both struck near the heart, which changed the odds in the bettin'. The moose went down, an' the young one, thinkin' he'd turned the trick all by himself, roared an' bellowed till you couldn't hear yourself think, braggin' erbout the job. Then, 'way off to the north, a cow called, an' he struck through the underbrush like lightnin', for, havin' come out of the fight ahead, he had earned the right to run a herd of his own until some better bull took it from him.

"We camped right there till daylight, buildin' a fire an' eatin' a couple of steaks from the big bull, with Jim gettin' inter fair shape for what was to follow. Say, that moose weighed more'n fifteen hundred pounds, if I'm any judge. I measured his horns, as I've said, an', take him all in all, I venture to say that he was the biggest critter ever seen in this part of the State. It was cruel to kill a fellow like him with a little, finicky revolver, instead of bringin' him down in proper style with a first-class rifle."

Joe ceased speaking as if his story was finished, and for a time it really seemed as if he was mourning over the unsportsmanlike fashion in which the big bull had been cut short in his career; but I broke in upon his apparent grief by asking, curiously:

"How did you get the sheriff home, Joe?"

"Oh, that was easy enough," the guide replied, carelessly, as if such a task was no more than child's play. "Of course he couldn't walk, so I rigged up a sled of pine boughs, which would slip erlong fairly well over the snow, an' strapped Jim on with his belt. Then it was a case of haulin' him out to Ryerson's camp."

"And with no other conveyance than a few pine boughs, you dragged a heavy man ten miles or more through the woods?"

"Yes, and I'm free to say that it was rough on him at times; but a man is bound to stand a little shakin' up when it's a case of grinnin' an' bearin' it, or freezin' to death, even if the gash in his leg don't get in its work. Yes, I was fagged out a bit, but that don't count when it has to be done. Jim played fair with me, though, for he sent me this 'ere rifle, which must have cost a good fifty dollars, an' worried the county officers into payin' me for my time at the reg'lar price for guidin'."

"And what about Tony Lebrun? Have you been so unfortunate as to meet him yet?"

"Deed I have, an' there wasn't any-thing so very misfortunate erbout it, either, though I got mighty shaky eround the knees when he hove in sight.



What's more, I've had a few drinks of his smuggled whisky within the last month, for Tony still runs the business, an' the sheriffs haven't caught him yet. Jim Beals is too much of a cripple to come up this way on sich a job, for the moose's horn used up one of his legs, an' there's no other man in the State who is hankerin' to tackle the Kanuck, though it's safe to say his time will come some day."

"Tell me about your meeting with Tony?"

"It don't make any story 'cause there's nothin' to it. I was up on the Allaguash with a couple of hunters, when Tony walked out of the underbrush large as life, right under my nose. I allowed that the time had come when I'd got to put up or be shut up, an' I handled my

rifle pretty considerable quick; but Tony laughed as he dropped his gun, an' said:

"Don't be a fool any longer, Joe Champlin. I'm not lookin' for trouble with you, for I never tackle a man that hasn't got the sense of a rabbit. Have a drink; here's my flask. Things were squared between you an' me the night you was sich a chump as to leave me for dead in the snow. Why, man, I got back to my camp before the boys were certain I'd really left, an', what's more, there wasn't a drink went out er that barrel which I didn't get the cash for, or knew who to chalk it up against."

"Tony an' me was real kind er sociable, so long as there was anything in his flask, an' we see each other every now an' then to talk matters over, like as men should."

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## THE HAMMERHEAD

BY ROBERT GILBERT WELSH

THE electrician adjusted his switches, then, folding his arms, listlessly watched the chorus swing past him, two by two, as they took the stage. There were no light changes in the second act, so he could afford to relax his vigilance for a while.

The comedian of the opera company, his dapper self hidden under a villainous make-up, joined him.

"Pretty dull wait for you, isn't it?" said the comedian.

"I've seen worse," replied the electrician. "Why, do you know, when I was on the dynamite cruiser *Aetna* in the Spanish war—she was doin' dispatch duty for the fleet—I did some o' the longest waitin' I expect to do this side

o' Jordan. When we were layin' off Santiago, we had nuthin' better to do than watch those cussed skipjacks come hoppin' out o' the water once every so often. Tried to catch some of 'em, an' didn't have the usual fisherman's luck, either—wet feet an' a dry hook. No, sir, we caught two of four or five pounds apiece—more than enough for one meal. But bein' on blockade duty gets purty monotonous, and we got so tired o' hangin' 'round, waitin' for a durn Spanish fleet that dasn't come out, that we finally took to shark fishin' for diversion.

"We used a hook about eight inches long, baited with a hunk o' salt pork and fastened to three foot o' brass chain.

The rest o' the line was good, strong rope about twenty foot long, and by gravy, we caught a hammerhead shark! You know what they look like, don't you? Ugly little, gray devils about three foot long, with a head like a blacksmith's hammer, an' eyes at each end, where the blow ought to strike. The *Aetna* had low decks, three foot from the water line, so we landed Mister Hammerhead without much trouble right at the break of the fo'c's'le; but what to do with him after we got him, we didn't know.

"On the bridge, about ten foot abaft of us, the Old Man an' the First Luff was promenadin', and they had a reg'lar box seat for the show. They was as much puzzled to know what we was up to as we was ourselves. Cockswain Clark an' me, we noticed their looks.

"Ses I to Clark, 'Let's make a bluff we're goin' to eat him.'

"I'll go you,' ses Clark.

"So we started in to skin Mister Hammerhead, an' when we got his backbone taken out, an' cut him up into slices about an inch thick, you couldn't tell 'em from codfish steaks—barrin' the smell. Then we got a tin pie plate full o' powdered hardtack an' dipped 'em in it, same as you would codfish for fryin'.

"I wonder what they're goin' to do with that shark, now they've got him cleaned,' ses the Old Man to the First Luff.

"I dunno,' ses the First Luff. 'Goin' to eat it, I dessay.'

"No, no, Seward!' ses the Old Man. 'Ben goin' to sea, man an' boy, these thirty-odd years, an' I never saw that yet. But,' ses he, lookin' kinder thoughtful, 'I've heard tell of it!'

"Hear that, Clark?' ses I. 'Now we've got 'em headin' south all right. You make out you're goin' to the galley to fry these here shark steaks, an' I'll go down an' get busy with the skipjacks, cut 'em up into steaks like these, come up through the fireroom into the galley, fry the skipjacks and fling the shark meat overboard.'

"Well, we did it. They was cooked up fit for the queen; then we brought 'em out on the same old tin pie plate,

got some hardtack, an' down we sits on the break in the fo'c's'le in full view o' the Old Man, and just piled into that fried fish.

"The Old Man stared. Then ses he to the First Luff: 'Seward, go down there an' try some o' that d—— stuff!'

"Seward turned pale an' shivered, but down he comes from the bridge, an' up forrard.

"Ses he, 'Wotcher got there?'

"Shark,' ses I, and chawed like the deuce.

"Mebbe you'd like to try a bit?' ses Clark.

"Don't mind if I do,' ses the First Luff.

"We handed him one of the finest morsels on a bit o' hardtack. He shied a bit first off, then he sniffed at it cautiously, then he took a little bite, like a young fish at its first hook—just a nibble. He tasted at it, worked his mug, took another nibble—this time it wasn't a youth's size—an' first thing you know, he finished it off an' licked his chops. Then he turned to the Old Man on the bridge, and called out in his unabridged dictionary voice:

"Very palatable, cap'n; very palatable!'

"With that, ses I, 'Mebbe the cap'n 'd like to try some, too?'

"Doubtless he would,' ses the First Luff, an' he takes another bit on hardtack an' waltzes up to the Old Man with it. Well, the Old Man goes through the same gymnastics, an' he licks his chops.

"After we cleaned up the mess we made cuttin' up Mister Hammerhead, an' swabbed up the deck, we sat smokin' our pipes an' talkin' in a Sunday-school whisper over the trick we'd played on the Old Man, when he hails me from the bridge.

"Got any particular work for this afternoon, Welles?' ses he.

"No, sir,' ses I, wishin' I had.

"Could you catch another hammerhead?' ses he.

"Ses I, 'I'll try!'

"Well,' ses he, 'here's my order for five pounds o' pork. Go down to the yeoman and get it, an' use it for bait—an' I wish you luck.'

"Well, we soon had that pork, but you can bet we cut off the lean part an' gave it to the cook to fix the beans for the next morning's breakfast. Then we baited the hook, put it over the side, an' gee whiz! we had another bite.

"Stick to him! Don't lose him!" yells the Old Man like mad. We'd no more'n landed him, when the Old Man calls out:

"What are you goin' to do with him, now that you've got him?"

"Goin' to give the cook enough for a mess," ses I, knowin' the cook wouldn't so much as touch the blame reptile.

"Would you mind givin' our steward a small piece?" asked the Old Man.

"Ay, ay, sir!" ses I, an' I done it.

"Well, this was about six bells in the afternoon watch. An hour later, when the watch was called—that would be about four o'clock, you know—all you could smell on that ship was shark. The officers' steward boiled it an' par-boiled it, an' the more he parboiled it the worse it smelled—for hot water an' shark ain't good for each other.

"It came on about sundown. It was my start-up in the dynamo room that evenin', an' I just got the machines runnin' and the lights turned on for the evenin' when the quartermaster hails me from the berth deck.

"The Old Man wants you in the messroom P. D. Q.," ses he.

"I marched aft to the officers' mess room, stood at the door an' saluted. The sight was comical. There they sat, the six officers—all we had on board—an' in front of each of 'em was a plate with cooked shark on it, an' not a mother's

son of 'em had touched a mouthful. Everyone of 'em looked like Ash Wednesday.

"The Old Man sat at the head of the table, glum as the rest. He pointed to the dish.

"Welles," ses he, 'taste that fish!'

"I had to make my bluff good, so I took a big mouthful, an' managed to munch it for three seconds. Then I rushed sputtering to the ship's side, to the satisfaction and relief of those six officers.

"The Old Man thought I was running away.

"Here, you!" he shouted. 'I ain't through with you yet—not by a d—sight! Come back here!'

"I came back.

"What's the matter with you?" ses he. 'I thought you liked shark!'

"I do," ses I, 'when it's cooked right!'

"Neeshi," ses he to the Jap steward standing behind his chair—he always did at meal times—"how did you cook this shark meat?"

"I fry him."

"The Old Man turned to me.

"How did you cook yours?"

"I fried mine, too," ses I.

"Again he turned to the Jap.

"What did you fry yours in, steward?" ses he.

"Cottolene," ses the Jap.

"I saw it was all up with me.

"I used cylinder oil," ses I, and beat a hasty retreat, while six plates of fried shark came flying after me. There—that's your cue!"

And the comedian went on.

# The Ruling of the Fourth Estate

A NEWSPAPER STORY

BY GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

This is the first story in the series of twelve notable complete novels to be published in *The Popular Magazine* during 1905. This series, as previously announced, will be based on the causes that have materially assisted the United States to become one of the leading nations in the world. The stories, each one complete in itself, will exploit with the graphic and comprehensive power of well-written fiction, such interesting phases of American business and governmental life as the army, the navy, invention, rail-roading, cattle raising, cotton, the press, commerce, etc. The present story, by George Bronson-Howard, former war correspondent in the East for the *London Daily Telegraph*, and a journalist of wide experience, illustrates the power of the press in battling for good government.

*(Complete in This Number)*

## CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH A PAST IS WIPED OUT, AND  
PHILIP TEMPLE IS BORN.

THE HON. ERNEST HASKELL was not in a good humor; that was easily seen by the expression of his face, as, from the eminence on which he stood, he cast frequent glances up and down the road which led from Del Monte to Monterey. He was attired in pronounced Piccadilly riding clothes, and he beat his hunting crop impatiently against his very baggy breeches. Near by, tied to a convenient tree, a chestnut mare looked reflectively over the stretch of brown and blue which marked the beach and the ocean.

It was plain that the Hon. Ernest Haskell was waiting for some one, and his frequent exclamations indicated that the person was of the other sex; also,

that Mr. Haskell had been waiting at that particular spot for some little time.

It was early morning in old Monterey. From where Haskell stood the quaint old town was stretched out in panoramic effect, its yellow adobe houses and public buildings looking like a print of old Spanish times. The beach, brown sanded in some places and white in others, with the sun shining full upon it, gave the varying impressions of sheets of gold and silver; and the turquoise blue of the Pacific, melting away into the fleecy whiteness of the horizon, presented a combination of colors which every morning delighted the souls of the artists who abode in the houses on the beach.

Haskell, however, was not in a frame of mind to appreciate the beauties of the morning, and the fact that he saw no solitary horseman approaching the

snake-like windings of the yellow road was one to banish all other thoughts from his mind. He looked at his watch again.

"Half after nine," he said, with suppressed fury. He replaced his watch, and took out his cigarette case, lighted one of its contents, and puffed at it with ill-concealed irritation.

At Haskell's back, coming over the crest of the hill which hid fertile El Carmelo from view, the figure of another man appeared. He was walking slowly, and there was something of a despondent air about the way his eyes sought the ground. One glance at him told that his present condition was that of a tramp; his clothes were worn and patched, and there was a large tear in the right sleeve of his coat. His face was almost hidden by a growth of heavy, black beard, and his hair had grown almost to his shoulders; but, in spite of all this, there was a certain something about him that made it quite evident that he had not always been in his present condition.

As he approached Haskell, the sunken eyes under the battered felt hat took in the intensely British get-up. His pace became even slower than before. He paused for a moment, then straightening the bandanna handkerchief that served him for a collar, he walked over to where the Britisher stood.

"I beg pardon," he said. There was no mistaking the fact that his voice was that of an English 'Varsity man. Haskell wheeled around and surveyed him.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded; his tone was supercilious and offensive.

The tramp's fingers worked nervously about the edges of his pockets. "I don't like to ask you," he said. "I don't—but I used to know you, Mr. Haskell. You don't remember me, I know, because I've changed since then."

Haskell laughed contemptuously. "I never knew you, my good fellow, and I don't care to begin now." He turned his back deliberately.

An angry look came into the tramp's eyes, but died out again quickly. He went on in the same humble tone: "I'm

down on my luck, Mr. Haskell. Haven't a shilling to my name. If I had some decent clothes, I might get work. And being an Oxford man——"

"Look here, my man," said Haskell, sternly. "You move along. I've nothing for you. If you are an Oxford man, I'm ashamed for Oxford. Don't say any more. Move along, or I'll see that one of the constables takes you in charge."

The tramp did not wait to hear the last of Haskell's tirade. He dropped his hands to his sides with a despairing gesture, and walked on down the road. There was a welling in his throat, and a suspicious moisture in his eyes.

"Ernest Haskell," his thoughts ran. "My chief boot-licker at 'Varsity. He didn't know me, of course. He didn't believe me. I couldn't tell him who I was."

He wandered on, striking off from the road and into the woodlands, where the soft moss seemed somehow to relieve his tired feet. There was a path, but he soon lost that. He wanted to get away from any evidences of men's doing; he was about to solve a great problem—that of existence; solve it by making it no longer necessary.

He might have gone on for an hour before it occurred to him to rest. In a little nook where the sun's rays were mellowed by the overhanging branches, where a little stream threw up crystal showers over moss-grown rocks, and where a great white stone invited him to tarry a while, he seated himself.

What he thought has been thought by thousands before him. It was the wail of the man who had failed; and the only thing left seemed the black door of Infinity. He argued the question.

"I'm out of place," he said, coldly, concisely. He was trying to convince his other self that what he contemplated was the right thing to do. "I can do nothing that will make me valuable to anybody. A 'Varsity man—yes; but that is nothing here. I can't tramp it any longer. I'm tired of living like a dog—kicked at and chased from pillar to post."

He was talking aloud; a habit of his

when he was alone. Now he relapsed into silence again, and his rambling eye took in the beauties of the scene about him; but, owing to non-possession of the Roëntgen power, it failed to discern a vision in brown sitting behind a tree not five yards away. Being there, the vision in brown naturally heard what he said; being a woman, she was curious to hear more. So she gave him neither visual nor auricular notice of her near presence.

His hand went into an inner pocket, and came out with something that flashed silver-bright in the rays of the sun. He held it in his palm and gazed at it contemplatively.

"What a tiny thing you are to hold the power of doing so much harm—and good," he said to it. "Five deaths! Think of an innocent piece of nicked steel holding them all. Why, you look like a toy—a woman's trinket."

He pressed the cold muzzle against his forehead. "But I don't need your five deaths, little friend," he said, as he gazed at it again. "Only one—but, somehow, it seems strange to do a thing like this." He lowered the weapon. "It does seem strange——"

"Not strange—a hundred cowards do it every day," he heard a clear, girlish voice say. The voice was near. He started up, and, in his surprise, the revolver dropped to the ground. At the same moment a brown-garbed figure stooped and picked it up.

Then they faced one another—the tramp and the vision in brown.

Her large, gray-blue eyes looked steadfastly into his. Her complexion had that combination of healthy tan and blush-rose peculiar to California; on her blond hair was perched a tam-o'-shanter, and her rounded form was attired in a hunting suit of serge-khaki, the short skirt of which revealed her well-turned ankles, high-arched instep and small foot. Over one shoulder was a rifle.

"Did you know you were trespassing?" she asked, severely.

He was still gazing at her, his wits wool-gathering. He mumbled something indistinctly.

"Well, you are," the girl went on.

"And further than that, the notice boards on this place say that nothing shall be killed here without a permit. And you were going to kill yourself, weren't you?"

He found his tongue again. "No," he said, with surprising firmness.

"You were," insisted the girl. "I heard all you said."

The man had fully recovered himself now. "I beg pardon for my trespassing, I assure you. If you will point me the way out, I'll not infringe the law any further."

She studied him curiously. "You hardly use the kind of language one expects from a—man in your condition," she said.

He bowed gravely. With his hat off, his appearance was much improved. She noted the breadth of his forehead.

She evidently expected him to say something, but he did not. "There's the way to the road." She pointed toward a blazed tree at a distance of a few yards.

"Thank you," he said. "Good-morning." He replaced his hat and started away.

"Wait a moment," she said, hesitatingly. He turned, removed his hat again, and waited. She looked toward him, her manner showing embarrassment.

"Can I help you in any way?" she asked, finally. "Really, one doesn't expect to find men of breeding and education in your fix. And I'd like to help you. I really would. Won't you tell me why you wanted to kill yourself—why you are like this?"

He gave a short half laugh. "Yes, I'll tell you. It is the least I can do in view of your kindness. I am a disgraced man, to begin with; I've cut myself off from my family and my profession. When I came to the United States I had a little money. But I was taken ill; my money vanished. When I recovered, I was too weak to do manual labor—and that was all I could get. I have had no business training. So I drifted—lower and lower—until—now."

She viewed him interestedly. There was much sympathy in her look.

"I appreciate your kindness," he said again. "But I think I had better leave you——"

"Just a moment, please. Don't imagine I asked out of curiosity. It may be that I *can* help you—in fact, I know I can. If you have any false pride about being helped by a woman, throw it aside. I am rather surprised, I must confess, that you, a man of education, should give up so easily. Of course, I don't know all of the circumstances, but whatever they are, you have no right to throw away a life which should be useful to others. Now, I have made up my mind to put you back 'on the track,' as father says. Perhaps it's only for my own self-gratification to do a thing that demands no sacrifice, and yet to receive the credit of having done a good deed—don't interrupt, please. My father owns the *Clarion*—that is one of the San Francisco newspapers. His name is Payson Stanford. I am Katherine Stanford."

He bowed.

"I know nothing about newspaper work, and neither does father. But I have heard it said that the only things really needed to start on a successful career in it were brains and a good education. Whether or not you have the first, I don't know. To-day's action doesn't indicate it. But you evidently have the other. My father is at the hotel. I will introduce you to him, and he will have Mr. Forman, the managing editor, take you on as a reporter."

"Thank you," he said, huskily. "But I couldn't accept. I'm not fit—I——"

"Of course you're not fit as you are. I am not such a goose as to let my father see you as you appear now." She extracted a tiny purse from one of the pockets of her hunting jacket. "Here are four ten-dollar bills. Oh! don't shrink back. It is only a loan. Take them. Don't interrupt, please. Take them as I tell you." She thrust the money into his unwilling palm. "Take it; go down into Monterey and buy yourself some clothes; get that horrid hair taken off your face, and try to look as you did before you got into this rut." She looked at her watch again. "It is

nearly ten o'clock. Be at the Hotel Del Monte at twelve, and ask for Miss Stanford. The train leaves at twelve-fifteen."

She rose. "Go now—that blazed trail leads you into the road."

"But, Miss Stanford——"

"You are losing time. I told you we must catch the twelve-fifteen train. Don't say anything more now. You can say all that on the train. Au revoir."

She darted behind a tree and the next moment was lost to view, leaving the man staring blankly at the bills in his hand. He stood absolutely still for at least five minutes. Then, with a long-drawn breath which expressed a combination of bewilderment and relief, he smiled, then laughed, and made his way off in the direction which had been pointed out to him.

Sometimes, looking at the photographs of actors in character make-ups, and then at others which show them as private individuals, we find it hard to believe they are the same persons. If photographs had been taken of the man in the woods and the man who wrote the name of "Philip Temple" on a card for one of the bell boys at the Hotel Del Monte to take to Miss Stanford, most people would have certainly refused to believe them the same.

Although the clothes that Philip Temple wore were of the ready-made variety, they certainly did not look cheap on his tall, well-made form. There was an indefinable something about his whole appearance that gave the idea of private yachts and boxes at the opera. His face was clean-shaven now, and his clearly-cut features showed to advantage; his nose may have been a trifle large, his jaw a little too square, his lips too firmly compressed for actual good looks, but the whole face gave the impression of strength and character, although the sunken eyes and hollow cheeks betokened a recent severe illness. He might have been a trifle under or over thirty years of age—not more than thirty-four nor less than twenty-eight. It was difficult to tell more definitely.



The boy came back with Miss Stanford's request to wait in the drawing room. He sat down and waited, trying to frame some appropriate speech which would express all he wanted to say in the way of thanks. While thus employed she entered. She was in a dark traveling suit, gloved and hatted. He rose, and she surveyed him.

"Are you——" Then she laughed. "Really it's positively ridiculous, but are you the—the——"

"Man whom you have brought back to life," he said, gratitude in every word.

"Now, don't," she said, holding up her hand. "Well, if you are—oh! yes, Mr. Temple, we'll go to the station now. Let me compliment you on the change."

"Miss Stanford, believe me——"

"Oh, yes, I believe you, Mr. Temple; but please don't start anything in the way of thanking me. I'll take that for granted. Come! My maid has gone with my few traps, and the second 'bus is ready to go. Also, father is waiting in the foyer, I think."

"Just a moment," he said, rapidly. "Since you won't let me thank you, I want to tell you that my name is not Temple. The old one is disgraced for me, as I told you. The new one I will keep clean for the sake of the woman who gave me the chance to bear it, if for no other. It may sound stage heroish, but nevertheless I shall try to do something in this line that will be worth while, so that you will feel that you did not waste your kindness."

"I'm sure you will," she said, with conviction. "Else I wouldn't have tried to put you on the road. Well, father is waiting."

A moment later Temple was shaking hands with a large man, who surveyed him with little, beady eyes twinkling with good humor. "This is Mr. Temple, father," she said. "I met him abroad. He is an Englishman, as you can easily tell by the way he inflects his words."

Payson Stanford was a judge of men. His little eyes measured up the newly introduced one and the verdict was favorable.

"You must go up in our car, Mr.

Temple," he said, as they got into the 'bus. "We have a really excellent cook, and I believe he is preparing some sort of luncheon, isn't he, Kitty?"

"It will go rather hard with him if he isn't," returned Miss Stanford, laughing. "My non-gameless hunt has made me as hungry as the proverbial wolf."

When they were seated in the drawing room of Mr. Stanford's well-appointed private car, the financier broke in abruptly:

"Kitty tells me you want to do newspaper work, Mr. Temple. Have you had experience?"

"None," answered Temple. "But I am anxious to learn, of course."

"Well, if you are really in earnest, and are a university man, you have the right foundation, and the experience is soon gotten—that is, if you have any aptitude for the work. Well, I wanted to settle business before lunch. Business is always first with me, Mr. Temple—not because I like it best, but because I want to get it off my mind. I'll give you a letter to Forman, the managing editor, and he'll put you on two weeks' trial. The rest remains with you."

He rose, went to an *escritoire* securely fastened at one end of the car, wrote a few lines on a piece of his personal letter paper, addressed the envelope, thrust the note into it, and handed it to Temple.

"Better go about two o'clock to-day—the sooner, the better, if you are in earnest. And now we'll go in to lunch, for I think my appetite is on a par with yours, Kitty. Never let your body run down through business, Mr. Temple; it doesn't pay. When you lose your appetite, your standing in Bradstreet's and Dun's can't get you another one—and without an appetite I'd rather not be in either of those gentlemen's books."

## CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH TEMPLE BEGINS HIS TUITION  
IN THE CITY ROOM.

"What is it like?"—that was the idea that kept running through Temple's brain as he said good-by to the Stan-

fords and boarded a Kearny Street car, which he was told would take him to the *Clarion* office. It was not necessary for him to bother about luggage. He had left his last piece at a Chicago hotel, some months before, in payment for a debt.

"What is it like, this newspaper work?" It must be confessed that his ideas on the subject were very vague. He rather imagined he would be turned loose on an unsuspecting public, and told to wander around in search of news; and then came the writing of it. That should be easy for him, he thought. He had been the valedictorian of his class. Then, too, he had written letters about army reform which the *Times* had printed; and sometimes verse and stories, but no eyes had ever beheld these save his own.

"Market Street!" yelled the conductor, and he stepped off the car at the junction of the four streets which form the Herald Square of San Francisco, just as surely as Market Street approximates Broadway.

It was not hard to find the *Clarion* Building. It stood proudly out, a landmark of the city. The doorman informed him that the editorial rooms were on the seventh floor, and the elevator landed him there, the boy pointing to a door marked with the name for which he was looking. He entered. Two small boys were marking a copy of the day's issue with blue pencil, while another was sorting sheets of typewritten tissue paper—the familiar "flimsies" of the news bureaus.

"I wish to see Mr. Forman," he said. None of the boys seemed to hear him. "Is this Mr. Forman's office?" he asked, in a louder tone.

"Seventeen, eighteen," counted the boy. "Yes, it is." He thrust a printed card into Temple's hand:

Mr. — wishes to see Mr. — with regard to—

"What's this for?" demanded Temple.

"For you to fill out," answered the boy, rudely, without looking up.

Temple's gorge rose. "See here, my

boy," he said, "I told you I wanted to see Mr. Forman. You go in and tell him I have a letter of introduction from Mr. Stanford."

The boy jumped to his feet, and the other two desisted from their work and looked at him. The boy who had spoken became obsequious. "Yes, sir, I'm sorry, sir; I was very busy. Hope you'll excuse it. I'll take the letter, sir."

Temple handed it to him, wondering that newspapers kept such uncivil employees; but he was yet to know why.

The boy, who had re-entered by another door, now looked toward Temple.

"Mr. Forman says, will you please step in?" And Temple entered into the sanctum.

To his surprise, it looked little like a business office. It was furnished in redwood, very much as a library might have been, and the desk, littered with papers, was the only reminder that it was a place to work.

Forman, a rather hard-featured man, with hooked nose, keen eyes and very red hair, rose as he entered.

"How do you do, Mr. Temple?" he said, shaking hands with the young man and motioning him to a seat. "Mr. Stanford says here that you have done no newspaper work. Well, if you have the nose for news and the ability to write clearly and forcibly what you see, in such a way that other people shall see just what you see, it will be all that's necessary." He seemed to discharge this sentence as a cannon discharges a shot; and then took a long, sharp breath before starting again. "You are a college man, Mr. Stanford says. Well, that's good. We want college men and men of the world, men who can see things with an unbiased and cosmopolitan eye. I hope you prove successful. Come with me."

He pushed open a swinging door and passed into another room, lettered "News Room," but where no one sat, although there were many desks and tables; here he opened another door marked "Telegraphers," and they went through a smaller room, also deserted, which had tables provided with telegraph instruments and typewriters. The

glass door which separated this from an adjoining apartment was lettered "Office of the City Editor." Forman turned the handle and ushered his companion into a yet smaller room which looked out on three streets, and which was partitioned off by glass from another longer room.

At a large table, littered with press clippings, "flimsies," telegrams and paper, written and typewritten, two men sat facing each other; one clipping from a newspaper, the other correcting "copy." One was an oldish man with iron-gray hair, and the other a very young, immature-looking fellow, with coat cut in exaggerated fashion, a remarkable fancy waistcoat, and a *bou-tonnière*.

But Forman paid no attention to either of them. He made for a huge rolltop desk in the corner, behind which sat another young-looking man of a different type. He was blond and fair, and his eyes were blue. He did not notice their entrance, so busily engrossed was he in writing in a huge ledger before him.

"Mr. Richmond," said Forman. At the sound of Forman's voice the man looked up, then rose to his feet.

"Mr. Stanford sent this gentleman here with a letter telling me to give him two weeks' fair trial. He has never had any experience. This is Mr. Richmond, the city editor, Mr. Temple—Mr. Philip Temple. Good-day, Mr. Temple. Best wishes for success."

Temple was conscious that the alert blue eyes of the city editor were taking him in from head to toe. It was a kindly look, however, and he did not resent it.

"Sit down, Mr. Temple," said Richmond, pushing a chair toward him. "You have quite made up your mind to go into this, I suppose, so I won't try to discourage you; but remember it's not a bed of roses, by any means. I am sorry to say you have struck the office during a dull week. There is hardly anything doing at all, and I find it difficult to deal out enough assignments to provide meals for the space and detail men."

"To provide meals?" queried Temple.

"Oh! I dare say you didn't know about that. Now I'll ask you one question. Are you dependent on this for a living?"

Temple nodded.

"I'm sorry. You see, it makes it rather hard, as you are a man without experience, and I wouldn't dare trust some stories to you. Space and detail are what you will get—and that means, in good times, an average of about twenty-five dollars a week. Of course we take a man on salary when it can be done, but half of the men don't stay here that long. Well, that's all, Mr. Temple. Are you ready to go to work now?"

Temple answered in the affirmative.

"Well, I'll put you on office this afternoon. It's just four o'clock, and that will give you your first assignment. Let me see—who's out in the room now?" He raised his head and looked through the glass, then called "Curtin!"

In an incredibly short space of time, a dark-eyed, raven-haired young man stood at his desk. His hair was a trifle too long and his cravat a trifle too full. His whole appearance was that of careless smartness—his hands thrust into the pockets of his very wide trousers, and a cigarette in one corner of his mouth.

"Curtin," said the city editor, "this is Temple, a new man. I've put him on office. He's never had any newspaper experience. Show him the ropes." And the head was once more bent over the ledger, while the pen in hand scratched away as though there were no such things as interruptions.

Curtin led Temple into the room adjoining—a very long, narrow room, one side sheer and the other overlooking the street. There were three rows of hardwood desks running down the center, for all the world like a schoolroom. Some were up, and displayed typewriters. Others were covered with books and papers. On the walls were tacked maps and pictures, also contorted headlines from newspapers, by which absurd combinations were formed. There were a number of original black and white cartoons, evidently of people known to the City Room.

Over each desk was a movable, green-shaded electric light, and on the shades were pasted more of the absurd plays on names. The floor was a mass of torn papers, burned matches, cigar and cigarette ends.

"The first thing to decide," said Curtin, "is where will you sit." He inspected the three rows with a prospective eye, then led the newcomer to one at the extreme end. "This one hasn't been used for some time, not since Dennis O'Connel went to New York. That will be your regular place. We all have one to ourselves. Use a typewriter?" He swung the lid of the desk up, and disclosed a machine. "No? Well, that's unfortunate. You'd better learn. You'll need to when you come in at eleven-thirty with a column story and the forms closing at twelve. However, all in good time." He sat on the edge of the desk and swung his tan-shod feet to and fro. "Have a cigarette?"

Temple accepted and lighted it. "Well, what am I to do?" he asked.

"Do—do now? Oh, nothing, except listen to me babble. Ask me questions, old man; I'm just bubbling over with information, and it's not often I get a green one to steer."

"I want all the information you have at hand," smiled Temple. "You can't tell me anything that will be old to me. I know absolutely nothing about newspaper work."

"Well, then, you don't know what a hard graft you are bucking. Oh! you're English, aren't you? Do you understand slang?"

"I've been in the States nearly a year."

"But not long enough to say 'bin' for 'been.' Well, if you understand slang, all right—I won't ask you to forgive it. Pardon inquisitiveness, but what in the name of Heaven are you coming in this business for?"

"To earn my living," answered the other, concisely.

"Pardon. Then I won't throw any more of a pall over you than I can help. Well, you're a space and detail man—the first is mostly refined sarcasm. The detail part means that the first assign-

ment you get—at one o'clock, when we all report—will net you just two samo-leons. That will last you until five-thirty, by which time another lot of cards will be dealt and a second assignment comes your way. That adds one more cart-wheel to your collection. Sometimes you get an extra morning assignment, but not often. Don't see any visions of rivaling J. Pierpont on that scale, do you?"

"Hardly," laughed Temple.

"Then, if you happen to catnap on the trail of a story the paper and the Associated Press haven't winded, you can turn it in and get space. It generally happens during a freeze in July. If you have a vivid imagination, you can land a story with the Sunday supplement every now and then—that pays fifteen dollars a page. I do it occasionally.

"Of course, you don't know about assignments. Well, in that big book you saw Richmond writing in, he keeps the detail list. Regular men on salary cover the police courts, the morgue, the railroads, the steamship offices, the water front and the hotels. They come in twice a day and write up their stories; but there is lots of stuff that won't wait, so they telephone in their tips and the men here get them. Then there are 'follow up' stories, the 'to-be-continued-in-our-next' type stories that have new turns and twists every day; things happening in other States and countries which affect San Franciscans and have a local end. You'll learn all that. Then, the evening papers have stories that have a 'follow up' for us. Richmond comes down at twelve-thirty and enters up these things in his book. For each story or each thread he uses a man, and that's where you come in. Sometimes you work two or three days on one story and then don't land it—but when you do it's worth while.

"They have regular departments, too, and regular men for them, though they occasionally call in for help from us. Two men have charge of the sporting page; one man the dramatic end, another the real estate, another politics, and so on."

Whatever Curtin's defects of rhetoric

might have been, he certainly possessed that power, which all good newspaper men have, of vividly putting the central points of the things described before the one who listens. It was all new to Temple, and though he had run life's gamut at too swift a pace to be very much excited about anything, still the glamour of the rushing life seemed to take hold of him, and he thought impatiently of the time that must elapse before he would be able to do just what Curtin was telling him about.

It was perfectly plain that Curtin's cynicism with regard to his profession was in a great measure assumed, for he spoke a little too enthusiastically regarding it. Toward the end, he remembered the disagreeable things.

"Sometimes, as a great favor, we get an afternoon or night to ourselves. Just now we get them too often to suit our pocketbooks. But one can never make an engagement, for fear one will not be able to keep it. You go to work at one o'clock, and, except for a few hours for dinner, you can count on being on until twelve at night. Every four or five nights you get the late watch, and that keeps you here until two-thirty. Not nice, eh? No, it isn't. You get no chance to make friendships with nice people, nor——"

"Curtin," came the voice of the city editor. The one called dropped from his perch and darted through the swinging door.

"There's been a murder at 720 Arlington Street. Woman left her husband; went to rooming house; husband followed, found another man, killed both of them, so the story goes. Take a photographer, one who can sketch—and take Temple. Rush!"

There was no need for the last word. Curtin was back in the room in a minute and had jammed a large sombrero on his head; then he seized the private telephone. "Hello! Art room? This is Curtin, city room. Mr. Richmond says, give me a photographer who can sketch. Who's there? Oh! you? Well, tell Morse to rush right ahead. Meet him on the elevator." He closed down the receiver. "Come on, Temple—murder

story." He explained in detail as they went through to the elevator. As he pressed the button, there was another ring from above and the elevator shot upward. When it came down it held a small-sized youth, burdened down with a large camera.

"What's the story?" he demanded.

"Murder," replied Curtin, briefly, outlining the facts. "Mr. Morse—Mr. Temple, a new reporter."

When they arrived at the scene of the affair, a dirty-looking lodging house in the Tenderloin, they found it surrounded by a crowd of people. Curtin pushed his way through them. At the door, a burly policeman barred further progress.

"Kape back, I say," he said, roughly.

"Clarion men," explained Curtin. "What's the story, officer?"

"I dunno," answered the protector of the peace, his attitude becoming silky. No policeman can afford to antagonize the press. "But Detective Boland's inside. He'll tell you."

So Temple's first glimpse into a reporter's work began. He saw the bodies of the victims and experienced a nasty feeling at the stomach; but Curtin got down on his knees and examined the wounds. Then he searched through the drawers of bureaus and cupboards, and unearthed two photographs—husband and wife—which he pocketed in full view of the policeman on guard, who merely winked.

"Always get photographs," he said in an aside to Temple.

Then Curtin interviewed the murderer—a rather good-looking man, who did not appear at all vicious. He told a simple story. "She was my wife—left me to go to him. I begged her to come back. She laughed at me. I killed them both."

The landlady of the house, the servants, the policeman and detectives—to all these Curtin put apparently simple questions and drew from them what he desired. Then he directed Morse to photograph the scene and the murderer in charge. Then they went out and the house itself was photographed.

"That's all," said Curtin. "Back to the office."

Just then a big, heavy-set man pushed his way toward them. He was dressed in broadcloth and wore large diamonds and a silk hat.

"You're a *Clarion* reporter, I guess, ain't you?" he asked Curtin.

"You guess right," answered Curtin.

"Well, I'm Timothy O'Flaherty—see? I'm a friend of your managing editor, Mr. Forman. You ain't a-going to say nothing about what kind of a place that is, are you?"

"Well, I certainly am," replied Curtin. "That is one of the points of the story—the woman going to a place of that character."

"Well, you ain't!" exclaimed O'Flaherty, expectorating. "Because I own that house—see? And I'm a friend of Mr. Forman's. I'm an alderman, too—perhaps you don't know that."

"I don't care what you are," said Curtin. "Come on, boys!"

He told the whole story to Richmond, and also O'Flaherty's connection with it.

Richmond consulted a memorandum slip from the managing editor. "It would be better not to dwell on the character of the house; in fact, better not mention it at all."

Curtin saw the slip and understood. Later he told Temple.

"Some more of Forman," he added, disgustedly.

"Do you mean that a man like O'Flaherty can influence a newspaper?" asked Temple, in amazement.

"Does Forman get anything out of that sort of thing?" returned Curtin, with an enigmatic smile.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MAKING OF A REPORTER.

Temple's first detail came on the night assignment, when at five-thirty the city editor called his name and told him to go to the Palace Hotel to interview a distinguished light in the diplomatic service, who had arrived that day from Venezuela. Richmond's instructions were clean cut: "Get him to talk about what Americans are doing down there, and how the Venezuelans look on them."

Curtin took him to a little place on Geary Street, where he generally dined; a place favored by the theatrical and so-called bohemian element. Temple's new friend seemed to be well known there, for many rather good-looking, rather over-dressed girls, and others over-dressed but not good-looking, smiled him a welcome.

"Do you want to meet any of them?" he asked, as they seated themselves at a small table.

"I'd rather not, thank you," said Temple. "What I want to do is to ask you more questions, if you don't mind."

As Curtin seemed to be indifferent on the subject, Temple pursued his course in that direction, and then told him what he was detailed to do that night.

"That's easy enough," the other told him. "All you have to do is to get him to talk about a column's worth."

When they parted at the door, Temple asked about lodgings.

"Well," said Curtin, a trifle hesitatingly, "I have a small apartment myself, and if you like to share it and take pot luck——"

"I don't want to impose on you."

"Impose! I'd be glad to have you—if you care to come. It isn't much of a place, but unless you have means outside your newspaper work, I dare say you won't find a better. Think it over. I'll see you at the office."

Temple was to see the great man at eight o'clock, but at that time he found him not in. He sat in the foyer and waited. At ten his quarry returned and received him very graciously. As Curtin had said, it was an easy assignment. The great man wanted to see the papers give him his full measure of publicity, and he talked at length, Temple taking copious notes. Then they drank each other's health, and Temple returned to the office.

It was his first newspaper story, and the words did not come as they might; but finally he got it done. It was half after eleven by then, and most of the men had already turned in their stuff.

The youth with the remarkable waistcoat who sat at the copy desk reached

out his hand for Temple's story and scanned it critically.

"How many words?" he asked.

"I—I don't know."

"Always count your words. There's too much stuff here. What is it?—an interview? Always turn your interviews in by ten o'clock. You're a new man, aren't you?"

Temple replied in the affirmative. He would have liked to say something to crush this disagreeable youth, but he wanted no trouble.

"Always begin your paragraphs with a paragraph mark. Inclose your punctuation marks in a circle. Never begin a story with a statement of time. That's all." He began to rapidly blue-pencil the story.

Temple walked out with a heavy, leaden feeling. "Who is that man?" he asked Curtin.

Curtin swore. "One of Forman's pets—little whelp! Dickinson is his name. Why?"

"I only asked," replied Temple. He was got anxious to begin to criticise those in power.

It was past midnight when they left the office, and Curtin finally took the direction of home. He lived in a large apartment house a few blocks from the office, and his suite of two rooms and bath, though untidy in the extreme, was most homelike.

"Harry Phelps used to share this with me," he informed Temple. "But he went to Chicago last week. If you want to take his place——"

"I do," said the other. So the question of a place to live was settled, and Temple's life in San Francisco fairly begun.

He was awakened early in the morning by a vigorous ringing of the apartment bell, and a boy handed him a paper—the *Clarion*. Eagerly he turned the pages in search of the headlines which would mark what he had written. The first search revealed nothing. Finally, on one of the center pages he found a four-line head in small type—"Americans Liked in Venezuela." He read the story beneath, but, save for a few words and phrases here and there,

it bore no resemblance whatever to the one he had written.

A sickening sensation came over him, and he let the paper drop to the floor. So he was going to fail in this, too. He could not even do what some of the rough-looking, ill-bred men he had seen in the office were successfully doing. He sat thus despondent for a long time. Then his teeth came together with a snap, his lips compressed, and his eyes grew hard.

"I will do it," he said. "I will, by God!"

Carefully he read the revised story. Although it was hardly a model newspaper article, still he saw without trouble that it told, in half the space he had devoted to it, exactly what the man had said, and precisely what the paper wanted him to say.

Then, systematically, he began to read the local pages; not as does the casual reader, looking for the news of the day, but with an eye to the construction of each. Curtin had not yet awakened, and Temple was able to devote two hours to his task before the other yawned sleepily and got up.

"What're you doing, old man?" he asked, as he came out in pajamas and slippers.

"Studying newspaper writing," answered Temple. "What was that you said last night? 'Put the most striking feature of the story in the first sentence, tell the gist of the story in the rest of the paragraph, and then go on to give the details'?"

"Approximately, my words," the author of them replied, reaching for a cigarette.

"They should be printed in heavy black type and nailed over every man's desk in a newspaper office," commented Temple.

"Not necessary—every man knows the principle and carries it out. Even you know it after one day's work."

"And I'll carry it out, too," said the new reporter.

So began his newspaper training. The first week gave him but small chance to show his mettle, being confined to small stories of the police courts,



obituary notices, and others of the same ilk. However, he was learning rapidly. He read every item in the newspaper, studied out the way in which each one was written, observed the points of a story, which were the most important and those that counted for little or nothing. He began to realize that death, even suicide and murder, is not interesting to the public unless the people concerned are well known or the details unusual or mysterious.

His first week's pay envelope contained just about half of the maximum salary of a space and detail man, and Curtin told him he had done very well for a beginner. It was true, he had been left out on a number of details, but although this was disappointing from a monetary standpoint, it had given him a chance to get practical experience by going out on stories with other men, and noting the various methods they employed.

A great source of gratification to him was that his stories were being printed now without any material changes. This was encouraging, for he knew that they must be satisfactory, else they would not adopt his verbiage. He never handed his copy to Dickinson again, giving it always either to Richmond or to Haynes, the assistant city editor.

Of course, none of the stories he handled was of any real importance, and it was plain that Richmond was as yet afraid to trust him with stories needing careful treatment.

He was three weeks in the office before his chance came—it was a "space" story, and an exclusive one.

He had been sent out to the Presidio, the army headquarters, on a trifling assignment connected with the health of the general in command of the Pacific Division. While he was there, he noted an orderly who spoke with an exceedingly Latin accent. At that time the feeling in the United States against Spain was very strong. Temple was sure the soldier was a Spaniard. The fortifications of San Francisco were jealously guarded secrets. Yet this man was the mail orderly in the engineer department, and, on quiet investigation, he

found him to be in charge of cleaning up the rooms also. This would give him easy access to the plans.

Temple considered the matter. Then he consulted with the colonel in charge of engineering.

The next day he obtained leave from the paper, donned a suit of private's blue and made up his face enough to give it a Latin aspect. In this guise he reported to Colonel Morrow to act as an enlisted clerk in his office. He spoke Spanish fluently, and with the accent of *Castellano*. When the time came for closing the office, he and the orderly had spoken together in that language. He left the office, but half an hour later returned. He had a conversation with the man—a long conversation—in which Temple represented himself as an officer in the army of the Queen Regent, sent to the United States to get copies of the plans of the forts. Then the other grew equally frank, and made the statement that he was one of the Spanish secret service agents, there for the same purpose, which he hoped soon to accomplish. Had he been aware that Colonel Morrow, two of his aides, and a corporal's guard had slipped into the next room and were listening, he might not have told so much.

When Temple had extracted all the information he deemed necessary, he whistled softly, as though in surprise. The next moment the spy's arms were pinioned by the two "John Henries" of the corporal's guard, and the man, frantically struggling, was taken away to spend the remainder of his days making shoes in Alcatraz prison.

Temple was thanked profusely by the colonel. In the spy's quarters were found tracings of maps, rough sketches of plans, positions and numbers of artillery, weak points of defense, etc. He had evidently sent nothing away.

"I deserve no thanks," said Temple. "In the first place, it was something that any man with a regard for the welfare of the United States would have done. In the second place, it makes good reading for the newspaper. All I ask you to do, colonel, is to keep this matter a secret until my paper publishes it, which

will be to-morrow. It makes an 'exclusive' for us, you see."

Colonel Morrow willingly assented, and Temple went back to the office, where he sat down at his desk and began to write his story. He made a number of bad starts before his ideas were in the shape he wished them, but with the narrative once started it flowed easily, building up, and finally dramatically revealing. He read it over, and he knew it to be a good story.

Dickinson happened to be the only one in the city editor's room when he entered. Temple looked around for Richmond.

"Give me the story," said Dickinson.

"It's a 'space' story," explained Temple. "I want Mr. Richmond to see it."

"Oh, he'll see it, all right," retorted Dickinson. "Give it here."

Before Temple had reached his seat Dickinson's voice recalled him. At the same moment Richmond went to his desk.

"See here," said Dickinson, rudely, as Temple re-entered the room, "don't try fakes like that on us." He spoke with the pride of conscious virtue, and threw the roll of copy toward the writer.

Temple picked it up and spoke to Richmond. Quietly he outlined the story to him, then put the copy on his desk. "Mr. Dickinson has called it a 'fake.' I think it a good, exclusive story. Colonel Morrow has promised no other reporter shall have it until to-morrow."

"It is a good exclusive," said Richmond. "Mr. Dickinson perhaps is judging you from his own standard."

Dickinson flushed. His reputation as a manufacturer of news, when a reporter, was well known.

Temple's story was run for two columns, with full-page headlines. It was the talk of San Francisco for a day, and a source of grief to the *Clarion's* contemporaries, who unmercifully "wiggled" their army reporters for being scooped. Although Richmond said no more on the subject, Temple's fellow reporters did. "You've made a hit with the 'old man,' Phil," Curtin assured him.

At the end of the week Temple's pay

envelope contained the extra amount for the story. It just completed the sum which Miss Stanford had loaned him at Monterey. He wrote her a short note:

DEAR MISS STANFORD: With my most heartfelt gratitude, I return herewith the sum which you were so kind as to loan me, three weeks ago.

I am doing as well as might be expected in a beginner, and hope to prove my words to you in time.

Thanking you again for past favors,  
Very sincerely,

PHILIP TEMPLE.

A few days later he received a reply in the form of an engraved invitation to a dinner to be given at the Stanford home. Below in handwriting was: "Be sure to come. I want to talk to you about your work."

In his answer he thanked her for the invitation, but declined on account of his work. "I cannot afford to miss any chances here," he said. "And besides, I do not wish to trespass on your kindness."

He was sincere in his words. He felt that she was taking pity on him, felt that she looked on him as an experiment which must be carefully watched, lest it should not succeed.

The next day he was called to the telephone, and a girlish voice asked for Mr. Temple. "This is Miss Stanford," it said. "We expect you at seven." Then, without giving him a chance to reply, the connection was cut off.

Temple ruefully sought Charlie Curtin. "I must ask you to loan me your dress clothes, Charlie," he said. The two men were about the same build.

"Where are you going?" queried the other, after assenting. Temple told him. Curtin whistled.

"Whew! I'd like to be in your shoes. I've seen her, you know—a stunner, isn't she? And papa's millions!"

Temple cut him short good-naturedly, and obtained permission from Richmond to absent himself for the night. At seven, correctly garbed for the evening, save for the fact that he wore an opera hat (that being the only dress hat owned by his roommate), he presented himself

at the Stanford mansion and was ushered into the drawing room.

Some men seem born to wear evening clothes. In spite of the fact that Curtin's were far from being the mode in either cut or material, when they lay snugly about Temple's person he appeared truly the type of man that our artists are so fond of drawing in evening clothes, the kind to whom a drawing room is a natural background.

Miss Stanford could not refrain from noticing this when she entered and bade him welcome, any more than he failed to observe what a remarkably beautiful girl she was.

The dinner was for ten, all of whom were somebodies in the social life of the town. Three of the men were the sons and partners of capitalists, the other a well-known local artist, while the girls were ones whose names constantly appeared in not only the San Francisco papers, but the New York and Washington ones besides.

To Temple was assigned the honor of taking his hostess in. He was a different Temple from the silent, reserved man whom the *Clarion* office knew. He told witty stories, got off several epigrams, and made himself generally liked. The men voted him a good fellow, the girls interesting and mysterious.

"Who is he, anyhow?" asked Maude Lansome. "He talks like an Englishman, and looks rather like one of Gibson's pictures."

"He is an Englishman," answered Miss Stanford, and left the other implied questions unanswered.

At euchre he was a coveted partner. During the conversation their talk drifted to his work, and he told her what he had done. She nodded approval.

Marton Harland, the artist, drew him aside just before leaving.

"Are you up at the Bohemian Club?" he asked. "If you like, I'll send you a card." Temple thanked him.

He remained until the last had gone, and then he, too, rose to take his departure.

"Father asked Mr. Richmond about you the other day," Miss Stanford told

him, "and he said that you were making an exceptional showing for a new man; that you had written one of the best newspaper stories he had handled in years, and that it was a 'beat' besides." She rose. "So that spells success, and I am glad."

"I will ask for no other reward when success does come, if you will only say that," he said, earnestly.

"Oh, don't take me so seriously as that," she laughed. Then as she held out her hand: "You know the way here now. Come up whenever you choose. I will always be glad to see you. Good-night."

He went out into the night air, his head erect and a strange feeling possessing him. The touch of her hand still made his tingle, and the recollection of her smile sent the blood throbbing through his veins. He thought strange, wild thoughts as he walked along. That evening had taken him back to the old days—the pretty drawing room, the silver service, the soft light of the shaded candelabra falling on pretty faces and pretty gowns, the atmosphere of good breeding and good living—and the girl!

Suddenly he stopped in his walk and stood perfectly still.

"I must succeed," he said, grimly. "I will succeed—and then——"

He smiled determinedly, and walked on. In his light-heartedness a tune came to his lips, and he found himself whistling softly an old love song.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE "CLARION" GETS A NEW SUNDAY EDITOR.

"That man Temple ought to be taken on salary, Mr. Forman," said Richmond, nearly a year later.

"Why, Mr. Richmond?" asked Forman. "There are some very good men of far more experience than Temple who have been on the paper a much longer time than he."

"They are not as good men as Temple, and all their experience doesn't count beside the experience he has derived from his work on this paper. The

man is a hard worker and a student—a student of newspaper-making. He can cover anything in the way of a story that comes up, and if anyone can get it, he can. He writes forcibly and drives his point home."

Forman smiled. "You are getting enthusiastic, Mr. Richmond, for the first time, I believe. Anything else?"

"Yes, a good deal. He is the kind of a man who can talk on an equal footing with anyone, and have them innately acknowledge the equality. When the Russian grand duke was here, he was the only newspaper man who was *invited* to his dinner—the rest sat over in a corner, rank outsiders. That's a testimonial, I think. When the Darlington trouble came up in the Burlingame set, he was the only reporter that Mr. Darlington allowed in the house, and while the other papers printed scandalous fakes we had his straight story."

"You interest me," said Forman, coldly. "The man must be truly remarkable."

"Because he was able to speak French fluently, he got the story of the survivors of the *Maison D'Orsay*, wrecked on the Farallones, twelve hours ahead of any other paper, while the other men sat twiddling their fingers and waiting for an interpreter. There are other instances where his ability to speak French, German and Spanish landed him 'scoops.' Another thing: he is a military expert, and when the maneuvers at San José came off, his story was the only combination of news and techniques that came up. Why, the Associated Press used to throw out their own correspondents' stuff and use our proofs!"

"So you want him put on salary?" queried Forman.

"I do, if we expect to hold him. I'd like to give him fifty a week."

"Impossible!" broke in Forman, shortly.

"I know that," said Richmond, calmly. "Therefore, say forty."

"It's against the paper's practice, you know, Mr. Richmond; but as you seem so enthused over the man, and he really appears to be doing excellent

work, we'll say thirty-five." He rang for his stenographer and told him to write a note to the treasurer and one to Temple, informing them of the new arrangement.

It was perfectly patent to Temple that Richmond had been the man who had engineered his raise in salary, for the feeling against Forman in the city room was very strong, while, on the other hand, Richmond, though severe to those who transgressed, was known to be just and fair and was popular with the men. When Temple went in to thank him, he was very cordial.

"You deserve it, Mr. Temple. You've worked for it. I like good work to be appreciated."

Temple had indeed "worked for it." During the time he had been on the paper he had done little else during waking hours save study the problem of success in newspaper work. He allowed nothing to distract his mind from the main issue. When "good-night" was given in the room, he went straight to his apartment and to bed, awaking in the morning promptly at eight, no matter whether he had been up the night before until the small hours chasing a derelict story or keeping the late watch. After his light breakfast it was generally nine. Between that hour and one his time was his own. Nevertheless he utilized it in the service of his paper.

His ability to converse fluently in French, Italian, German and Spanish had opened a new field for him. In the morning hours he wandered through the foreign quarters, chatting with the newly arrived immigrants and with the bureaus of informations—the landlords of the drinking shops. So, very often, good, exclusive stories came his way, and went into the *Clarion*, to the amazement and disgust of its contemporaries. It was by this means that he discovered that Antonio Florentina, the Mafia chief, wanted in New Orleans for divers crimes, was hiding in a little shop off Kearny Street, and the police were given the information only on condition that it was not to be given to the other representatives of the press until the *Clarion* had printed it in full.

His tall figure was well known in the Latin Quarter, where he posed as an artist, going so far as to take along a sketch book and draw outlines of men and places, in which he had some amateurish skill. So well did he keep his identity a secret that no one knew his real profession, and his manner of gaining information was so charmingly indirect that no suspicion was aroused.

Nearly always now, he had a full-page story in the Sunday supplement—stories that possessed the charm of true insight into the Latin character, but which were too much dependent on their literary quality for use in the news columns.

Another one of the many duties which he assigned himself was the learning of the practical end of newspaper-making. Early in his days on the paper, he approached the foreman of the printing room and asked permission to come down as a printer's helper once a week, and learn how the mechanical side was carried out. On his days off, Thursdays, he reported promptly with the apprentices and helpers, and, asking no favors, went to work to acquire their trade. He was a man who was able to adapt himself to circumstances, and his attitude toward his fellow workers in this line, while characterized by that pleasant reserve which marked his dealings with all men, was perfectly free from snobbishness, and gave no impression of the "I am better than thou" idea.

Out of his first savings he purchased a kodak and a book on photography. This he studied carefully, and after making some rather bad pictures, paid a professional photographer to initiate him into the secrets of the trade. After a week's morning lessons he found himself capable of taking and developing a photograph. A few months with his kodak, and he bought a small camera with time exposure, and with this made many successful pictures. Finally he told Richmond that, instead of having a photographer with him on his stories, he would do the work himself if provided with the camera, and Richmond knew him well enough by this time to feel his

word could be trusted. His pictures were as good as the average turned out by the art room, and their quality steadily improved.

Then he asked for a week off, and went into the art department to study their methods; three days of this, and he sought the engraver and lithographer. He applied for another week, and during that time he learned something about the way pictures and photographs were prepared for print.

But through all this he did not neglect the reportorial end, as was proven by the importance and diversity of the stories to which Richmond assigned him. He had interviewed murderers, tracked down crimes, written up the life at the Presidio, reported the State campaign for governor, done dramatic criticisms and described society functions.

While doing the first cotillion of the season one night, he received a "hurry up" call from Richmond to go down into the Salinas Valley and write up a train wreck. In his dress clothes and silk hat he boarded a south-bound train to the scene of the carnage, and wrote his description of the cotillion going down, wiring it from a station where the train stopped for a minute. The next half hour found him among the dead and wounded, with the lights of the wrecking party ruthlessly showing their mangled bodies; and the same wire that took his description of the pretty ballroom scene served to carry the ghastly description of a hundred lives lost through an engineer's carelessness.

Richmond had noted all this, and Richmond knew the value of a man. So the first fruits of success were sown and reaped by Philip Temple.

But to do all this, Temple had necessarily cut himself off from the joys and pleasures of life. Save only Charlie Curtin, not one of his newspaper associates ever saw him out of office hours. The cafés frequented by the press men were always avoided by Temple. When Charlie Curtin gave late suppers to theatrical people at the apartment, Temple was generally in bed, and if he were not he went there as soon as possible. He was

an enigma to Curtin's friends, and they wondered how the two managed to hit it off together—laughter-loving, never-a-care-for-the-morrow Charlie and the inscrutable Temple, who spoke but seldom and then only when addressed.

At the office he had been dubbed, in all good nature, "Lord Philip."

"Somehow, he gives you that impression," said the irrepressible college girl who was called the "Child Wonder," and who did the women's fashions and the children's page. "He has that stately air of a knight of old, and he speaks as gravely and judiciously as though he were deciding whether or not he would permit a man to live. And then he has such a strong face, too, besides being good-looking. He looks as though he could get very angry and call out, 'What ho! villains! Swing me this caitiff on the battlements,' and if the villains didn't come, he would do it himself. I wouldn't like to be alone with him when he's angry."

She was talking to the girl who did Society. "The question in my mind," said that young lady, "is, who is he?"

"Well, you won't get him to answer it. I always feel like I'm presuming when I speak to him at all, and though he always bows and lifts his hat, I imagine he's looking straight through me."

But it was not that Philip Temple did not like the society of his fellow men and women in that good companionship which marks the journalistic life. He did not have the time—that was all. He had set a goal before him, and his only object was to reach it. Until he could do that, any energies applied in another direction would be misdirected.

In the year that had elapsed since he began his work on the *Clarion*, he had seen Miss Stanford regularly just one night each month, deviating from his usual rule three times, besides, to go horseback riding with her in the afternoon. It was very hard for him to thus limit himself; it would probably have been harder had he allowed his thoughts to dwell on her, but this he did not do, save as one of the things to be gained when the goal was reached. Whether she cared anything for him, he did not

know, nor did he make any attempt to discover her feelings on this subject. He liked to talk to her about his work and about the things that interested her. She had a bright, breezy way of viewing all things, and when in her presence he laughed and joked as he never did elsewhere. She seemed always pleased to have him come, and looked on him as a friend. By the end of the year she called him "Phil," and he naturally had dropped into using the name by which San Francisco knew her, "Kitty."

She was a typical Western girl of good breeding, secure within herself and continually doing things that might have brought her censure in an Eastern household. The society journals called her "Freaky Kitty," because of the novel and original things by which she delighted the little circle of the San Francisco elite.

Going without a chaperon on all occasions was one of the tenets of her faith, and so strongly did she insist on it that the habit spread among her friends, and the chaperon threatened to become an obsolete institution in San Francisco society. She never tolerated a man about her who was not interesting, nor yet did she admire a genius who did not cut his hair and who refused to trim his nails. Her many adventures and escapades were always furnishing the papers with lively material; but all of them were perfectly innocent, and not a breath of scandal had ever come her way.

That she liked Temple was evident; but that she preferred him to others of her friends of his sex was a thing that, if so, was never shown nor suspected. What it meant for Temple to know she was near by, yet removed from him by a gulf that he must bridge before he could speak with her on her own plane, is something that only a lover can realize. But he was a strong man, and he crushed down any feeling that might keep him from the end which he had determined to make.

His raise in salary meant little to him from a financial standpoint, for he needed little money for his simple living; but, as an appreciation of the work

he had done, it meant a great deal, and was an ever-present reminder that he was getting near the goal.

Six months more passed; and then Stilson, the Sunday editor, was leaving to take a position on a New York daily. Forman sent for Temple. Richmond had kept the managing editor informed of what Temple had been doing, and though Forman had an instinctive dislike for Temple—for the same reason that a mongrel generally hates a thoroughbred—he could not see anyone else who would adequately fill the position. The conversation he held with him was short and terse. The position was offered at a beggarly increase in Temple's salary as a reporter.

"I can't afford to take it on those terms, Mr. Forman," Temple said, firmly. "As it is, I get over a page into the Sunday, which means at least half again what my salary represents. Besides, the work is more confining. Sixty dollars a week is the least that I will consider. You see, that cuts me off from getting space stories."

Forman snarled. He did not like to give the sum offered, even though it represented less than the former Sunday editor had received; but he knew when a man was in earnest, and he had seen enough of Temple to realize that he always meant what he said.

"It's more than we have ever paid," he said, mendaciously, "and the man who gets it will have to earn it, Mr. Temple."

"I would resign in a moment if I thought I wasn't capable of filling it," said Temple, in his usual quiet way.

Forman turned to his work with a growl. "Take over the work immediately and talk the thing over with Stilson. You'll be expected to get out the next issue."

Temple thanked him perfunctorily, for he knew the circumstances under which the position was given him. His interview with Stilson was very short, for the former Sunday editor knew he could tell his successor little about the work that he did not already know.

The next issue was precisely on the same lines as the old, but Temple was

determined that there should not be many more like it. He took Charlie Curtin aside one day, and upon him imposed a task.

"Richmond has given me your services for to-day, Charlie," he said. "Now, I want you to listen closely and then get right to work. You think you are something of a Jerome K. Jerome, don't you? Well, I am going to run a series of 'Lives of Great Men,' and in it I am going to show the people of San Francisco something about the kind of men who run their city government. We'll begin with that insignificant-looking bit of humanity who stands as 'the boss.' Go out and gather up all the information you can about him—his life, in fact. Come back; parody the name, parody the life; in short, make a caricature in writing which will stick to the facts, yet put them in a comic vein. Satire is of more avail than sledge-hammer editorials—sometimes."

When Curtin was gone, Temple sent for Raydon, one of the artists and caricaturists on the staff of the paper, and directed him to draw a caricature to accompany Curtin's "biography."

Temple knew that Forman would be away that week, else he would not have wasted his own time, and that of reporter and artist, to produce a thing which Forman would reject; for he knew that "the boss" was also "a friend of the managing editor." How many times had that phrase kept a good story out of the paper, kept him from exposing a fraud or a crime that he felt should be exposed. He knew he was risking his position in doing what he was about to compass, but he also knew that before Forman could act he must see Mr. Stanford. Temple had never yet invoked the aid of the proprietor, but he was aware of the fact that Mr. Stanford knew that Temple did what he deemed right.

Then he sat down himself to write a story which had taken root in his head six months before, but which was necessarily not written for the same reason that others of the same kind still remained in copy form only.

The mayor of the city had been



elected by the labor vote. He had once been a mechanic, and that fact was used extensively in his campaign. The mayor was one of the Half Circle who ruled San Francisco. There were five of them, and by trading on the Jeffersonian motto and professing a hatred of the rich, they held the labor and popular votes, and ruled the city of the Golden Gate with an iron hand. As a matter of fact, this "poor man's candidate" was the owner of a patent device which had made him rich, and had thrown countless workmen out of their positions.

Temple once visited his country mansion and photographed it. A steam yacht, supposed to be owned by a company, was also his property and used exclusively for his pleasure. This also Temple had photographed. His son was one of the wildest rakes at an Eastern college, and was looked upon as a proverbial "good thing" by all the thirsty chorus girls on the Rialto. He had once been photographed with two of them in the act of drinking wine out of the slipper of one—an old trick of the "Johnnie." This photograph had appeared in one of those trashy sheets which pander to the callow youth and the cheap performer, and although the son's name was not below, Temple recognized his features. He sent to the periodical and bought the plate. He was determined to publish the story some day, and now was his chance. He wrote feverishly, but he painted a picture that every man could see—on one hand the friend of the poor, on the other the man who did exactly what his own party accused his antagonist of doing.

Temple headed the article:

THE FRIEND OF THE POOR WORK-  
INGMAN! MAY THE LORD  
PITY HIM!

TWO VIEWS OF MAYOR JACOB HUNT!

A Real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in San  
Francisco Politics!

Then he called in another artist, and together they designed the colored cover

for the supplement. It represented two men with the same face. One, attired in a workman's overall suit, stood on a platform in a crowded street and incited a mob of wild-eyed workmen to break down the great iron door of a warehouse in which was stored great quantities of bread. The scene was a pitiful one; hungry-looking women in tatters and shreds, holding up wizened babies, urged the men on; their faces were haggard and drawn. The man who shrieked at them had the face of the mayor, Jacob Hunt.

Behind the door was a group of frightened-looking men, each one with the face of one of the members of the Half Circle; but at the door, a huge mallet in his hand, was a man also with the mayor's face. He was driving great spikes into the door to prevent its being broken down, the spikes labeled with the name of his invention. Up to this time his ownership of this patent had been a profound secret.

This page was to be done in colors, and the artist to whom the work was given was well able to carry it out. He had only one defect—he lacked ideas. When they were given him, his work was a success.

With photographs, Temple's story took up two of the inside pages. The photographs showed the mayor on his yacht, the mayor in his touring car, the mayor's wife in a Paris gown with some twenty or thirty thousands in the shape of jewelry on her person, the mayor in his mechanic's clothes, and the mayor with a great monopolist of New York. Then, too, there was the picture of the son with the divas, and the son with two of the young society men of New York, famous for their excesses.

Temple had other things in this issue, but they were mere shadows. He worked up Curtin's parody, which was really funny, and gave that a page with the caricature of "The Boss." As is usual, the Sunday supplement went to press on Saturday. The secret was carefully guarded until Friday morning, when Temple wrote an advertisement to be inserted in the Saturday paper. It was to be in heavy type and duplicated

four times on different sheets of the paper.

READ HOW THE POOR MAN'S MAYOR HAS  
ROBBED THE POOR MAN

THE SUNDAY CLARION!

WORKINGMEN! ATTENTION! DON'T FAIL TO  
READ IT!

Richmond rushed into Temple's office the next morning, the paper in his hands. "What does this mean, Temple?" he asked. He was, for the time, managing editor, though he was given no jurisdiction over the Sunday sheet.

"It means that I've exposed a great rascal," answered Temple, evenly, as he reached for his pipe and lighted it.

"Let me see the paper," said Richmond, with the first tinge of excitement in his tone Temple had ever noticed.

"Well, you know it isn't customary, Richmond," said Temple, watching him with a twinkle in his eye. "The Sunday isn't supposed to be seen by anyone except me until Sunday."

"Oh, that be hanged!" cried Richmond. "Let me see it!"

Temple handed it to him without comment. As a matter of fact, he wished him to see it. Richmond's quick newspaper eye caught the idea on the first page, and he breathed admiration and dismay. The pictures on the next page and the caricature of "The Boss" settled it. The paper dropped from his hands, and he looked at Temple as though he were some newly discovered specimen of prehistoric animal.

Temple went on puffing quietly. Presently Richmond whistled—a long drawn-out whistle that expressed many things. Then he laughed, a queer sort of half-choking laugh, and clapped Temple on the shoulder.

"Grit, boy, clear grit!" he said, slowly. "How I've wanted to do it! I've never had the courage, though. I have two girls growing up and an invalid wife, you know——"

He paused. Then he relighted his cigar which had gone out.

"You know more than I do about it. You've got a good story there; a story

San Francisco needed—needed badly. But"—he gave another half laugh—"they were friends of Mr. Forman."

"Yes," said Temple, carelessly. "They are friends of Mr. Forman, I believe."

Richmond put out his hand, and Temple shook it warmly. Then the city editor picked up the paper, handed it back, and went out, slowly.

## CHAPTER V.

### TEMPLE GOES TO WAR.

For three months now Temple had not seen Miss Stanford. She had gone to New York on a visit, then to Newport, where some friends persuaded her to revisit Europe. She had written him regularly once a week since her departure; long, gossipy letters, full of fun and satire of the people she met. And he had answered her in like vein, occasionally getting on the serious side, which was his work. When he was given the post of Sunday editor, however, he had not divulged his plans. In a letter, dated at Ostend, she urged him to do something original.

He smiled; then he sat down and wrote her of what he had done. This letter was entirely serious. It told about "the friends of Mr. Forman," and what he intended to do to them. A copy of the Sunday supplement was also sent, even though it was only Saturday, and against the rules. He felt sure that she would be glad to see what he had done.

Sunday came, and the edition went off at great speed. By noon the newsdealers and newsboys were running short, and, like *Oliver*, crying for more. The limited extra edition which had been printed in expectation of the demand was issued, but by four o'clock the boys were back. They wanted more copies. None were forthcoming. The edition had been exhausted.

It was music in Temple's ears, as he strolled along the streets, to hear the newsboys shout with true newsboy appreciation of the story which counted: "Here y'are! Wuxtra! Wuxtra! Full account of Mayor Hunt's bunco game.

Wuxtra! Wuxtra! How Mayor Hunt done the workin'man! Wuxtra!"

It was also a joy for him to see passers-by call to the boys and buy the *Clarion*.

Down at the office there was much excitement and great glee. The Sunday editor had not attempted to disguise the authorship of the story. His name stood out in bold, black type—"By Philip Temple." He had asked Curtin whether or not he desired his name attached to the "biography" of "The Boss," and as the humorist had answered in the affirmative, he, too, came in for a share of the general approbation: "The Life of the One Who"—in large type—"Catches Them in the"—in small type—"Toils"—in large type—"by Charles Rockwell Curtin," was read and much appreciated, in a secondary degree, to the "big" story, perhaps, but still accorded its full measure of admiration.

"Charlie," said Morris Jones, solemnly, "that is great." Jones was the political reporter, and his few words were much praise.

"And they're both 'friends of Mr. Forman,'" said the real estate man, chuckling. "Ye gods! What nerve Temple has! And you, too, Charlie! You go with him."

"As sure as Hunt's not a righteous man," broke in the baseball reporter, "just as sure, you'll be fired; you and Temple both. But you shouldn't mind after a splurge like that!"

"Wonder how Hunt feels—and how the Half Circle take it?" laughed Merritt, the Hall of Justice man. "I vote three cheers for Lord Phil. Come on, boys. Hip, hip, hurrah! What's the matter with Lord Phil?" He paused expectantly. Then came a shout like unto which the city room had never heard: "He's all right!"

Richmond, in his inner office, smiled; but he did not rebuke the cheers. Philip Temple, in his inner office, grew red in the face, and blessed his *confrères*.

The whole city either read the *exposé* or heard of it. Nothing less than a murder could have hurt Mayor Hunt quite as much. In their homes, the Half Circle raged. Then they seized tele-

phone receivers and communicated with one another. An hour later they were at the mayor's house, and early in the afternoon one of them presented himself at the *Clarion* office.

"I want to see Mr. Forman," he said, in a voice of thunder. "I am Mr. Michael Derrick."

The office boy, recognizing greatness, fell to trembling.

"Mr. Forman—he ain't here, sir."

"Ain't here?" demanded greatness. "Where is he?"

"Comin' back from Portland, sir. He'll be back to-day at five o'clock, sir."

Mr. Derrick frowned significantly. "You put this here card on his desk, and you tell him Mr. Derrick will be here at five o'clock. Understand?"

The office boy trembled so that he found it difficult to choke out "Yes, sir," and take the card. As the ponderous form of the great man disappeared in the direction of the elevator shaft, the boy gazed admiringly. "Gee!" he ejaculated.

At five o'clock Mr. Forman came. He had bought the *Clarion* at Sacramento, and when he had seen the Sunday supplement his one desire was to be a chauffeur with a machine that would make two miles a minute. Ill, indeed, would it have been for human or animal objects in the way had Henry B. Forman been able to carry out this unpractical wish.

The ferryboat landed him at the foot of Market Street at a quarter to five. He hailed a cab.

"*Clarion* office—quick!" he shouted.

At exactly five minutes past five, he rushed from the elevator and into his sanctum; also into the portly form of Mr. Michael Derrick.

"What the——" he began.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" shouted Derrick, recognizing him. "Well——" here came some elevated figures of speech. "What do you mean by this—hey?" He waved a copy of the Sunday supplement, and danced about frantically. "What do you mean?" Some more classical quotations. "Tell me that!"

"See here, Derrick," said Forman, shortly, and with difficulty controlling

himself. "I've been up in British Columbia for the last week and a half. You know that. Now, you keep quiet. I didn't know anything about it."

"You're a pretty man to run a paper, you are," sneered Derrick. "Don't know what's goin' into it." Again his language became torrid. "I want to know who this Philip Temple is, and I want him fired—quick—an' I want him chased out of town!"

The conversation that followed consisted almost entirely of the kind where blanks are used to such an extent as to render repetition monotonous. At the end of some fifteen minutes of it, Mr. Derrick took his beaver hat and went his way, kicking open the door with unnecessary force, and pushing the office boy out of his path so energetically that the youth in question fell, and lost some of the cuticle on his nose.

Temple had waited for Forman's return. When sent for, he presented himself promptly, and looked calmly at his enraged chief. Forman knew Temple well enough to realize that melodramatics would count for nothing with him.

"Good-evening, Mr. Temple. May I ask you what you mean by running a thing of this kind?" he held up Temple's production, accusingly.

"He is a rascal. The town ought to be rid of him, and all the Half Circle. The story is true; is interesting; is vital. Those were my reasons, Mr. Forman."

"You knew perfectly well it was against the policy of the paper."

"I knew it was against *your* policy, Mr. Forman."

"Do you realize that you are liable to discharge, Mr. Temple?"

"For bad work? Yes; I know that perfectly well; but my work has not been bad; therefore you have no reason to discharge me."

"Suppose I acted on my own judgment? Being the managing editor of this paper, I naturally have the right to part with the services of those whose work I do not like. Frankly, I do not like your work, Mr. Temple."

"My work has been good enough to

win me the Sunday editorship. You gave me that, Mr. Forman."

"On trial," broke in Forman.

"Yes, on trial! Since then my work is in the supplement. You would find it hard to get a newspaper man who would not tell you that, since I have had it, it has been the best 'Sunday' published in San Francisco. This is no time for false modesty. I know what kind of work I have been doing."

"But I do not like your work."

"The people do. To-day's edition is totally exhausted. You can't buy a *Clarion* in San Francisco."

"By the aid of cheap sensationalism and yellow methods. That's how the paper was sold." Forman was beginning to lose his hold on his temper.

Temple lowered his voice; he spoke most impressively when he adopted this method. "Mr. Forman, I printed a story which San Francisco should have read six months ago—yes, a year ago—when Hunt was elected. It's all true—every word of it. I'll go before a judge and jury at any time and swear to it. Besides, photographs don't lie."

Forman sprang to his feet. "Mr. Temple, you are discharged from to-day."

Temple leaned over and faced him. "I refuse to accept a discharge from you," he said, evenly. "Mr. Stanford is the editor and owner of this paper; he is also a friend of mine. I have never used his friendship to further my own interests, but I will to compass a good end. I am going to smash the Half Circle, Mr. Forman. I am going to smash it—flat; and I am going to do it through the columns of the San Francisco *Clarion*."

Forman sank into his chair. Temple towered over him like an angry god. But his voice was still low, and betrayed no anger; only earnestness and determination.

"When I go to Mr. Stanford, I shall tell him *why* it is that the managing editor suppresses stories of corruption in municipal affairs. Why dives are not closed. Why? Because the Half Circle are 'friends of Mr. Forman,' and be-

cause they own the dives, and other things. Shall I go on, Mr. Forman?"

"Stop a minute. You're talking too fast." The managing editor was dazed. He realized what he was facing. Hitherto, he had been the practical director of the *Clarion*. Stanford had been too busy with other things to claim the prerogatives which went with the title of editor. This clear-headed, soft-voiced, determined young man knew him personally. He had a persuasive tongue.

For a long time there was silence in the room. Then Forman lifted his head. Whatever his faults, he had original ideas.

"A war correspondent is an important man, Mr. Temple. He is chosen for four qualities." Forman seemed to be talking ambiguously. Certainly Temple failed to catch his drift. "For four qualities: first, a keen news sense; second, an ability for vivid description; third, military knowledge; fourth, courage. From to-day's A. P. dispatches, it seems that the Filipinos are biting the hand that fed them. The transport *Sherman* leaves here Tuesday with two regiments for service in the Philippines. We need a war correspondent."

He was no longer ambiguous. Temple understood him clearly now, and could hardly refrain from admiring the cleverness with which he was trying to extricate himself from the slough into which he had fallen. The party demanded Temple's removal from office. Mr. Stanford, on hearing the case, would probably discharge—well, not Temple. So he was to be shipped to the Philippines. Insurance companies demand a higher premium on the lives of war correspondents than men in any other line of work, and the percentage who never return from the battlefields is large, considering the total number.

"You are a good newspaper man, Mr. Temple," pursued the crafty one. "That you know military tactics is evident from the way you have reported maneuvers, and your sure hand on matters pertaining to the army; that you are courageous——"

So tickled was Forman with the idea that he smiled broadly; to have pre-

vented a catastrophe, Temple could not have restrained from following his example.

"I couldn't consider it, Mr. Forman," Temple said, recovering himself. "When you have anything further to say, you will find me in the Sunday room."

He passed out before Forman could think of a retort.

In the hall, he met Linnard, the news editor, who stopped him.

"You used to know the old man's daughter, didn't you?" asked the news editor.

"Do you mean Miss Stanford?" asked Temple.

"Of course. Well, what do you think of that?" He thrust a news slip into his hand. "I always thought she was a sensible girl, but—pfugh! What do they see in titles?"

As Temple read, the hall seemed to spin around. Involuntarily, he put his hand to his head. The typewritten slip seemed to blot out into blackness. But it was only for a moment; then, perfect master of himself, he read calmly an announcement from the Paris bureau of the New York *Herald*, that Miss Katherine Stanford, only daughter and sole heiress to the fortune of R. Payson Stanford, the San Francisco capitalist and multimillionaire, was engaged to marry Pierre Gaston Etienne de la Medoc, Duc de Montlegier, Comte de Faix and Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, the head of the great ducal house of the Medocs.

"Is this confirmed?" he asked, with an effort.

"Telegram from A. P. to same effect. Wired Norton, and he says it's true."

Linnard passed into the city room. Temple stood motionless.

"Engaged—to—marry—that—cad!" he said, slowly. Then, as his castles in the air faded away, he groaned.

For a moment he stood with head bowed; then retraced his steps to the office of the managing editor.

"Mr. Forman," he said, "I've reconsidered your offer. I'd like to see some fighting. When did you say the *Sherman* sailed?"

## CHAPTER VI.

## IN THE PHILIPPINES.

Officers of the Eighth Army Corps in the Philippines remember Philip Temple, war correspondent, very well indeed. But it is as "Captain Reckless" that he is most generally known among the "hiking" campaigners of the days of Ninety-nine.

A brigadier general, not unknown to fame, who had the opportunity of noting his actions more frequently than others, told his adjutant that he never saw a man who voluntarily took as many risks as did the correspondent of the San Francisco *Clarion*. Indeed, it seemed strange that he survived the first few engagements with the insurrectos, so foolishly did he expose himself, and so daring was he in his feats.

"If he were a yellow journalist, looking for chances to exploit himself, I could understand it," continued the general. "But in his dispatches he never uses the personal narrative nor mentions anything he himself does."

He earned the title of captain fairly, for captain of Company K, of the —th Californias, he was for a period of two weeks; and had it not been for him, there might have been a necessity for dropping Company K from the roster of the regiment.

In one of the many guerrilla fights that occurred in the hills of Cavite province, the aforesaid company was separated from its brigade, and found itself hemmed in on all sides by a few thousand of the disciples of the Katipunan. Captain Doane had been killed, Lieutenant Marsh had gone down from exhaustion, and, at the critical moment, Edgerton, the second lieutenant, was shot through the lungs, leaving the company without a single officer.

Temple had gone with the California regiment, representing as he did a California paper. It so happened that he was with Company K. Had this company been a regular outfit, the senior "non-com" would have risen to the occasion. Being mostly raw "rookies," when deprived of their leaders their an-

nihilation looked certain. At that time, a tall figure, in stained khaki and sun helmet, came to the front—not melodramatically, but as behooved one used to command.

"Don't bunch there!" he shouted. "Form in skirmish line! Down on your knees! Load, aim—fire!"

They did not question the command. They obeyed. The oncoming Filipinos fell back in the face of sixty death-dealing rifles.

"Don't expose yourselves," came the calm order from the man in the sun helmet, who stood behind a tuba tree, loading his revolver. "Wait until they get within a hundred yards. Fire!"

Again the Filipinos fell back.

"Retreat by squads—keep under cover, I tell you! By squads, I said! Load while retreating! To the right!"

Before the Filipinos could make another rush, the little hillock held no Company K behind it. It was done very quietly. The insurrectos did not know that the enemy was making its way along the edge of the stream, sheltered by bamboo trees.

How Captain Philip Temple, of Company K, lost only five men when he had the enemy between him and the brigade to which he belonged; how he took the "pueblo" of Estecaban and held it until the brigade came up, are matters of history with the Eighth Army Corps. He received enough praise from everyone—division and brigade commanders down to the John Henries of the ranks—to turn the head of the average man. Colonel Whistler, of the regiment to which Company K belonged, offered him the permanent captaincy, but smilingly he refused.

Meanwhile, one of the New York papers which had not the foresight to send out a correspondent, noting the value and accuracy of the dispatches of the San Francisco *Clarion*, wired him an offer to do their work besides, and the name "Philip Temple" was made familiar to those who read war news in New York as well as in San Francisco.

His continued recklessness in the face of danger had its final reward. He received a severe wound in the leg, which

required him to be sent to Cavite, and afterward to Manila. By the time he recovered, the insurrection had been thoroughly stamped out in all parts of the islands.

One morning as he sat on the balcony of the hospital, convalescent, attired in cool, white drill, one of the "muchachos" brought him the last batch of papers from the States. He read them perfunctorily; he was not very much interested. Suddenly, however, his attention was arrested; he gripped the paper nervously; the eyes of Katherine Stanford looked out at him from the printed page.

As he read the paragraph below, his eyes brightened:

Clever trick of an impoverished French nobleman to raise money. He announces his engagement to an heiress, and borrows money on the strength of his prospective engagement. Miss Stanford gives her opinion freely on the subject.

He touched the bell, and ordered the boy to bring him a whisky and soda. Then, his hand trembling and his eyes glistering, he lighted a cigarette.

Another bronzed young man in white drill came out on the balcony. He also was a correspondent, and also had been wounded.

"What's the matter, Reckless?" he asked Temple. "For the first time, you positively look as though your digestion was good."

"Didn't I say something foolish to the effect that I was going to settle in this 'dhubie' country, Morrell?" asked Temple.

"I recollect some such asinine crack you made," answered Morrell.

"Well, I've changed my mind. I'm going back to 'God's country' on the *McClellan* in just a week."

"Good boy! We'll be company." He whistled a few bars of the marching song of Samar, and together they sang:

D—n, d—n, d—n the Filipinos,  
Pock-marked, khaki-acted ladrones.  
Then beneath the Starry Flag—civilize them  
with the Krag,  
Then return us to our own beloved homes!

## CHAPTER VII.

"THE HALF CIRCLE MUST BE SMASHED."

There were many "brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts" of Company K who resided in San Francisco; also, Company K had returned two months before. When it was rumored that "Captain Reckless" was returning on the *McClellan*, ex-Sergeant Debreë determined that he should have a homecoming that was worth while. That was why something like three hundred people gathered at the army transport dock when the *McClellan* was reported to be entering the Golden Gate.

As Temple stepped down the gang plank, prepared to deliver himself into the hands of the customs, there was a mad break by the hitherto orderly crowd, and the encircling rope to keep back visitors was broken down. Familiar faces surrounded him, and eager hands were thrust into his. He hardly recognized many of his former "rookies" in their neat civilian attire.

"Heard you were wounded, captain." "Gad! we're glad to see you." "Thank you, captain, for my boy's sake."

There were girls and women, too—ones he had never seen before.

"Three cheers for Captain Reckless! Hip, hip, hurrah!" The army officials, powerless to check the demonstration, smiled and said nothing, but from the deck of the *McClellan*, a colonel led the passengers when they joined in the cheers.

Expostulating, Temple was raised on the shoulders of four men and carried in triumph to the street, where a number of the decked carriages awaited. A band began to play.

"Oh! I say, boys, don't, don't!" cried Temple. He attempted to escape, but his grinning ex-privates prevented him. He was thrust into the brougham which bore the company's insignia and the regimental colors, and the procession started up Market Street.

Finally, with it all over, speech and the rest of it, he jumped into a cab, returned to the customs, and went to the Palace Hotel. Later, he sought the



*Clarion* office, and was accorded another demonstration.

It took three or four days before San Francisco had finished lavishing her regards on Captain Reckless. When he was finally fixed in a new suite of rooms uptown, Richmond called. He had missed Temple considerably in his absence, and he showed it as much as a man of his temperament usually shows his feelings.

"And now what are you going to do?" he asked Temple.

"I don't know yet. I am going to call on Mr. Stanford to-morrow."

"I suppose you didn't know that I sent in my resignation as city editor to-day, with the recommendation that you be given the vacancy. Oh! don't think it was philanthropy. I have been waiting for your return, that's all. Read that! It may explain."

It was an announcement by a prominent firm that "A Man of Men" had gone into the fifth edition. The name of the author was Parke Richmond.

"My middle name," explained the city editor. "I always sign here 'Arthur P.' So of course you didn't know."

"Then you wrote 'Rulers of Destiny,' too!" exclaimed Temple. "Congratulations, old man."

The next day Temple saw Stanford; after the first compliments of his success in the Philippines, Stanford showed him Richmond's letter.

"Do you want the billet, Mr. Temple?" he asked. "I hear you have a good New York offer, so I don't want you to feel it is obligatory—much as we want you."

"I have refused the New York offer," said Temple. "This is my home now. I want to stay here, and I want the city editorship—but on my own terms."

"It is not a question of salary," broke in Stanford, sharply. He felt somewhat hurt.

"I wasn't thinking of that, Mr. Stanford," explained Temple. "It is a question of the policy of the paper. I must have my department free from interference."

"What do you mean?" asked the proprietor of the *Clarion*.

"I mean this: The *Clarion* is an independent paper without politics—or claims to be. Now, I want to use it to benefit San Francisco. This city is in the hands of a set of scoundrels, who rob it right and left. I want to tell the people the truth about them. There will be no libel suits. I will say nothing that I cannot prove."

Stanford rose and paced the room. "How is it that these facts haven't been brought to my attention before?" he demanded, angrily. "You know I have no time to spare for politics—know nothing of them. I spend very little time in San Francisco, and haven't kept track of events. But I expected my paper to do so."

"Then you approve of unmasking these rascals?" asked Temple.

"Approve!" thundered the irate proprietor. "Approve! Well, I should say I do. Why hasn't——"

"I don't wish to say anything that may reflect on anyone," said Temple. "Richmond knows why—he wanted to do just what I propose, but he was prevented. If I have your support, future events will speak for themselves."

Temple took hold of the city room the next day. His first action was to discharge three reporters whom he knew to be paid by the Half Circle to suppress news. He increased the salary of five others, and telephoned several men on other papers to call on him. When they did so, he took them on at larger salaries than they were receiving from the rival sheets. By three o'clock Forman sent for him. He sent back a note that he was very busy and could not come in; this resulted in bringing out Forman, black as a thunder cloud.

"What do you mean by changing the staff without my approval?" he shouted.

Temple handed him a note signed by Mr. Stanford, copies of which had been sent to the different departments of the paper; one reposing at that time on Forman's desk, but which he had neglected to open.

Mr. Philip Temple is in full charge of the city room. He is authorized to publish whatever, in his judgment, he deems fit, to employ or discharge men, and to increase or

decrease the salaries of the local reporters. He is answerable in his actions to no one except

J. PAYSON STANFORD,  
Editor and Sole Proprietor.

Temple had gone on with his work while Forman read this. Forman touched him on the shoulder and handed it back.

"My congratulations, Mr. Temple," he sneered, "on this wholesome deviation from the regular management of a newspaper. Are you sure you were not made managing editor?"

"Not yet," answered Temple, looking at him with no trace of emotion on his face.

Forman withdrew—to think. It was perfectly evident to him that matters were approaching a crisis. His arbitrary rule of four years on the paper looked as though it were nearing an end. The *Clarion* had been slowly making him wealthy; after the next municipal campaign he would have been willing to retire on his profits. He had drawn a large salary in his position; by cutting down salaries he had been able to put a fair amount every month into his own pocket, money left over from the salary appropriation; by using syndicate matter he had reduced the sum for space matter on the Sunday supplement, and that extra money had also been his. For his services in suppressing news hurtful to the Half Circle he had been rewarded by a portion of their gains. Now was it all to end? He gritted his teeth; certainly it looked that way.

Forman had always disliked Temple, and since he had issued that Sunday supplement regarding Mayor Hunt, he had feared him. He had reason to believe that Temple knew the different ways in which he had bamboozled his employer, and, as Temple had Stanford's ear, things certainly looked black for Forman.

Now, how to get Temple out of the way. A few hours later he was closeted with the man who represented the social side of the Half Circle—a clever, apparently well-bred man, an exceedingly tricky lawyer, and a man who never lost that fine polish of manner which is supposed to indicate the gentleman.

He heard Forman's story with great composure, an appearance diametrically opposed to Forman's excited manner. When the managing editor had finished he poured out some brandy and offered it to him.

"You need it, old man," he remarked. Then he lighted a cigarette.

"You don't appear to realize what you're up against," cried Forman. "I tell you this man Temple will wreck you if you don't get him out of the way. He has information enough to start on now—you remember that Mayor Hunt story, don't you?"

"Oh! yes," said the other, reminiscently. "So—that—is—the—man. So!" His voice was silky.

"Yes, that's the man." Forman used some modifiers. "Well, what he doesn't know, he'll find out. He can trail a story right into the earth. I know his work. He's got Stanford back of him and the complete control of twenty-five of the best newspaper men in San Francisco."

"There are three plans that suggest themselves, of course," said the member of the Half Circle. "The first is—frighten him!"

Forman laughed shortly. "Did you chance to read about 'Captain Reckless' who saved Company K of the Californias?" he asked. "Of the man who, Funston said, apparently valued his life at a 'duco's' worth and then threw away the 'duco'? Well, that's Temple. Frighten him! You'll have to think of a better scheme than that, Dunning."

"So he is 'Captain Reckless,' too?" queried Dunning. "I am inclined to think that he must be an interesting character. I should like to know him."

"I hope you may get to know him as well as I do," said Forman, viciously. "But I didn't come here to get appreciations of him. I want to know how to get him out of the way. My position depends on it, and, mark my words, if he stays in power two months we'll lose the coming election."

"Well, he might be bribed," suggested the lawyer. "Bribed judiciously, as you were."

"Leave me out of it," snarled For-

man. "No, I don't think he can be bribed. It might be tried, of course, but I don't think it would work."

"How about his past? Has he had any trouble with women—or——"

Forman got up and paced the room. "You may be on the right track, Dunning. Nobody knows anything about him except that he is evidently a college-bred Englishman of good family. That's plain from the way he looks and talks. He has never told anyone anything about himself so far as I know. His office nickname used to be 'Lord Phil.' I remember——"

"Well-bred Englishman goes to work as a reporter. Mysterious antecedents," mused Dunning. "Have you his photograph?"

"No, but the office has. It was sent in by another correspondent who described his saving of Company K, saying that, as Temple was too modest to tell the story, his friends must do it for him."

"Good photograph?"

"Excellent—his living image! Taken in his khaki riding clothes, with full war correspondent's get-up. Brings out his military bearing——"

"Oh! he has that, has he?" queried Dunning.

"Yes; that's another point, isn't it? He knows military tactics to the proverbial T."

"Have four enlargements of the photograph made—ten by eight, I should say. Bring them to me when you do."

When the photographs were done Forman brought them; three letters were written by Dunning—one to the War Office, London, requesting information as to whether the inclosed photograph represented any officer formerly in her British majesty's service; this was signed by the adjutant general of the State of California. A second went to Scotland Yard, the British detective headquarters, and was signed by the chief of the San Francisco police department. The third, to a private information bureau in Lincoln Inn Fields, London. Both of the latter requested identification of the photograph and prompt reply by cable—collect.

"We should hear from them in about two weeks," said Dunning. "Meanwhile, we'll wait and see what he does, and, if necessary, we'll put up enough money to call off his game."

"You'd better think up something better than that," said Forman, rudely, as he took his departure.

Temple spent his first week in reorganizing the local staff. He selected four men, over whom he placed Curtin in charge, and mapped out a course of investigation which would lead to the results he wished for his first sledgehammer blow at the administration.

"The bill for expenses on building the new city dock, brought in for the past fiscal year," he said to the five, when they assembled at his rooms the second night after he took charge, "amounts to just twenty-five million dollars. That is the way the report reads. The dock is hardly begun. Now we want to know just where that twenty-five millions went."

"Into the Half Circle's pockets," said one of the men, facetiously.

Temple frowned. "I don't want anything said that can't be proven. Of course that is what we think—but it is best not to think aloud. I want positive proof that the city has been defrauded of this sum, and I want it in time for publication in Monday's paper. You will find that different large sums went to McIlhenny, O'Flaherty, Murdoch, Dunning, Penniman, Derrick, and others. Derrick, Dunning and Murdoch are members of the Half Circle. Quite naturally, the names of the mayor and the boss, who complete the ring, are not here. One of the things to prove is that they are represented in this list by other men. Another is: just what equivalent did these men furnish for value received? You have exactly a week to work out the problem."

He talked further to them on the subject, suggesting ways and means. Then he told them to go out and do the work and not to show themselves at the city room until the story was complete. He gave Curtin the key to a little office downtown, which they were to use as headquarters, and let the four men un-

derstand that they were to look on Curtin as their captain during the hunt. They left him, full of enthusiasm.

"Say, he's great," said Roach, an ex-office boy who could hardly write a grammatical paragraph, but whose knowledge of the ways of the lower element and abilities as a sleuth earned him a better competence than many college men. "Yes, sir, there ain't no flies on Lord Phil."

"What a story it will make!" added Roach's antithesis, a smooth-haired, well-groomed youth with a great ability for extracting information from society people, without their being aware of the process. "I can manage my end of it without any trouble." His end was the working of the dapper municipal clerks who held their positions through the influence of the Dunning element.

"I have an idea that we can all work our ends, else Temple wouldn't have given us the story," said Curtin. "But we don't want to air our knowledge to the general public, and we don't want to shout our business aloud. Remember that no man in the crowd is to say anything about being connected with the *Clarion*."

Four days after found Curtin closeted with Temple. "We've got the story," he said, triumphantly, "the whole thing." He handed Temple a bulky roll of copy paper and began volubly to explain.

Temple read the story, a grim smile playing about his lips. He questioned Curtin closely and suggested a few amendments. Afterward he sent for Marriott, the caricaturist, whom he had brought down from a Portland paper, at a very much increased salary. He explained to him a series of caricatures wanted.

He had made up his mind to cast the history of the Half Circle's steals into the form of a continued story, and had ordered a new linotyping machine for the composing room, in anticipation—the kind which cast what is known as "block" type. The whole of the back page of the paper was to be utilized each day to tell the story.

He wrote the introduction himself—metaphorically wrote it in vitriol with a

pen of adamant. In a brief five hundred words, he arraigned the thieves, ridiculed their pretensions, and tore the veil away. It was a little classic in the library of cold, cruel, biting satire, and no one reading it would fail to be influenced.

Like a concealed mine, the story burst on the astonished city. The *Clarion's* first page was half covered with headlines, and the heavy block of the introduction referred readers to the story on the rear page. There they read the history of a crime, ruthlessly revealed, the margins ornamented by bold-lined caricatures of the men who had done the stealing; they read how millions had gone into the money boxes of the Half Circle, millions wrung from the workman whose friends the mayor and his clique professed themselves to be. It was impossible to resist the forcibleness and the direct truthfulness of the attack. None of the sentences began with the time-honored libel savers, "It is learned from good authority," "It is rumored." There were no guesses, no theories, no deductions—only hard, cold facts told in a style that kept the reader going until he came to the words:

To-morrow's *Clarion* will deal further with the Half Circle steals.

Forman went to Stanford and frantically expostulated. Stanford sent for Temple. As they waited, his daughter entered. She had returned from Los Angeles only the day before. She held a copy of the *Clarion* in her hand. She did not know of Temple's promotion.

"Father, how splendid! how really splendid!" she cried, as she pointed to the story of the day. Then she saw Forman.

"I'm glad to see this exposure, Mr. Forman," she said, heartily. "It should have been done before."

Her father smiled. "Mr. Forman had no hand in it, daughter."

She stared at him. A boy brought in Temple's card. A moment later the new city editor stood in the doorway. The truth flashed on her as she saw his stalwart figure and bronzed, determined

face. It was the first time they had met for over a year.

"Phil!" she cried, impulsively, as she ran forward and took his hand. "Phil, I'm so glad, so glad to see you! And so glad to know what you've done!"

He held her hand in his strong grip; that little, firm hand that he loved so well. At her words, his eyes met hers. They told her something which for the past three years he had tried to conceal.

"Phil, you're splendid!" she cried, "just splendid! 'Captain Reckless.' You must explain that 'Reckless,' sir."

"I will explain"—his voice throbbed as it sank to that whisper in which he voiced his strongest emotion. "De Medoc——"

She dropped his hand as her father spoke; but in that brief moment she understood what it might have taken hours to explain.

"Mr. Forman says you are using the paper to further personal ends—spiteful ends, I think he says. He also denies the truth of what you say here."

"Mr. Forman," said Temple, icily, "when a man says I lie I generally thrash him, unless I believe he really thinks so. In the latter case I try to convince him he is mistaken."

Forman cowered under the look that flashed from the younger man's eyes.

"I refuse to be the managing editor of a yellow journal," he said, with the growl of a cornered wolf. "I refuse to have anything to do with a paper that prints stories it cannot substantiate."

"Mr. Forman," said Temple, quietly, "I worked under you for three years. During that time I set to work to find out something about all branches of newspaper work. The financial end also came under my observation. Approximately, you have thirty-five thousand dollars in your possession, taken from the *Clarion* during that time, and for which you have rendered no adequate return."

"You lie!" shouted Forman, rising.

"The books are open to Mr. Stanford's examination. Furthermore, you are a hired tool of this unprincipled party whom I am exposing. You have not done your dirty work without ade-

quate returns. By rights, you should be in the same jail into which I am going to put the Half Circle."

"Mr. Stanford——" cried Forman.

"Mr. Temple has proven his words, Mr. Forman," said the owner of the *Clarion*, holding up a bunch of papers. "You had better go. You should be glad I have enough regard for old times to keep me from prosecuting you."

Forman took his hat. "You'll hear from me, Temple," he said, malevolently, as he passed out of the door.

"We need a new managing editor, Mr. Temple," said Stanford as he placed the evidence against Forman in a private drawer. "Perhaps you know a man for the place?"

Temple eyed him.

"If you don't, I do," cried Kitty Stanford, breathlessly. "Here he is, father." Her eyes looked many things, but chiefly admiration.

"I reckon Kitty's head is level, Mr. Temple," said Stanford. "The *Clarion* looks to you now for a continuance of your excellent work."

"Phil," breathed Kitty Stanford, "you're—you're—a—a dear."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN ATTEMPT AT BRIBERY.

San Francisco had awakened. It was reading the *Clarion*. The rival papers, owned by men who feared to antagonize the powers that were, began to realize that they would lose their grips on the public unless they followed Temple's example. The great men who held their destinies said: "No—wait."

So they waited, and each day brought a new development in the dock frauds. Temple told a vital story—a story that every man who cared about the welfare of his native city read. It began to have its effect after a few days. The editorial rooms were swamped with letters urging them to keep up the good work.

San Francisco—wide-open, easy-going San Francisco—was shocked. More than shocked—it discovered that it had been taken in. San Franciscans began to grow angry. The whole thing had

been done so easily; there was no great amount of cleverness about it—just a plain steal.

On the fourth day of the exposure Temple ran a note printed in red ink:

If what we are telling the people of San Francisco about their municipal government is not true, why do the men accused not sue us for libel? We are waiting for the suit.

It took a week to deal with the dock frauds. The next Sunday three out of every five ministers made the *Clarion's* exposure the subject of a pulpit discourse. The weekly papers, independent of the great ones, ran their own discussions on the question, and most of them printed a picture of Temple and a brief *résumé* of his career. The fact that "Captain Reckless" was the man who was exposing the men in power served to fan the fire of public approbation. San Franciscans are intensely proud of their own, and Temple had so thoroughly identified himself with California, both in peace and war, that he was looked upon as one of them.

The former members of the California regiments began to discuss him among their friends, and to tell reminiscences of what they had seen him do in the Philippines; what he had said to them just before or just after he did certain things; how they had helped him do this and that. Fully nine-tenths of these tales were utterly without foundation, and Temple's exploits were so grossly exaggerated that to hear some of them would be to imagine that he had personally conducted the whole war. They had their good effect, however. It began to be the thing to have known Temple, and every man who had been in the Philippines was expected to have known him personally. This made him popular.

But the great masses needed no element of personality to enlist their sympathies on the side of the *Clarion*: In vain the hirelings of the Half Circle, disguised as friends of the poor, endeavored to point out to them that the *Clarion* was a rich man's paper, and this was only an attempt to install municipal

rulers who would be tools of the plutocrats. These speeches failed to make an impression with any save the lowest class, who mistook noise for eloquence and coarseness of speech for sincerity.

The same line of argument was also adopted by the *Party*, a daily which served as the organ of the Half Circle. It elaborated on the fact that Stanford was one of the wealthiest men in the State, a grinder-down of the poor, a monopolist.

This gave Temple a chance to spread his wings again. He gave a list of the things that Mr. Stanford had done for San Francisco: his endowing of a "Home for the Needy," where any homeless or hungry man might procure the necessities of life for an adequate amount of labor; a school and home which he provided for girls turned on the world at too early an age; twenty-five scholarships at the State University which he had bestowed, the amount of each enabling the winner to go through college with no other aid; the free "soup kitchens" which he set up during the hard times of '93; the fact that in his great fruit-canning factories no person under sixteen could obtain employment, and that he paid a higher average wage for labor than did other employers in the same business throughout the State. Temple addressed himself to the four thousand people employed by Mr. Stanford:

If there is one among you who has ever had cause to complain regarding wages, hours or treatment, let him stand out and say so; this paper pledges itself to publish his letter. On the other hand, there is not one of you who cannot testify that Payson Stanford, in 1894, did what no other employer did: he kept on every employee in his different canneries, even though the supply exceeded the demand, and the canned fruit was piling up in such quantities that new warehouses had to be built.

So he turned the enemy's shot into a boomerang. Four thousand people can talk a great deal, and a number of people can hear them. Stanford's employees did talk. They realized an attack on him might mean trouble, and they had no desire to undergo the treatment in

other canneries after the lenient one adopted by Stanford.

Meanwhile, Temple had attacked another point in the enemy's defense. It was the payment of numerous fictitious persons for services, naturally, never rendered. Gording, one of his men, had an uncle who was high in favor with Dunning. To this uncle he went, representing himself as having been discharged by Temple, because he refused to "roast" the Half Circle. Although his uncle hated Gording almost as much as his dutiful nephew disliked him, he felt compelled to do something for him out of family pride. Gording hinted at a position open in the office of the city auditor. His uncle obtained it for him rather than loan him money, the alternative suggested by the wily Gording.

It took this self-reliant young gentleman some little time and considerable labor to obtain the evidence he desired; but at the end of two weeks he turned in the story and the detailed list of the fictitious persons who drew salaries. The list totaled up to an average of about ten thousand dollars a month. Fifty of the men on the pay rolls who did not exist were supposed to be policemen. This was Temple's chance to bring in another branch of public corruption on which he had two other men working in the Tenderloin—the question of why certain palatial gambling houses were not raided.

"Why have we not an efficient police department?" was the heading, and it followed immediately after the startling facts that Gording had unearthed. It proved that the police had orders from those in power to close every gambling house except ten—this gave a practical monopoly on this form of vice to these houses. Why? Temple produced evidence in the shape of title deeds and mortgages which proved that these houses were owned by the Half Circle.

Things were getting pretty warm for the people in power at the "steal works," as Charles Rockwell Curtin, humorist, had dubbed the city hall. Local bosses rushed in frantically every hour to inform the heads that unless something was quickly done to shut up the *Clarion*

and make it retract what it had already said, there would be small chance of carrying the next municipal election. Street-corner publicists of the other party, sowing in the good time, were rehashing the *Clarion* exposures for the benefit of those who did not read the papers, and the manifestations on such occasions were far from flattering to the Half Circle. Those who read and thought had given proof of their ideas on the subject, both by letter and by word of mouth.

The Half Circle held a consultation, but Forman was not there. Forman, not caring to give Stanford a chance to reconsider his words about jail, had fled into the wilderness. The upshot of their deliberations was that Mr. Laurence J. Dunning was told to seek out the raging lion who devoured and to placate him at all costs.

Mr. Dunning was a very crafty, very well-bred and very rascally person, but he had no idea in his head as to the correct way in which to deal with a thoroughly honest man. He believed in the aphorism which has for so long passed as a truth, "Every man has his price." He was aware, however, that Temple was a gentleman. Therefore, knowing something of men who give that impression, he also knew it would not be a case of putting the money on the table and requesting Temple to call off his dogs; but the idea that this strenuous young editor would refuse the munificent offer he was instructed to make never occurred to him.

Smiling, debonair and well-groomed, he was ushered into the presence of the man who had caused all the trouble. Temple's appearance justified Mr. Dunning in his impression that he was about to converse with a gentleman.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Captain Philip Temple?" The use of courtesy titles was one of Mr. Dunning's little ways of ingratiation. "The famous 'Captain Reckless,'" he smiled.

"My name is Temple, Mr. Dunning," answered the other. "But I have no right to the prefix. Won't you have a chair?"

Dunning availed himself of the offer,



and beamed on Temple, who looked at him interrogatively. Dunning gave a slight cough.

"I don't know whether you are aware of the fact, captain," he began, "but I—that is—I seem to have earned your enmity."

"You!" Temple raised his eyebrows. "Impossible, Mr. Dunning." There was a slight noise behind a green curtain which stretched across the room at Temple's back. He heard it and could hardly refrain from scowling. Fortunately, Dunning did not notice it.

He coughed again. "Perhaps you don't know exactly what Dunning I am," he said.

"Why bring up a painful subject, Mr. Dunning?" queried Temple, in all good nature.

"You know, then——"

"That there is only one Laurence P. Dunning in town, and his likeness and its distortions have appeared in the *Clarion* too many times for me to fail to recognize the original." —

Dunning liked delicacy of treatment. He appreciated Temple's recognition. He smiled again graciously.

"Well, then, you must know that I am very deeply pained at the criticisms—ah! rather more—that have appeared in the *Clarion*."

"You must pay the penalty of being a public man, Mr. Dunning. Criticism is naturally their lot when they fail in their duty to the public."

"But I am not a public man." Dunning extended his palms expostulatively. "I hold no public office."

"No, that's true. Therefore, the more reason why you should be criticised for attempting to direct public affairs."

"Mr. Temple, you are a well-bred man. You must appreciate my feelings when in receipt of this unwelcome notoriety—talking as one gentleman to another."

"With different definitions of the noun, please," put in Temple.

Dunning nearly lost his temper. He paused for a moment; then, disregarding the interruption, continued: "I am anxious for the *Clarion* to get the right

view in this matter. I want to explain a few matters."

"Whenever the *Clarion* wants information of that sort," interrupted Temple, "it will send out one of its staff to interview you, Mr. Dunning."

"I would rather be your friend than your enemy, Mr. Temple."

"Under the circumstances, I should prefer the latter, Mr. Dunning."

"Well, then, let it be enemies, Mr. Temple," said the spokesman of the Half Circle, rising. "But I don't mind telling you that I am interested in your welfare—you have the making of a great author in you, Mr. Temple."

He paused to notice the effect. Temple looked a trifle less stern.

"Newspaper work is of the day. You may be the controlling spirit of the *Clarion* all your life, and influence men and morals just as you are doing now. You will make a fairly decent living out of it, that's all. Ten years after your death people will forget that a man named Philip Temple ever lived. Isn't that true?"

"It's true—though trite," agreed Temple. By the expression on his face, Dunning decided that the ground was ready for the seed.

"On the other hand, a great author lives through the ages. He influences generation after generation of the whole world. Your newspaper work will influence one generation and one locality. Why not, then, use your virile pen for the benefit of the world at large? The answer is, of course: 'I can't afford to wait for fame.'"

"Of course," assented Temple.

Dunning was becoming well pleased with himself. "Then why not accept the services of a wealthy man who wishes to be your friend?"

"Who?" queried Temple.

"Myself. I will be glad of the opportunity to help posterity—and yourself."

"Do you mean you will give me enough to live on while I write books?" asked Temple, in his softest tones. Unfortunately, the astute politician did not know the danger signal.

"Yes," he answered.

"How much?" inquired Temple.

"One hundred thousand dollars," answered Dunning, leaning closer.

"No more than that? Couldn't I get three?"

"I'm afraid——"

"Three hundred thousand is very little. No less than that would provide a decent income!"

"Well, then, say three hundred thousand," said Dunning.

"In consideration of which I resign from the *Clarion* and cease that paper's attacks on the municipal government?"

Dunning smiled uneasily. "Well, naturally, the—you know the old saw—the dog doesn't bite the hand that feeds him."

Temple rose and faced him. "The saw is most apropos," he said, quietly. "I should indeed be a dog if I accepted your bribe—or, rather, let us not insult the dog by comparing him with a person of that character. Mr. Dunning, your offer shows you unable to understand an honest man. It is an insult to me—a damned, dirty insult!" He was still speaking low, but the wrath and scorn of a tragedian could not have been more impressive. Dunning shrank back.

"You've made your offer. You've failed. Perhaps you would feel more comfortable outside, Mr. Dunning. I give you fair warning, however, before you go, that your attempt at bribery will form the subject of an interesting discourse in to-morrow's editorial columns, while the interview—word for word—will take a prominent place in the news columns."

Dunning laughed. He had recovered his composure and swallowed his disappointment. He was not going to allow Temple to think he was defeated.

"You're only talking now, Mr. Temple," he said, easily. "You have only your word against mine that this occurred, and if you publish it I shall bring suit for libel. As you have no witnesses——"

It was Temple's turn to laugh now; a low, rippling laugh, full of satisfaction. "When I deal with rogues, Mr. Dunning, I use other weapons than in dealing with honest men." He placed his hand to the green portière at his

back, and swept the folds into one mass. "I knew what you intended to do, you see."

Behind the portières sat a stenographer and Charlie Curtin. As his chief spoke Curtin stepped out.

"How do, Dunning?" he said, pleasantly. "Lord! Phil, I'm glad this interview is over. I'm nearly dead for a cigarette."

Whereupon he lighted one, and gazed on the speechless spokesman of the Half Circle.

Temple touched a bell, and the boy appeared. "Show Mr. Dunning out," he said.

Dunning turned, his eyes not pleasant to look into. "You were an impersonal enemy before, Temple; you're a personal one now, and people who have had me for a personal enemy will tell you they would have done a good deal to avoid it."

"Did you get all of the interview?" asked Temple of the stenographer. The latter replied in the affirmative. "Thank you. Oh! ah! Good-day, Mr. Dunning."

## CHAPTER IX.

"THE PAPER HAS GONE TO PRESS, MR. DUNNING."

When Dunning reached the street his rage had been fully mastered, and he smilingly acknowledged the bow of a girl who passed by a flourish of his silk tile. But Dunning was always most dangerous when he smiled as he did then, showing his little, even teeth viciously.

He had fully made up his mind that his interview with Temple should not be made public property. He realized what such a step would mean, coming as it did after the Half Circle's published utterances in the *Party*, "that the *Clarion* lied, and that the petty bark of such a paper was not worth the while of confuting." He rapidly summed up his conversation with Temple; in it he had tacitly acknowledged that the *Clarion* had spoken the truth, and had offered a sum of money so large for the silencing of that organ that it would be plainly

evident to all who read that there was no doubt regarding the guilt of himself and his *confrères*.

Although the attitude of the public had changed greatly toward the party in power, there were enough ignorant men left who did not read and a sufficient number of those who refused to believe, to enable the Half Circle, with the aid of its unscrupulous "repeaters" and publicists, to put in another Half Circle administration. Should this interview be published, the unbelieving ones would be lost, and without their votes, it meant that a reform party would be put in power. With natural zeal, the new municipal authorities would do what the *Clarion* was insisting should be done—send the Half Circle, their cohorts and tools, to the State penitentiary, he, Laurence P. Dunning, among them.

Plainly, this must be avoided. He reached his private office, sat down and smoked innumerable cigarettes. His brow was wrinkled, and his long, thin fingers drummed a nervous tattoo on the table beside him. After an hour he had thought of only one thing—and that promised little.

He went to the cable office, where he wrote several wires and tore them up. Finally he produced the following:

SCOTLAND YARD, LONDON.

Referring photograph sent two weeks ago, how progresses investigation? Man contemplates leaving San Francisco to-night. Wire answer immediately.

"Jarvis!" he said. The clerk at the desk recognized him.

"I want this to reach London at the earliest possible moment. You understand?"

"You want it sent at 'urgent' rates, Mr. Dunning?" queried the clerk.

"Yes," answered Dunning. "At any rate that will get it there without delay. And when the answer comes rush a boy to my office. No loitering, mind you!"

Jarvis counted the words and named the price—not a small amount. The value of words is much appreciated when they go over continents and oceans at "urgent" rates. Dunning

tendered the amount. It was nothing to him.

"Mind you, that cablegram goes immediately, and—stop." He took out some more notes. "This is for a paid answer. Add to the cable: 'Answer paid.'"

Jarvis obeyed, and Dunning returned to his office. His clerks were told that he would see no one, and many were turned away while the member of the Half Circle sat in his inner office, smoking one cigarette after another, and gloomily eying the clock.

The time for closing the office came. The clerks went away. Dusk was coming on, and it wrapped the room in shadow, but the light of Dunning's cigarette showed the white, drawn face behind it.

He was not the man to talk aloud, to groan, to bewail his fate. He knew nothing could alter what was destined. Finally, however, the uncertainty was too much for him. He rose and paced the room nervously.

Then came the knock. Quickly he passed into the outer office and unbolted the door. The freckled messenger boy who handed him the blue envelope seemed the handsomest boy he had ever seen. He tore open the envelope with trembling fingers. Then it fluttered to the floor. His face lighted up, and his hand went to his pocket. He thrust a bank note into the messenger's hand.

"No answer, boy," he said, genially. "Run along."

He picked up the cablegram, thrust it into his pocket and took down the telephone receiver. His call was for the *Clarion*, and when their private exchange answered he asked for Temple.

"This is Dunning, Mr. Temple. I have just received a cable from Scotland Yard, London, regarding a certain Lieutenant Morpeth. What? Yes, Lieutenant Morpeth. I am coming down to see you in about fifteen minutes. You'll wait? Thank you. Good-by."

He smiled as he replaced the receiver. Then he switched on the electric light and took down "Burke's Peerage" from a nearby shelf. He consulted it and pencil-marked a name. It concerned

the family of the Earl of Colchester, beneath whose name was that of his son and heir—Viscount Chandos.

Morpeth, Charles Dudley St. Regis, Viscount Chandos | Lady Mona Temple

Morpeth, the Honorable Philip Lenox.  
Morpeth, the Honorable Violet Chandos.  
Morpeth, the Honorable Ralph Churchill.

There was an annotation beside the names of both of the sons of Viscount Chandos. It read:

As the Honorable Philip Lenox Morpeth is probably deceased, the direct heir to the title of Lord Chandos and eventually the Earl of Colchester is apparently the Honorable Ralph Churchill Morpeth.

A cab landed Dunning in front of the Clarion Building, and within the prescribed time he found himself in Temple's presence.

"Well, Mr. Dunning?" The voice was hard and cold.

"I merely wish to read you a cable from London, Mr. Temple," said the other, suavely. "A few weeks ago I forwarded your photograph to Scotland Yard, London. To-day, wishing to know what disposition they had made of it, I wired them. Shall I read the answer?"

In the yellow glare of the electric lights, Temple's face was drawn and haggard, the many fine lines about his eyes and mouth showing plainly.

"Yes," he said, huskily.

DUNNING, San Francisco: Person wanted here for murder. Name, Philip Lenox Morpeth, son Viscount Chandos, grandson Earl of Colchester. Formerly lieutenant Fifth Lancers. Killed officer same regiment. Arrest and hold him.

Temple sprang to his feet. The desk light toppled and fell. The two men stood in darkness. There was silence for a space. Dunning broke it.

"Well, my lord," he said, mockingly, "you heard it."

Temple did not answer.

"Perhaps you had better call your stenographer to publish this interview side by side with the other."

Still no answer.

"So the reformer is a criminal, eh? Nice reading for the people of San Francisco, isn't it? Their young crusader, their hero—a *murderer*!"

"Have you finished, Mr. Dunning?" asked Temple at last. He raised the desk light and turned it on again.

Dunning eyed him. "I have finished, Lieutenant Morpeth. It is your turn to say something."

"I have nothing to say, except—*get out of my office!*" came the low voice of Temple.

There was something in Temple's tone that made Dunning drop his mocking manner.

"See here," he said, abruptly. "No one here knows this except myself. I can wire Scotland Yard that Morpeth has gone to the Orient on the liner leaving to-morrow. In consideration, you tear up your interview and cease your attacks. It's a fair bargain."

"It is not a bargain," came from between Temple's compressed lips. "I ask you to leave."

"Don't be a fool, Temple," cried Dunning. "Murder is a serious thing. In ten minutes I can have a warrant for your arrest issued, and land you in jail an hour later."

"I know what you can do. It doesn't influence me at all. You had best go before I lose control of myself."

Dunning was at the last stage of desperation. "The three hundred thousand too, if you like!" he cried. "Nothing's fairer. You don't deny the truth of this, do you?" He waved the cable.

"Mr. Dunning," said Temple, slowly, "I do not deny that I am Philip Morpeth, the man described there. Now go and get your police. This paper publishes your attempt at bribery to-morrow. Go, Dunning, and get your police!" He moved a step toward him and added, in a low, even tone: "If you don't go—now—I shall put you out!"

Dunning moved toward the door. "Your last chance, then——" he began.

Before he had said more, two firm hands gripped his shoulders; he was pushed against the swinging doors. The impetus carried him far into the hall, and

the door swung to behind him. Dazed, he walked to the elevator shaft.

Ten minutes later Temple followed him. A cab was waiting him at the door. He entered, gave the address of Mr. Stanford, on Van Ness Avenue, and was whirled rapidly in that direction.

It was not long after the footman took up his card that Katherine Stanford, in an evening gown of soft, white, filmy stuff, joined him in the library where he sat waiting her. As he rose, she noted the expression on his face.

"Phill!" she cried, in concern. "You are surely not well. I never saw you look as you do to-night."

"Nor never will again," he answered, in tones vibrating with emotion. He pressed the button which controlled them and the electric lights went out, leaving the room in the soft glow of the shaded lamps. "I don't want you to look at me," he explained.

He stood over her as she sat on a divan near the window. Below, in panoramic effect, the lights of San Francisco sputtered and twinkled.

"Three years ago, you took me out of the gutter and made a man of me. You asked no questions as to who I was. I said I would justify your belief in me. When I had done it I intended to explain all, and then, Kitty, to tell you that I loved you."

She looked up at him, a strange, new light in her eyes.

"I was mad enough to hope. Then I heard of the De Medoc case. I went to the Philippines. I wanted to die. I tried, but failed. Would to God I had succeeded!"

"Why do you say that?" she asked, softly.

"Kitty!" he cried. For a moment his frame shook. She held out her hand.

"No," he said, overcoming the desire to take her into his arms. "No—wait! Listen! When I read of the affair again and saw the trick I came back, as you know. It seemed that the goal was very near, and I should soon be able to tell you I had succeeded. It *has* been reached. To-morrow the Half Circle's end will come. But you—oh, God!

Kitty, you are further away than ever."

She caught his arm. "You say you love me?" she asked, slowly.

"Love you! Ever since that day at Monterey when you made Philip Temple out of an outcast and a vagabond."

"Perhaps I love you, too!" she said.

"Kitty!" He turned to her, arms outstretched. Then they dropped lifeless to his side. "It isn't fair to let you be deceived. Listen!" He spoke rapidly now. "Dunning tried to bribe me to-day. I have his attempt ready for the press, a stenographic report. He came to-night with a cablegram from London telling my real name and that I was wanted for *murder*. No one knows except Dunning. He offered to keep the secret if the interview were not published and the attacks of the *Clarion* ceased. I refused. It is the last blow necessary to smash the Half Circle—and it will be smashed. So I have fulfilled my trust to you."

She was breathing hard. He went on:

"I am wanted for murder. My name is not Temple—that was my mother's name. It is Morpeth. I am the grandson of the Earl of Colchester. The murder was no murder. I was an officer in the queen's army at the time. I had an enemy. I discovered that he had defamed a woman—a cousin of mine. I publicly thrashed him. That night I was strolling by the river. A man sprang at me with pistol upraised. We struggled. I was the stronger. The revolver went off in the struggle. He fell. A moment later a party of brother officers had jumped from the club windows and a bull's-eye lantern was turned on me, standing over my enemy's dead body, a revolver in my hand.

"I was court-martialed. All the evidence was against me. The revolver was my own, monogrammed and crested; he had stolen it, probably to give the idea of suicide. I was broken in the presence of the regiment, and then sent to the military prison at Dartmouth.

"I escaped—how, it doesn't matter. I came to the United States. I had a

little money at first; but at length I came down to what you saw."

He ceased and waited for her to speak; but she only breathed more quickly. "That is the story," he said, wearily. "I wanted you to know it before the public did."

Still she said nothing.

"Good-by. May I take your hand?"

She held it out.

"You love me—and believe I can let you go," she choked out, a sob in her voice. "Philip—Philip—I—I—love you."

Hardly believing the witness of his ears, he staggered back. "You—love—me—after that?"

"I love you after anything," she cried, her voice trembling. "Love you no matter what befalls. You made me love you that day you told me of De Medoc and when you defeated Forman. That was the beginning, as I knew it. Then your fight came, and now you would sacrifice all your prospects for honor. Love you! When a woman loves she gives her whole soul. Mine is yours, Philip."

For the first time their lips met.

"You will never be taken to Dartmouth prison," she said. "Father's money is mine—and if need be, every cent of it will be spent to clear you. You have become an American citizen. The extradition law can be fought. I know we will prove you innocent."

He rose. "I have courage for anything now," he said. "If you believe in me, nothing else matters. I begin to have your confidence." He looked at his watch. "I must go now. The paper goes to press at twelve."

She caught his hand. "Would it—would it be wrong if you did not print— Oh! Philip, don't look at me so."

"Do you ask me not to print it?" he asked, quietly. "It is a whole city's welfare against mine and yours. Would it be the act of the man you love?"

She buried her head in the pillows. He stood erect, motionless, waiting. Presently she looked up; her right hand

clasped his, and her left rested on his shoulder.

"No, my knight," she said. "No—I do not ask you."

The last proof had gone up corrected. In ten minutes thousands of printed sheets with the last blow at the Half Circle would fall in neat piles beneath the presses.

Curtin, the new city editor, went out into the local room where the reporters sat, their work done, waiting for release.

"It's 'good-night,' boys," he said, using the time-honored formula. "Miller will keep the late watch—the rest of you may go."

Temple heard their jests as they passed by the door. He sighed when he remembered that this was his last "good-night."

In the composing room, grimy typesetters and compositors were being transformed into clean-looking young men. Below, the engineers oiled the machinery of the great presses.

Dunning jumped into the elevator bringing down the last of the local room. "Has the paper gone to press?" he asked the boy, breathlessly.

"No," answered the boy. "'Twill soon, though."

Dunning pushed open the door of the managing editor's sanctum, and entered.

"The warrant's made out in Morpeth's name," he said. "They are only waiting my telephone order to arrest you. They don't know who it is yet. Call it off, Temple. Make it five hundred thousand. I'll write the check now."

Temple looked at him without anger. He did not answer, only lighted a cigarette, and looked out of the window with far, unseeing eyes.

Below a crank was turned. There was a whirl and a buzz. Then a great vibration shook the building, settling down to a steady thud! thud!

"The paper has gone to press, Mr. Dunning—with your interview and other things. Go, telephone the Hall of Justice, and tell Captain Brewer to send his men. I shall be waiting here."

Outside Curtin called cheerily, "Good-night, Phil."

"Good-night, Charlie," answered the managing editor.

## CHAPTER X.

BY THE HAND OF A "FLUNKY."

The other morning papers knew nothing of the arrest of Temple until it was too late for printing, so his last stroke at the Half Circle remained the sensation of the day until the afternoon papers recovered from their dumb amazement and issued extras.

Temple told the story freely to the newspaper men who called on him at his room in the Hall of Justice. The police officials both respected and feared him, and they did not incarcerate him in a cell. The private office of one of the commissioners was placed at his disposal, and save for the fact that the windows were barred and two policemen stood outside the door, he was as comfortable, physically, as he would have been at his own home, a caterer from across the street providing his meals, and his own Japanese boy being there to wait on him.

The afternoon papers were very considerate of his feelings. The city editor of the *Mail* called personally for the interview, and the assistant editor of the *Argus* came with him. He knew both of them, and the story was told calmly, not omitting Dunning's share in it. The end had come for the latter gentleman and his associates, and the papers had no reason to fear them now; so it was that Temple figured as a hero in their columns, and his life story was told sympathetically and in the way calculated to cause those who read to believe that he was entirely innocent of the crime with which he was charged.

Early in the afternoon Payson Stanford came, and with him Kitty! He took Temple's hand in both of his and shook it warmly. Then he patted his shoulder.

"My boy," he said, solemnly, "this little girl has told me the story, and she has told me something else besides.

Ever since she was old enough to toddle, she's ruled her old father, and what she says goes. And, besides, I know you, Philip, my lad. I've seen what you've done, and I know what you are. I'm a wealthy man, as you know. I've made money because it was in me to do it. I had to do something and so it came; but every cent of that money has been made for Kitty—to make Kitty happy. She says she loves you. Therefore, you must be extricated from this trouble. So I've engaged the best lawyers in the city—and if you aren't cleared—well——"

Temple's eyes clouded with a suspicious moisture. He could say nothing, verbally, but his looks expressed what he would have said. Kitty came forward and kissed him.

"You'll be out of it soon, Phil," she said, caressing his hair. "But whether you are or not, I know you are innocent."

Her father found occasion to leave the room for a moment, and the two were left together. What they said was of the greatest interest to themselves; but further than that it could concern no one.

Charlie Curtin had been waiting outside, and when Stanford and his daughter took their departure, he came in.

"Phil, old man," he said, huskily. They shook hands. Each understood the other.

"Mr. Stanford has just told me that you have recommended me to fill your post while you're away," Curtin said.

"To fill it permanently, I fear, Charlie," said Temple.

"Nonsense! You'll be out of this in a jiffy. It's absolutely absurd to think that."

Temple picked up the afternoon sheets. "You've read them, I suppose?" he asked. "Well, they've been very good, very fair, and very just. And what they say is true. I want you to say about the same in the *Clarion*, only don't use the eulogistic adjectives that they do in describing me. I am not a long-suffering saint, and it wouldn't do for my own paper to praise me. You understand that. Here is a letter—my



resignation from the *Clarion*, which Mr. Stanford has refused to accept. It would be well to publish that."

There was only one morning paper which vilified Temple's name—the *Party*, the organ of the Half Circle. It said things for which it had no foundation, and attempted to paint Temple in such a way that his exposure of the Half Circle would be nullified. But its efforts were quite futile; the Half Circle's influence was gone forever.

San Francisco is a city of strong likes and dislikes; unswerving loyalty to its heroes and a fervid way of expressing them. "Captain Reckless" had become one of its heroes. The average man who read of his arrest saw only one thing—a plot of the Half Circle to get him out of the way.

Hawkins, the Honorable Ernest Haskell's "man," temporarily acting as footman in the absence of the Mexican "muchacho," who had partaken of too much "vino" the night before, dropped the jar of marmalade which he was just about to put before his master to complete the breakfast.

"Hawkins!" said Haskell, severely. "You are growing careless. See that it doesn't occur again."

"Yes, sir," murmured Hawkins, deferentially.

Haskell went on with the account which he was reading aloud from the San Francisco *Evening Mail*, which had reached Monterey the night before, and was being perused by him for the first time. Bobby Barraclough, who shared Haskell's cottage in the English settlement at Pacific Grove, was giving vent to exclamations, tugging his intensely British mustache the while.

"Phil Morpeth! My word! To think of Phil running a paper! Oh, I say, Ernie, there's some mistake, old chap. It couldn't be Phil, y' know. Oh, no, not possible, old chap, not possible. Phil was drowned in the Dart, y' know, when he got out of that bloomin' prison."

"You can read it for yourself, Bobby," said Haskell, throwing him the paper. "It's a deucedly queer affair all

around. I went to 'Varsity with Phil, you know. My word! what a dig he was! He was in the eight, too, you know! Stroke at Henley, in ninety-two. I was his fag, and hanged cocky I was about it, too. We youngsters used to think he was the greatest man in the whole blooming world—greater than the dean, by George!"

"There was a confounded shindy about that murder affair of his," remarked Barraclough. "Personally, y' know, I believe it was all poppycock. I knew Dugdale at Sandhurst when the 'pater' had me try for the army. Dugdale was a cad, a beastly cad! Morpeth, by Jove! was a decent sort; I knew him at the Junior, when I was a member."

"Well, I'm devilish sorry that this thing had to come up again," commented Haskell. "It'll knock the Colchester succession sky high. You know Ralph is married on the strength of his prospects, and Chandos isn't good for many years more. And then the earl can't possibly live ten years; he's deucedly fit now and all that, but he's eighty-five according to Debrett."

"If you please, sir," came the mild voice of Hawkins.

Haskell turned. "Well?"

"H'I 'umbly beg your parding, sir," said the valet, stepping from behind Haskell's chair. "But h'if h'I might be so bold, Mr. 'Askell, might h'I venture to s'y a few words, sir, h'about Leftenant Morpeth, sir?"

"What do you know about Mr. Morpeth?" asked Haskell, unencouragingly.

"Well, sir, you see, Mr. 'Askell, w'en Leftenant Morpeth was h'in 'er majesty's service (God bless 'er, sir, with your permission, Mr. 'Askell) my father was corporal, sir, lance corporal, in the syne regiment, sir. H'and h'I was a little chep, seven years h'ago, it was, sir, h'and h'I was h'only fourteen, sir, h'extra boy, sir, for Colonel Mainwaring, sir. 'E's dead now, sir. (God bless 'im, sir, with your——)"

"Hawkins, my man, what has all this to do with Mr. Morpeth?" asked Haskell, severely.

"H'I'm a-coming to that, sir, with

your permission, Mr. 'Askeel. H'I was h'only a boy, sir, h'and lots of things h'I didn't h'understand, sir, being kid-like, so to say, sir. Well, h'I was a-walkin' h'along the river bank, sir, that night, sir, with—h'I was strollin'—"

"With one of the village girls—I understand, Hawkins. Go ahead."

"Well, sir, (with your permission, Mr. 'Askeel,) I was with a femyle person, kidlike, so to speak, strickly agynst h'orders, sir, so secret-like, so to speak, sir. We (me and the femyle person, sir) we got tired of a-walkin', sir, h'and (with your permission, Mr. 'Askeel) we sat down, sir, when h'along comes Leftenant Morpeth, sir; and bein' h'out with a femyle person, agynst orders, sir, we hid, secret-like, for 'im to pass, sir. Then, sir, h'I seed some one jump up in front of 'im, sir, and 'eard him swear, and then h'I saw 'im catch a hold of the h'other, sir, and h'I 'eard a bang, sir, and h'I was afryd, sir, and me and this 'ere femyle person, we run, sir.

"H'I was a-servin' Leftenant Pearson for a while, sir, and 'e was goin' aw'y to the target shooting at Black 'Eath, sir, leavin' that night, sir, and we went, sir—"

"You went, you damned waster! Went and let an officer be tried for murder when you knew he was innocent!"

"Beggin' parding, Mr. 'Askeel, no h'I didn't, sir! H'I didn't know nothin' h'about no murder, sir; leavin' Leftenant Pearson, sir, h'at Black 'Eath because of 'is a-strikin' of me, h'and went to Lunnon, sir, gettin' took h'on h'as h'an h'extra boy h'at the Savoy Club, sir, h'and, bein' generally not much on readin' of the papers, sir, and not 'earin' from my father, sir, him being h'angry for my leavin' Leftenant Pearson, sir, and me bein' afryd to let 'im know my lodgin's, sir, being afryd of 'im comin', sir, and mykin' me go back, sir."

"And you'll swear to all that, Hawkins?" asked Haskell, rising.

"Yes, sir; beggin' your—"

"Pack one of my bags, then, and get ready to take the ten o'clock train to San Francisco. Thank Heaven for a

chance to pull Morpeth out!" Haskell's British imperturbability was a little discomposed. "You'll come, old chap?"

"Rather!" ejaculated Barraclough, adjusting his gold-rimmed monocle.

It did not take long for the news to spread about San Francisco that, although heavily bonded, "Captain Reckless" was a free man again; and the night was turned into a *fiesta*.

Mr. Laurence P. Dunning, with great acuteness and foresight, tarried only long enough in San Francisco to deed over his house and a modest competence to Mrs. Dunning and the children. Realizing hastily on the rest of his property, he took the next boat sailing to Honolulu and Japan. His associates were not so wise, and afterward had much reason to regret it, when a new administration went into power, and they to the Supreme Court, to be found guilty of fraudulent dereliction of duty and appropriation of the public money.

On the night after Hawkins' testimony had served him in such yeoman stead, Philip Temple and the representative of her Britannic majesty at San Francisco talked over the matter in the Stanford library, and in the presence of the head and daughter of the house.

"Of course you'll have to go back to England, Mr. Morpeth," said the consul general. "And while it would be advisable to take Hawkins with you, still I think his deposition, sworn before me, will answer all purposes. Meanwhile, I'll keep a watch on the man, and, if necessary, will send him on."

When the consul general retired, Philip showed the Stanfords the cables he had received from his people.

"I'm afraid I'll have to go, Mr. Stanford," he said. "It's necessary to clear my name, and, besides, this cablegram from our family physician informs me that my father is very low. It is my duty to be there, at that rate, in order that my name will be fit to bear the title—for bear it I must for duty's sake. We are proud of our name, and proud of the succession, and a peer's influence in the House of Lords may do much for his

country. I will take with me the best of what I have learned in America, and the best girl in the world to share my name. Shall I not, Kitty?"

She hid her face on his shoulder, and Stanford, his emotion overpowering him, rose and went quietly out of the room.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EPILOGUE—AT THE HOTEL CARLTON.

It was the dinner hour at the Carlton. A countless stream of cabs, broughams, victorias and other vehicles poured out their fares beneath the glass-paved entrance; the dining room was a variegated color-picture; the brilliant evening gowns and jewels of the women, attired for the opera, contrasting oddly with the endless monotony of white shirts shining out from the somber black garbs of the men. The smooth-tongued, bowing waiters glided about noiselessly, almost apologetically, as though conscious of the presence of greatness. The whole place breathed of good breeding, good manners and good living.

Behind one of the pillars, at one of the smallest tables, two men, after finishing an early dinner, were sipping their cognac, smoking the while and gazing at the varied assembly. One of the men was Sir Denis O'Florence, baronet by long descent, in possession of a crumbling ruin in Tipperary, called Castle Borueagh, and a reputation at the London clubs which had caused many of the members to ask for his resignation. But, although too lucky at baccarat, his charming personality and easy assumption of the rights of his station had kept him a place on the fringe of London society, and he knew almost everyone in the charmed circle, if not well, still well enough to be recognized.

The other man looked exactly what he was: a cultured man of the world. There was nothing about him to indicate he was not a gentleman—and yet San Franciscans did not think he was.

A soldierly-looking, clean-shaven man

passed, with a woman on his arm. She was more than pretty, and she carried herself in too easy a manner and her clothes had far too much fit and fashion about them for her possibly to be an Englishwoman. They were a striking couple, and a number of heads were raised to watch them.

"I say, Denis," began O'Florence's companion. "Who is that couple?"

Sir Denis adjusted his monocle. "Oh! those two—— Faith, my bhoy, 'tis easily seen you're not of London long. They are Viscount Chandos and his wife. Can it be possible ye haven't heard of the man who was thried for murder and escaped and went to the United States for to become a journalist—and, faith! succeeded, too! And he married the daughter of an American millionaire, and with the owld man's money he bought the *Daily Courier* here—and now it's running the owld *Times* so hard, it looks as though it would bate her. Faith, he's a great man, is Chandos, and"—here the voluble Irish baronet sunk his voice—"he pays me a small amount each month for some writing that I do for him. He'll be the next speaker, too, or me name is not——"

The other man arose. "I'm going over to speak to him, Denis," he said; and he made his way over toward the table where sat the viscount and his wife. Within a few steps, he stopped, for Chandos was gazing at him with an eye that had no indication of recognition in it.

The man wavered, dropped his gaze to the floor, and retraced his steps.

"Well, Dunning," said the Irishman, "for why did ye not speak to your old friend?"

"I made a mistake," said Dunning, slowly. "I made a mistake."

"The wrong man, eh?" asked O'Florence.

"No, I forgot the difference in men," answered the ex-member of the Half Circle, as he realized that there are times when a man would fain be honest.

# ON A BUSINESS BASIS

BY ARTHUR HENDRICK VANDENBERG

*Being the account of a political campaign which proved instructive to a congressional nominee, and should prove instructive to the reader*

WITH his usual irrepressible air of masterful superiority, MacDermott accosted the Honorable Jabez Slawson. MacDermott was a broker, and suffice it for present purposes to say that he was eminently successful. Some people said this was due to his personality. Some said it was his invariable faultless appearance. Some said it was his ingenuity; some, his carry-everything-before-it manner; some, his ambitious age—he was just approaching thirty-five. No one seemed to know exactly. Yet all agreed that MacDermott was irresistible. Slawson, on the other hand, was a retired lawyer, a millionaire by dint of years of hard work, successful speculation and shrewd manipulation. He had reached the dignified age of seventy without bowing one iota to the ruthless mandates of time. Slawson, too, was universally accredited a success.

MacDermott, faultlessly clad in frock coat and wearing his characteristic red carnation in the lapel, met Slawson just outside the latter's office.

"Good-morning, judge," he said, stepping in front of the elderly man, who was leisurely sauntering down the street, and commanding the latter's attention by sheer physical force. "I've been looking for you for two days." He had Slawson by the hand, and was wringing it heartily. "Fact is," he continued, "I have something important to talk over with you. It concerns your boom." He added the last sentence with a knowing wink.

Slawson had recovered his equanimity. MacDermott's mysterious final suggestion had strangely worked upon him. He replied with more than usual suavity.

"Won't you step inside, sir," he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the office building. He knew MacDermott by reputation, and felt inclined to treat him respectfully, however warily.

"Just for a moment," the broker replied, apologetically. Thereupon he led the way to Slawson's floor, opened Slawson's office door, and pulled up a chair for Slawson to sit down at his own desk. The millionaire was smiling good-naturedly.

"Make yourself perfectly at home," he suggested, a queer little squint of sarcasm playing about the corners of his sharp gray eyes.

"Thanks," replied MacDermott, briefly, pulling off his gloves.

The two men were soon knee to knee in an earnest conversation, MacDermott bending forward and beating the two forefingers of his right hand in the palm of his left as he drove home each argument, Slawson leaning back upon the arms of his spacious chair in a crouching attitude of apparently hopeless resistance.

"Judge Slawson, I want to be postmaster," MacDermott began, abruptly.

"A very laudable ambition, I am sure, and——" the judge drawlingly interrupted.

"Very laudable and very likely," his

visitor quickly returned. "I want to be postmaster because it's a job worth six thousand dollars, with no work," he added.

"That's frank enough," the judge ventured, the smile of sarcasm again twitching at his eyelids.

"Frank enough and reason enough," MacDermott interposed, in a tone meant to convey the suggestion that further interruptions on the part of the judge were not only entirely uncalled for, but also decidedly obnoxious.

"The President of the United States appoints postmasters——" the heedless host again interposed.

"Upon recommendation of district congressmen," MacDermott added, in perfect cadence.

"And as I am neither President of the United States, nor——"

"District congressman, you fail to see the object of this visit?"

Slawson nodded an assent. He had resumed his crouching attitude of defense. The fingers of MacDermott's right hand were again beating emphatically into the palm of his left.

"There is the milk in the cocoanut, judge," he said, suavely. "You are not in a position at present to control this patronage, but——" He only smiled without finishing the sentence. Slawson comprehended.

"Frankly, judge," he went on, "I want to run you for Congress. I want to elect you. Not because I think you'd make a better man than Jenks, but because you'd make me postmaster, and Jenks wouldn't."

MacDermott subsided. Slawson had taken his attack with perfect coolness. He knew his youthful visitor by reputation, and felt justified in humoring him.

"My running for Congress is not a new topic," he remarked, leisurely toying with a paperweight. "In fact, I have been on the verge of announcing myself several times, and have only been restrained by existing political conditions. You understand that I am a Republican, and always have been since the days of Fremont. This city——comprising the first congressional district——

is overwhelmingly Democratic. I have never seen the wisdom of butting my head against a stone wall."

MacDermott was reflectively flattening out the petals of his red carnation. "Go on," he said. "Paint it as black as you can."

"Well, I think that covers the case," Slawson went on. "It's not lack of desire, but the proverbial ounce of precaution." He lay back in his chair, bringing the tips of his fingers together judicially before his chin.

"If you were reasonably sure of success," MacDermott suggested, "you would——"

"Run, most assuredly," interrupted Slawson, positively.

"Then you run!" declared the youthful broker, bringing his fist down emphatically upon the ledge of the desk. Slawson smiled incredulously.

"It's this way," MacDermott went on. "I know that just as soon as you show a man where it is money in his pocket, you've got his vote. I think that, through my peculiar business connections and through yours, we can convince the voters of this district that it is money in their pockets to give you their ballots. In fact, I am positive of it. A vote for you will be a vote for me. If you win, I win. If you lose, I lose. And I have pretty fully decided to be postmaster."

It was a wonderful interview, and an eminently successful and mutually satisfactory one. Slawson listened to the siren's song, and was allured. He agreed to back MacDermott to any reasonable limit. He also promised the post office.

"But mind! No boodle!" he said, as they shook hands in parting.

"No boodle!" echoed MacDermott. "This is strictly on a business basis."

A Republican congressional nomination in the first district had long been looked upon as a sinecure. Its empty honor had been passed from one retired merchant prince to another, with no thought at any time that the selection was anything but a perfunctory matter. "To keep up the party organization," was the usual apologetic slogan of the

minority party and their candidate for Congress. You may conclude from this condition that the first district unfailingly sent a Democrat to Washington. It is also a fact that this Democrat was continually enjoying an increasing majority. Jenks was the Democratic nominee for a fifth term. He was not a particularly good congressman, but he was a mighty good Democrat—and Democracy was the prevailing standard in the first district.

But Slawson did not take the nomination as a sinecure. He was not looking for an empty honor. He was no martyr to the party organization. He ran because MacDermott said he should run; because MacDermott wanted to be post-master; because MacDermott usually landed the capital prize in every venture in which he embarked. Republican partisans pricked up their ears when the Slawson boom was launched upon the turbulent political seas, full-rigged and with every indication of speed, strength and staying qualities. Democratic partisans knowingly winked one eye and sarcastically mentioned something about "another lamb" and "the slaughter." But they reckoned without MacDermott.

The versatile young broker immediately began laying his lines with the precision and ingenuity of a past-master. He became the active Slawson manager—but usually incognito. Few knew that his brain was behind the simple but amazingly successful machinery which seemed to spring, fully equipped, into operation. Few recognized his handwriting in the Slawson slogans. No one knew he had been promised the post office.

MacDermott's second interview with the nominee came ten days after the Republican Convention had made its choice. It was a protracted session, and although it began at the dinner hour, the men did not part until a cold gray sky in the east heralded the approach of a new day. The story of this meeting is the best explanation of the tactics which were pursued in the memorable campaign which Slawson made for Congress.

"We're getting down to hardpan,

judge," MacDermott said, smoothing out a chart upon the nominee's desk. They were again in Slawson's office. Again the elder man lay back in his revolving chair and in unperturbed calm watched the youthful broker as he outlined his campaign. He played with a heavily mounted gold penholder in an effort to disguise his nervousness.

"We're putting everything on a business basis," he continued, looking up from the paper he was studying long enough to give Slawson a reassuring glance. He toyed for a moment with the red carnation in the lapel of his coat. His clean-shaven cheeks glowed with the vigor of unimpaired youth. "I have talked with Monahan——"

"Monahan!" interrupted Slawson. There was a deeply wrinkled frown of unmistakable displeasure upon his face. "That fellow whom everyone knows to be a rascal?"

"The same," replied MacDermott, complacently. "And permit me to relieve my mind by stating that I believe he would steal a handful of ashes for the sake of keeping in practice. But Monahan knows, and this is another case where knowledge is power."

"Monahan knows where votes can be delivered for so much a head," interjected Slawson, angrily, beating the penholder against his thumb. "But what's that knowledge to me? I still insist that when a man sells his vote he doesn't buy good government with it, and I think the reverse is just as true. Monahan knows just where every offense stops short of the penitentiary. Is that available knowledge for me? Monahan knows——"

"The first district like a book," interrupted MacDermott. He brought down his fist in determination, and his jaws stood out in a characteristic way which friends of his would have said boded ill for the opposition.

"Monahan can tell why this district is Democratic," he continued, quietly, but with that firmness which breeds no contention. "And, furthermore, Monahan has told. And on top of that, I have agreed that you will pay him one hundred dollars for the information."

"You're putting——" the judge started to warn.

"Everything on a business basis," interpolated MacDermott, with a smile which signified that the difference was settled and that the victor harbored no inclination to crow over the defeated party. "As I was saying," he continued, "I have talked with Monahan. The result is this. The first district is Democratic because the city is Democratic. The city is Democratic because the third, fourth, fifth, tenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth wards are Democratic."

Slawson started to laugh. MacDermott stopped him short. "None of that!" he cried. "These figures are actual and accurate. This isn't any statistician's dream, nor any optimist's hallucination. It's the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the results of the past ten years as studied by such a judge of political conditions as this very same Monahan." He was smiling again. The impending storm clouds had blown over.

"Now," he went on, "here are seven wards which hold the key to the situation. We must have a majority in all—not one, but all. And, Judge Slawson, I am pleased to inform you that we can do it." MacDermott thrust both hands deep into his trousers pockets, tilted back in his chair and complacently surveyed the elderly gentleman over whose star of destiny he seemed to have assumed undisputed sway. "I say we can do it!" he emphasized.

The judge was studying the *fleur-de-lis* in the wall paper. He shifted his gaze to the green dragons in his Persian carpet, but did not deign a response.

"Now I'm going to tell you how we can do it," MacDermott continued, assuming the air of the campaign orator who paints an American flag against the sky and then summons an empyrean breeze to make it wave. "The third ward I shall leave to Monahan. Now, please don't say anything," he quickly added, holding up a warning hand as Slawson violently threw his pen upon the desk and started to object. "Other candidates before you have lost the third, because they scorned the aid of

Monahan. That was sheer foolishness. I don't intend to be euchred out of the postmastership upon any such slim grounds of silk-stockinged morality. Monahan will cost you three hundred dollars—but he's sure." Slawson was very evidently fighting between sentiments of disgust and ambition. "So that takes care of the third," MacDermott added, with the same old conclusive smile.

"The fourth is your own ward, and the fifth is mine," he went on. "I think we can reasonably put them down as safe. Prophets may be without honor in their own countries, but a politician is most at home in his own ward. So there's three of our seven."

"Yes, there's three of our seven!" repeated Slawson, sarcastically. "And the other four?"

MacDermott was silent for a moment. He was absent-mindedly playing with his red carnation. "Judge, we get down to real business now," he slowly said at length. "Not the business of politics, but the business of business."

Slawson displayed a decided renewal of interest. "The tenth ward—the next on your list—is controlled by Burke, Clarke and Hapgood, of the Indian Creek Lumber Company, and their kindred interests, isn't it?" he inquired.

MacDermott smiled encouragingly. "Good!" he commended. "You're learning fast, judge. You've diagnosed the case exactly. Now you know the Demos—Jenks among them—have taken the two dollar tariff off of foreign lumber. This free trade schedule cuts pretty deep into American dealers, and these tenth-ward lumbermen have been particularly hard hit. Jenks' name is Dennis down there, if these people know that you will try to put the tariff back on, and that Jenks will vote to continue to keep it off. Jenks knows this, and tried to hedge last week. So I went after the Canadian Lumber Company up in one of his own wards—they are running in a lot of Quebec timber for nothing now—and gave them the tip that Jenks was going to flop. They were hot on his trail in twenty minutes, and made him promise to stand with the



free-traders. He's bound to them hand and foot. I promised Burke and Clarke and the Indian people that you will be with them for the two-dollar tariff, and we've got them solid. The votes are as good as counted. So we'll put down the tenth for Slawson."

The judge could not restrain a smile of admiration. "I always have believed in the protection of home industry," he murmured. "It's the creed that raises American smokestacks—puts American coal into American furnaces to generate American energy; the energy that evolves American products for American markets. It's the doctrine of——"

"Good point!" interrupted MacDermott, soothing out the chart upon Slawson's desk in an effort to recall him to the matter under discussion. "You can use that some night down in the tenth. Now we come to the eighteenth ward," he continued, counting it off on the fingers of his left hand. "This is a pretty delicate proposition and a pretty expensive one."

Slawson drew back in his chair again, assuming his former attitude of hopeless defense.

"Everything in the eighteenth ward depends on the Amalgamated Copper combine. Their big refining plant is down there, and about one thousand four hundred of their men live in tenements clustered close at hand. They are hived together like bees, and they follow the queen every time. Now, I suppose you know that Amalgamated Copper is hard pressed for money. It's common talk on the streets that their business is growing so enormously that their working capital is simply swamped. They are talking of an issue of one hundred thousand dollars preferred stock this fall, but they want to place it in one or two big lumps, so people won't know about it. I heard indirectly, judge, that you had been approached for fifty thousand dollars, and had favorably——"

"Fifty thousand dollars!" gasped Slawson, clutching at the ledge of his desk. "Never heard of such a——"

"So when I learned that you were interested," placidly continued MacDer-

mott, "I went down to the works to see that we killed two birds with one stone. The thing is all closed up——"

"Closed up!" cried Slawson. A cold perspiration stood out upon his brow. "At fifty thousand dollars!" He nervously pulled the ends of his mustache. "Young man, this is too——"

MacDermott was smiling—the same old unanswerable smile. "Judge, you said you would put one hundred thousand dollars into this campaign, didn't you?"

"One hundred thousand dollars!" the elder man replied, utterly astounded. "One hundred thousand dollars!" he repeated. "I don't remember ever saying that I would put a dollar——"

"Besides," argued MacDermott, suavely, ignoring the line of his host's argument, "this is a fourteen per cent. investment. What on earth do you want more?"

"What did you promise the Amalgamated people?" the judge asked, in hopeless despair.

"I told them that if they turned their men from Jenks to you for Congress and put the eighteenth ward safely in our column, you would take half the issue of the one hundred thousand dollars preferred. They've agreed. It's down in black and white. So that settles the eighteenth ward—and, really, sir, you'll find it's an awfully good investment."

"I'll have to admit that," the judge answered, with seeming regret. "I've heard of Amalgamated dividends. But how does it happen that they'd take your word for all this?"

"You told them I had perfect authority to act," replied the broker.

"I did?" cried Slawson, in wide-eyed wonder.

"Remember when I called you on the phone," suggested MacDermott, "and told you I had some men with me whom I wanted to tie up to our boom and asked you to tell them that I could act for you?"

"And they were——" began the nominee.

"The Amalgamated Copper magnates," interrupted the visitor.

Slawson dropped back in his chair. MacDermott drew a cigar from his pocket, deliberately chewed off the end and firmly grasped the weed between his teeth. He was studying the schedule spread out upon the desk. Finally he found the item which had been the object of his search.

"How much coal do you burn per annum in the Slawson Municipal Lighting plant?" he inquired, looking up into the judge's puzzled face.

"Ten thousand tons, but what's that got to do with——"

"And you haul it on contract from up State, don't you?"

"Yes, contract with the railroad."

"And you're just about to sign for next year's supply, aren't you?"

"Yes; but what the devil's the difference!"

It was a rare occasion which drove Slawson to any impropriety in diction. It augured trouble. MacDermott viewed the omen, however, with supreme indifference.

"Judge," he said, unable to repress a smile, "I have arranged to take care of the nineteenth ward through your next year's coal contract."

Slawson anticipated at once what was coming. He shook his head vigorously in the negative. No word passed his lips, however.

"The Great Lakes Coal Companies own the nineteenth ward body and soul," MacDermott went on. "I learned that Jenks had thrown his orders to another company this season, and I went right up to the Great Lakes offices and talked business straight from the shoulder. I figured you'd need about twelve thousand tons, and——"

"You ordered it?" gasped Slawson.

"Oh, no!" answered MacDermott, good-naturedly. "They had some Long River lump at three dollars and ninety-five cents—I think you pay three dollars and eighty now—and I told them that if they'd see to it that their men vote for you for Congress, they can have this year's lighting-plant contract. It's only fifteen cents a ton difference, and you ought to see the result! The company has posted a big bulletin over the main

scales, asking every man to vote for Slawson. It's great!"

Slawson swung round to the generous office window and surveyed in silence the panorama spread out beneath him. MacDermott leisurely searched his vest pockets for a match, and, finding one, drew the sulphur head across the bottom of his chair. He puffed vigorously at his cigar without interrupting Slawson's soliloquy.

At length the judge turned back. "This leaves only the twentieth ward unaccounted for," was all he said. But the expression on his face conveyed plainer than words the sentiment: "What have you done to me there?"

"The twentieth ward was a hard proposition," MacDermott began, "and I'm not entirely satisfied yet. I looked the commercial situation over, and couldn't find any particularly dominant business houses. So this sort of threw off my trail."

"I am surprised you didn't start a few at my expense," Slawson muttered, vindictively.

MacDermott only heeded the interjection by a particularly vigorous draught upon his cigar. "I found out that Damskey—the grocer and butcher—is pretty strong with the Dutch and Irish in the lower precincts," he went on, "so I dropped in on him for a chat. Damskey was ebullient with words of hearty greeting and the stench of sauerkraut. His blond locks hung down over his ears like tassels, and his chubby round face was flushed a fiery red from the exertion of mopping the marble counter of his market. Just as soon as he found out that I wanted to talk politics, he laid one finger along the side of his nose and, winking mysteriously, clutched me by the coat sleeve and pulled me toward a small door in the rear of the place. He soon had me seated at a tiny, round table, and my smelling sense warned me that we had entered a room imperishably consecrated to Bacchus. Without uttering a word, Damskey drew two steins from a recess in the wall, gently placed them on the table, and again solemnly winked at my astonishment. A generous bottle of Munich beer was then

forthcoming, and my strange host of obvious nationality proceeded to fill the mugs.

"To bedder acq-vaintance!" he finally said, holding aloft the stein of beer and waiting for me to follow suit.

"Here!" I answered, imitating his gesture.

"He drained the mug at one draught. Then came a guttural grunt of luxurious satisfaction as he dropped the stein to the table. 'Now, vat it iss?' he queried, clasping his fat fingers together in front of his rotund waist."

MacDermott interrupted his narrative long enough to relight his cigar. Slawson had obviously forgotten all the unpleasant differences of the early part of the interview. His face bore a broad smile of interest and amusement. He had completely capitulated. MacDermott—masterful actor—held him in the palm of his hand.

"Well, Damskey was a sociable old martinet," the latter continued, "and by the time we had split a toby of ale we were good friends. To make a long story short, I promised him my grocery and meat trade for a year if he swung his precinct into our column. And to make sure of the deal I promised him your patronage, too. This satisfied him thoroughly, and as we parted company he called after me: 'Vat you say his name iss? Slawson? Oh, yah!'—and at my last glimpse of him, he was laboriously jotting down your name on the jamb of his door."

"I'll go down and see Damskey tomorrow," asserted Slawson. "I'm not averse to Munich beer myself."

"And don't forget to leave him an order," MacDermott suggested.

The youthful broker folded up the chart which had laid upon the desk during the protracted interview, and returned it to his pocket. He suppressed a yawn of weariness, stretched himself for one fleeting moment, and rose to his feet, driving his hands deep into his trousers pockets.

"So that completes the business end of this campaign," he said, at length. It was an invitation for Slawson's criticism upon the work which he had done.

The latter rose and held out his hand. "And it's mighty well done, even if I do have to pay the bills," he asserted, good-naturedly.

"Thanks," said MacDermott, heartily shaking the extended hand. "I was afraid from the way this conference started, you were going to prove pretty belligerent."

"It's all right," was the response, "and I guess it's me for Congress and you for the post office."

The night of November 8th, Slawson and MacDermott were again closeted together in the former's office. As the returns came in from one precinct after another, they showed an unmistakable majority for the Republican nominee. For a time it had looked evenly divided, and the Democratic organ had gone so far as to publish an extra announcing Jenks' election, figuring that he would secure his old-time majorities in the wards which had always been counted in his column. Then had come the first break. The third ward went Republican by four hundred plurality.

"Monahan has done his work," muttered MacDermott, who had stretched his tired body out upon a spacious leathern lounge.

Soon the Republican headquarters sent over a bulletin that the fourth, fifth and tenth wards were also showing big Slawson gains. The eighteenth was nip and tuck until the last votes were reached. Then Slawson drew ahead with forty-eight majority.

The tide turned in the nineteenth ward. Nominally a Democratic stronghold, impregnable to attack or siege, it swung to the Republican column by five hundred and ninety-nine. Before the twentieth was heard from Slawson's election was assured.

MacDermott, debonair even in his weariness, effusively congratulated Slawson upon the result. "And now is as good a time as any for us to square accounts," he added.

"You refer to the post office?" queried the successful nominee.

"No," responded MacDermott, smiling in spite of his exhaustion. "I owe you money."

"Owe me money!" cried Slawson, in amazement. "My dear fellow, not only do you owe me nothing, but you are my creditor to a greater——"

"You don't understand," explained MacDermott. "Look here. In the tenth ward those lumbermen paid me five hundred dollars for the labor supposed to have been involved in securing your pledge to a protective tariff. In the eighteenth Amalgamated Copper paid me eight thousand dollars in commissions for engineering the sale of stock which you purchased. In the nineteenth the Great Lakes Company owe me five cents a ton on your coal contract. And in the twentieth Damskey has been giving me table supplies gratis for a month as bonus for turning your patronage to him. Now, that I am to be postmaster,

I shall hardly need to retain these gains, and——"

"And still you got their votes!" gasped Slawson. "MacDermott, I'd heard of you before you came to me with your astounding proposition to make me congressman in return for the post office. Permit me to acknowledge here and now that everything I heard was true. You're a wonder. If you'll give up the post office, I'll pay you twenty thousand dollars a year to manage my local interests while I'm in Washington."

"Why not both?" sleepily suggested MacDermott, fighting hard to keep his head erect and his eyes open.

"Why not take my place in Congress, too?" replied the successful nominee, good-naturedly.

"Why not?" murmured MacDermott, as his head fell forward upon his chest in response to nature's demand for rest.

## THE GILDED GLOBE

BY ALBERT H. GORGAS

### I.

THE mere fact that the house was located on the Plaza Cristobal Colon was enough to prove its value. Everybody who has visited San Juan knows that one of the most fashionable quarters of the Porto Rican capital is situated within sight of the handsome column erected in the little square. It is there the band plays on certain evenings, and it is there the elite of the island city promenade in the balmy air of the declining day.

From the roofs of the houses can be seen the blue stretches of the inner bay and the gorgeous hues of the opposite

shore. The traffic of the business section is subdued to a gentle murmur, and only the carriages of the quality thread the narrow, well-kept streets.

The dwellings skirting the thoroughfares are constructed after the prevailing Spanish style, but their walls are bright and freshly colored, and the iron bars guarding the windows are ornamental and in many cases neatly gilded.

It is a region of opulence, and it can be imagined that our brother officers were greatly amazed when Jack Rainsford and I took up our abode in one of the most palatial of the residences.

Jack, by the way, is an army surgeon, and I am only a second lieutenant of in-

fantry, with an insignificant little epaulet and a suspicious air of newness to my sword.

No one was more surprised than we when we found ourselves installed in the Cortinez dwelling, but the manner in which we secured the prize was so peculiar, and I might say mysterious, that we said nothing about it, but thankfully accepted the stroke of good fortune.

It was several days after the sailing of the Spanish troops that Jack and I found ourselves strolling along in the vicinity of the Plaza Cristobal Colon. We were duty-free and had ventured away from the main portion of the town in search of any adventures which might come our way.

We had grown tired of the Hotel Ingles, with its ever-present mob of civilian prospectors and military officials, and were discussing the advisability of seeking private quarters in the town, when the thing happened to us.

It was a most remarkable coincidence. Jack had just said that he would like nothing better than to occupy a house in the neighborhood through which we were walking, when suddenly a man stepped from a doorway several yards in advance of us. He was bareheaded and seemed to be a native servant. In one hand he held a placard which he proceeded to fasten to a nail driven into the wall near the door.

"Wonder what that is?" said Jack, curiously. "It can't be—— Well, I'll be blowed!"

By this time we had approached near enough to be able to read the card. It bore one line written in a large, flowing hand. The words ran:

Se aquila cuartos.

"Would you believe it?" exclaimed Jack, incredulously. "Rooms to let, and in a mansion like this! Say, if it is true, it's just what we are looking for. I'm going to ask the chap."

The doctor's Spanish was rather shaky, but he managed to make the servant understand him and learned in reply that it would be well for us to see

his mistress, the Señorita Isabella, who was at that moment in the *patio* of the house.

Jack pinched my arm as we followed the man through a broad, tastefully decorated hall to the open court in the center of the building.

"Even the colonel will perish with envy if we secure quarters in this palace," he whispered. "Isn't it a gorgeous place? Look at the marble tiling and the mahogany furniture."

"Don't you think it rather queer that people wealthy enough to own a house like this should rent rooms to strangers?" I replied, dubiously.

"What's the odds, so long as we get a decent place!" was the doctor's careless reply. "If there is a mystery, so much the better. I hope this Señorita Isabella is——"

He stopped short. A girl stepped from the *patio* into the hall and came toward us. Even in the subdued light we saw that she was beautiful, with the dark, somber beauty of the Latin-American. She was tall and straight and supple in her carriage. Her eyes were large and set wide apart, and her nose was of that slightly aquiline type characteristic of the Spanish strain.

She acknowledged our bow with a little courtesy.

"We beg your pardon," explained the doctor, haltingly, in Spanish. "We think—that is, the card outside——"

"Yes—you wish to see the rooms. Juan will show them to you. And if you should decide to take them you can arrange with Juan."

This was said simply, and in English, much to our astonishment and gratification. Without waiting for a reply, the girl courtesied again and left us. As she disappeared into an adjacent room Jack favored me with an expressive wink which he carefully concealed from Juan.

"The attractions of this enchanted castle multiply apace," he whispered. "Gad! but she's a stunner! Did you ever see such eyes?"

"Suppose we see the rooms," I responded, dryly. The doctor's susceptibility was a never-ending bone of contention between us. His conquests

formed a familiar subject in the officers' club at more than one military station.

"Vamenous, Juan," Jack chuckled. "We are anxious to get settled in this fine house of yours."

Just then I caught a glimpse of the servant's countenance. He was an elderly man, smooth-shaven and dark. There was a curious expression of mingled hatred and servility in his face that rather startled me. It was gone in a second, however, and as he led the way from the hall across the *patio*, I felt that I had been mistaken.

The rooms he showed to us were two in number, one small and evidently a dressing room, and the other a large apartment containing two single brass beds and several other handsome pieces of furniture.

There was an abundance of ornaments, plaques, miniature statuettes, three or four valuable paintings, and in one corner an onyx stand supporting an object so unusual that the doctor and I instinctively stepped toward it.

It was a ball, or rather globe, about sixteen inches in diameter and bearing upon its surface the traced outlines of the various divisions of the world.

But, strange to say, the space representing Spain was lavishly gilded, while Cuba, Porto Rico and the United States had been painted a deep black.

"This is a rum-looking thing," muttered Jack. "Who do you suppose has been painting it up in that fashion?"

While the doctor was speaking I was examining the globe. It was well made and seemed to be formed of small pieces of inlaid wood. Several woods had been used, some of them unfamiliar to me. The pieces were of various shapes—octagonal, triangular, oblong and even circular. The process of inlaying had been beautifully done.

So nicely had the parts been joined that the lines of meeting were difficult to discover with the naked eye; they had been joined solid, so to speak. It was an excellent piece of marquetry.

I struck it with my knuckles; it sounded hollow. The more I examined the thing, the more it whetted my curiosity. It was altogether a very peculiar

article. While I was bending over it, Jack placed his head close to mine, and whispered:

"I wonder what we are up against here, Billy? Sh-h-h! When you get a chance just look at that portrait on the wall to the right of the door. Watch the eyes."

"Will the gentleman take the room?" said Juan, behind us.

I turned to reply and glanced beyond him to the portrait indicated by the doctor. It was a faded oil painting of some famous bullfighter. The lines in the face were indistinct, but the eyes were large, deeply shaded and singular in appearance.

Suddenly, as I watched, the eyelids seemed to close!

I instinctively stepped forward, but Jack grasped my arm.

"Yes, Juan, we'll take the apartments," he said, quietly. "By the way, what is the rent?"

"Twenty pesos a month, señor."

"Cheap at twice the amount," muttered the doctor. He added aloud:

"Here is the first month's rent. You can give it to your mistress. We will have our traps brought in to-day."

Three hours later we were installed in what Jack grimly called "The House of Mystery."

## II.

Our first move when Juan finally left us was to examine the portrait. Mounting a chair, I started to run my hand over the face, but quickly found that the whole affair was inclosed in glass. Where the portrait hung was a dark part of the room, and we had failed to notice this peculiarity of the frame. I lighted a match, however, and by the faint illumination saw that I was not mistaken. The eyes were closed.

"That's certainly a rum go," said Jack. "I am sure they were open when I noticed them. And they seemed to move, too. That is why I asked you to look."

"There's something else queer about it," I replied. "The frame is fastened to the wall."

"We are up against some mystery,"

said the doctor, "but I'm not going to lose any sleep over it. Those beds look inviting, and I'm dead tired. Suppose we turn in and talk about it to-morrow."

I am not a light sleeper as a rule, but the strange events of the day disturbed my rest, and I remained awake after the doctor had fallen into a deep and untroubled slumber. It was shortly before midnight—a distant clock had long since chimed the hour of eleven—when I heard a slight fumbling at our door.

I remained quiet, but keenly alert to every sound and move. I saw the door open slowly and gently, and then a hooded and cloaked figure crept in, halting just over the threshold.

For the space of a minute the figure hesitated, then, apparently satisfied that we were asleep, it glided toward the onyx stand upon which rested the gilded ball. There came the sound of a faint clicking, then the mysterious visitor returned swiftly to the door, and disappeared.

The whole affair was so uncanny, so much in keeping with the strange atmosphere of this remarkable house, that I lay in bed in that curious condition which is between sleep and waking. I even rubbed my eyes to see if I had not been dreaming.

When at last I knew that it was no delusion, but that some one had really paid us a nocturnal visit, I sprang from the bed. My first thought was to awaken the doctor, but as I moved toward the cot I became aware of a peculiar ticking noise like the pulsing of some large and unusually clear-toned clock.

It might have been a clock, had it not been that the sound was varied, every half dozen ticks or so, by a sort of stifled wheeze, as if the air was being forcibly expelled from an asthmatic bellows.

The sound seemed to come from the neighborhood of the gilded globe.

Thoroughly aroused, I went to the onyx stand, and as I neared it there came from the interior of the globe a puff of vapor which almost instantly dissolved in the air. A sweetish, oppressive odor beset my nostrils, and I experienced a sensation very similar to dizziness.

It passed quickly, however, and I stood and looked and listened, fully convinced that some sort of machinery had been set in motion inside the globe by our visitor.

It is one of my unfortunate characteristics to permit my curiosity to get the better of discretion at times, and at that moment I was so eager to fathom the mystery that I entirely forgot my roommate, the doctor.

"I will find out what all this means if it takes a month," I muttered. "There is some hocus-pocus work going on as sure as fate. If it should be a scheme to rob——"

I ended with a grim smile. The bare idea that anyone would go to so much trouble to get the few dollars belonging to a couple of junior army officers was ridiculous, to say the least.

There was some other reason, and I firmly resolved to discover that reason no matter what it cost.

The globe still continued to give out its strange ticking noise, occasionally accompanied with the wheezing sound, but there was no more emission of vapor. The room seemed close and oppressive, however, so I opened wide the window.

It was then a very uncomfortable idea occurred to me. Suppose the gilded globe with its mysterious noises should prove to be an infernal machine!

The possibility did not commend itself to me at all, as you can well believe.

The ball evidently contained some curious mechanism. It might be more curious than safe. Possibly some agreeably little device in clockwork. The tick, tick, tick suggested clockwork that had been planned to go a certain time, and then—then, for all I knew, ignite an explosive, and blow up.

I approached the globe gingerly to make another and, if possible, more careful examination. It now struck me that the noise was distinctly louder than before; this applied both to the tick, tick, tick, and the wheezing. It also seemed, strange to say, that the globe had increased in size. In fact, it seemed to be swelling before my very eyes.

It was enough.



With a bound I gained the side of Jack's cot, and dragged him to the floor.

"Quick!" I almost shouted. "There's something infernally wrong in this house. They are trying to blow us up."

"Blow us up?" the doctor echoed, stupidly. "What do you mean?"

"It's that gilded globe. Look at it; listen. Don't you hear the mechanism inside?"

Jack's coolness never failed him under any circumstances. In an instant he was alert and ready for action. He bent over the globe, listened intently, then, with one tug of his strong arms, lifted both stand and ball and started toward the open window.

Before he could reach it my quick ear caught the sound of a hand on the knob of the door leading from the *patio*. I felt at once that it was the mysterious figure returning. Perhaps we could solve the mystery by nabbing our mysterious visitor?

"Jump into bed, Jack," I whispered, hurriedly. "Hurry—here comes some one who may be able to explain the mystery. We have had one visitor to-night; this may be the same person."

The doctor was under the sheets before I had finished. I snatched up a bath robe and stepped behind the door just as it opened. In the faint light of the reading lamp we had left burning I saw that the intruder was our former visitor, hooded and cloaked as before.

The figure hesitated, holding one hand to the breast as if in agitation, then glided across the floor to the onyx stand.

Before it could touch the globe, or do aught else, there was a whirring sound, a muffled explosion like that occasioned by the sudden freeing of compressed air, and the room became filled with a dense, pungent, stifling gas.

The power of breathing seemed taken from me, and I grasped wildly at my throat. My head reeled, and I only saved myself from falling by lurching against the foot of the doctor's bed.

I saw as if in a dream the hooded and cloaked figure drop to the floor, then Jack, pale but apparently calm, seemed to rise from the darkness.

He picked up the figure and stag-

gered to the door with it. Almost suffocated, I followed, stumbling and reeling like a drunken man. Strange to say, as I passed the portrait with the peculiar eyes, I glanced toward it.

For one brief space, a fleeting second, I saw two malevolent eyes glaring down at me, then they vanished. The next moment I was out in the *patio* drawing in deep breaths of pure, delicious air.

The doctor already had deposited his burden upon the tiled floor, and as I joined him he threw off the cloak and hood. Exclamations of amazement came simultaneously from our lips.

"Good heavens!" cried Jack, "it's the señorita."

Suspended from an overhead bracket was a bronze *patio* lamp. It gave but a faint illumination, but we were enabled to distinguish the fair countenance, the mass of dark hair and the beautiful features of the girl we had first met only a few hours before.

As we looked in mingled astonishment and horror, the señorita's eyes opened. She gave us one glance, then, before we could stop her, she sprang to her feet and started toward the open door of our room. Jack quickly interfered.

"Do not go in there, please," he said, quietly. "I am afraid that apartment is not very healthy just at present."

The girl hesitated. I noticed by the dim light that her face was pale, and in her large, dark eyes was an expression of horror. She trembled violently, and I thought she was going to swoon again.

"Wouldn't you better sit down?" I exclaimed, starting forward. She waved me back with a gesture that seemed more appeal than command.

"Won't you please go away?" she said, almost in a whisper. "Both of you go away at once. I beg of you, do not stay another second. There is danger——"

"We will leave if you wish it," replied Jack, "but not for that reason. Anyway, I think the globe has exhausted its power by this time. No—you need not try to explain. I think I can guess the truth.

"Come, Billy," he added to me; "the

señorita will forward our luggage to the Hotel Ingles in the morning. We will dress and go back to the hotel."

As we turned to re-enter our room we saw her walk slowly with bowed head and clasped hands to a door on the other side of the *patio*. Then she disappeared.

"Poor girl!" muttered the doctor, softly. "She has troubles of her own, all right."

"What is the meaning of all this?" I asked. "Do you mean to tell me that you have solved the mystery?"

"I think so. It's simple enough, but wait until we get out of the house. Ah, I thought we would find the fumes pretty well dissipated. They were strong enough to kill a horse for a few minutes, but gas of that nature does not last long."

By this time I was eagerly searching for the globe, which had unaccountably disappeared. Lying upon the onyx stand and scattered about the floor, however, were a number of fragments of marquetry work and a twisted frame of aluminum, to which was still attached an uncoiled spring and a broken glass cell.

"That's what did the trick," explained the doctor, while we dressed. "It's devilish ingenious, isn't it?"

"Now, Billy," said Jack, when we found ourselves in our old room at the Hotel Ingles an hour later, "I suppose you have an inkling of the truth?"

I puffed meditatively at my pipe for a minute, then replied:

"I know that some person tried to kill us."

"Yes, some person did."

"It wasn't——"

The doctor shook his head and sent a thin spiral ring of smoke toward the ceiling.

"No, it wasn't the señorita. It was her respected father. I am not entirely

clear on all the details, but this is the way it seems to me: Her father is a Spaniard—in fact, I am sure he is Colonel Lopez, who, as you know, commanded the Spanish forces of this district. I noticed the name Lopez on the doorplate yesterday. I have heard that Lopez was a rabid enemy of the Americans, and I also have heard that his sanity has been questioned."

"Then you think he really meant to murder us?"

"Not the slightest doubt of it. He evidently planned this thing for that very purpose, and he probably has been working on it since the taking of the island. Instead of going out with a club and killing the first *gringo* he met, like any other madman might do, he planned this spider and the fly business."

"But his daughter?"

The doctor knocked the ashes from his pipe, and sighed.

"She tried to save us, old fellow. The first cloaked and hooded figure you saw was the old chap himself, and it was he we saw looking through the eyes of that portrait. I don't suppose his daughter, the Señorita Isabella, had an opportunity to interfere until the last moment. Heigho! she's a deuced pretty girl, isn't she?"

"Why don't you pay her another call?" I suggested, with sarcasm. "I wouldn't let a little thing like a crazy father stop me."

"I won't," yawned the doctor. "I'll call on the fair Isabella to-morrow."

The following afternoon Jack came to me with a long face.

"I've been to the house," he said, briefly. "They are gone. I was told in the *almacen* at the corner that they left in a carriage at daybreak. But say, there's a deuced pretty girl in the next house. I wonder if they have rooms for rent."

"Not for me," I replied, grimly. "This hotel is good enough for yours truly. No more experiments."

# THE LONESOME TRAIL

A STORY OF THE "FLYING U" RANCH

BY B. M. BOWER

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(In Two Parts—Part I.)

A MAN is very much like a horse. Once thoroughly frightened by something he meets in the road, he will invariably shy at the same place afterward, until a wisely firm master leads him perforce to the spot and proves, beyond all doubt, that the danger is of his own imagining—after which, he will throw up his head and deny that he ever was afraid, and be quite amusingly sincere about it into the bargain.

It is true of every man with high-keyed nature, a decent opinion of himself and a healthy pride of power. It was true of Will Davidson—commonly known, among his Montana associates, as Weary Willie—a characteristic bit of irony aimed at his tireless energy and buoyant spirits.

Many miles east of the Bear Paws, in the town where Weary had minced painfully along the streets on pink, protesting, bare soles before the frost was half out of the ground, yelled himself hoarse and run himself lame in the redoubtable nine christened by themselves the "Man-eatin' Tigers" (and by others called the Tigerines), there had lived a girl.

She might have lived there a century and Weary been none the worse, had he not acquired the unfortunate habit of growing up. Even then he might have escaped injury had he not grown up and up—a straight six feet two of lovable good looks. As it was, the girl saw that he was worth trying for; she took to smoking the chimney of her bedroom lamp with curling irons, wear-

ing her best hat and her best ribbons on a week day, and insisting on putting number four and a half feet into number three and a half shoes—and managing to look as if they were perfectly comfortable. When a girl can do that, and when she has a good complexion and red hair and long, heavy-lidded blue eyes that have a fashion of looking sidewise at a man, it were well for the man to travel—if he would keep the lightness in his heart and the red hair from tangling his dreams.

Weary traveled westward, but the trouble was that he did not go soon enough. When he did go his eyes were somber instead of sunny, and he carried in his heart a deep-rooted shyness of women. That is why I said he resembled a horse.

He shied at long, blue eyes, and turned his own uncompromisingly away. He never would dance with a woman who had red hair, except in quadrilles where he could not help himself—and then his hand-clasp was brief and perfunctory when it came to "grand right-and-left." If commanded to "balance, swing!" the red-haired woman was swung airily by the finger tips—which was not the way Weary swung the others, by any means.

And then came the schoolma'am. The schoolma'am's hair was the darkest brown and had a shine to it where the light struck at the proper angle, and her eyes were large and came near being round, and they were a velvety brown and also had a shine to them—quite independent of angles of light.

Weary shied consistently and systematically for six months. Then Glory, his horse, playing the part of the "wisely firm master" mentioned in the first paragraph, took matters into his own hand. That is to say, broke the bit and spat out the fragments, carried Weary perforce to the very feet of the schoolma'am, and positively refused to carry him a step further.

Weary, discovering that large, brown eyes do not look sidelong at a man after the manner of long, heavy-lidded blue ones, but have a fashion of frankly regarding him from under level brows—a fashion at once disarming and exhilarating—ended a five minutes' parley by leading Glory to the stable and feeding him well. Then he threw up his head (figuratively), and denied to himself that he ever was shy of woman.

Weary rode stealthily around the corner of the little frame schoolhouse and was not disappointed. The schoolma'am, Ruby Satterly, was sitting unconventionally upon the doorstep, her shoulders turned to him and her face turned to the trail by which a man would naturally be supposed to approach the place. Her hair was shining in the sun, and the shorter locks were blowing about her cheeks in a downright tantalizing fashion; they made a man want to brush them back and kiss the spot they were caressing so wantonly. She was humming a tune softly to herself. Weary caught the words of the chorus, sung absently, under her breath:

"Didn' make no blunder—yuh couldn' confuse him,

A perfeck wonder—yuh had t' choose him——"

The schoolma'am was addicted to coon songs.

She seemed very busy about something, and Weary, craning his neck to see over her shoulder, wondered what. Also, he wished he knew what she was thinking about, and he hoped her thoughts were not remote from himself. You see, he had of a truth forgotten to shy.

Just then Glory showed unmistakable

—and malicious—intentions of sneezing, and Weary, catching a glimpse of something in Miss Satterly's hand, hastened to make his presence known to her.

"I hope you ain't limbering up that instrument of destruction on my account," he observed, mildly.

The schoolma'am jumped, and slid something out of sight under her much ruffled white apron.

"Weary Willie Davidson, how long have you been standing there? I do believe you'd come straight down from the sky, or straight up from the ground, if you could manage it. You seem to have a horror of coming by the trail like any ordinary man." This with great severity.

Weary swung a long leg over Glory's back and came lightly to earth, immediately taking possession of the vacant half of doorstep. The schoolma'am obligingly drew her skirts closer to her person that he might have room—an inconsistent movement, not at all in harmony with her eyebrows, which were pinched close together in apparent disapproval of him.

"You don't like ordinary men, no-how. You said so onct, when I said I was just an ordinary man. I've swore off being ordinary since yuh gave me that tip," said he, cheerfully. "Let's have a look at that cannon you're hiding in your lap. Where'd yuh resurrect it—out uh some old Indian grave? Oh, mister! It won't go off sudden, will it? What kind of ammunition—suffering cats, if that ain't just like a woman!"

He pushed his hat back off his forehead with a gesture not left behind with his boyhood, held the object the length of his long arm before him and regarded it gravely. It was an old, old "bulldog" revolver, freckled with rust until it bore strong resemblance to certain noses which Miss Satterly looked upon daily. The cylinder was plugged with drab cotton cloth instead of good, leaden bullets, so that, as a whole, the weapon did not look particularly formidable.

"A tramp stopped here the other day, and so aunt Meeker thought I ought to have something to show as a defense."

Weary aimed carefully at a venturesome and highly inquisitive gopher, and pulled the rusted trigger. The gopher stood upon its hind feet and chipped derisively at him.

"Yuh want to look out—if this engine uh war *should* happen to go off right sudden, it might scare somebody. Look here! If you go pouting up your mouth like that again, something's going to happen to it. There's a limit to what a man'll stand in that line."

Miss Satterly hastily drew her lips into a thin, untempting red streak, for Weary was not the man to bluff; on the contrary, he had the reputation of "making good" without fail. The schoolma'am had not seen him, on an average, twice a week for the last four months for nothing.

"Of course you can make fun of it—but all the same, it answers the purpose."

Weary turned his head till he could look straight into her eyes—a thing he seemed rather fond of doing, lately.

"What purpose? It sure ain't ornamental—it's a little the hardest looker I ever saw in the shape of a gun. And it won't scare—yuh noticed that gopher never batted an eye when I pulled it on him. Just watch the difference."

He reached backward and drew a glistening thing from his pocket, steadied it for a second before him—and the effect was unmistakably "different." The gopher leaped and rolled over and over backward, and the schoolma'am gave a little, startled scream and jumped clear off the doorstep, quite recklessly scattering ancient firearm and undeniably modern ammunition.

"Don't yuh see? They ain't a bit alike. You couldn't raise any such a dust with yours." Weary raised innocent eyes to her face and polished the gun caressingly with his handkerchief. "Try this once," he suggested, earnestly.

The schoolma'am was fond of boasting that she never screamed upon any provocation, however great—and she had screamed just now, over a foolish little matter. It goes without saying that her temper was roughened. She

did not sit down upon the doorstep again; she stood accusingly before Weary, with the look upon her face which never failed to make sundry small Pilgreens and Beckmans squirm on their benches when she assumed it in school.

"Mr. Davidson"—not Weary Willie Davidson, as she was pleased to call him when her mood was friendly—"you have killed my pet gopher. I have fed him all summer, and he would eat out of my hand."

Weary cast a jealous eye upon the limp little animal, searched his heart for remorse and found none. He knew quite well that he was glad he did it—the ornery little brute, to get familiar with her!

"I did not think you could be wantonly cruel, and I am astonished and—ah!—deeply pained to discover that fatal weakness in your character."

Weary began to squirm, after the manner of delinquent Pilgreens and Beckmans. When the schoolma'am rose to irreproachable English, there was trouble brewing. It was a sign that never had failed.

"I cannot understand the instinct which prompts a man to brutally destroy a life he cannot restore, and which in no way menaces his own—or even interferes with his welfare or comfort. You may apologize to me, perhaps—you may even be sincerely repentant"—the schoolma'am's tone at this point implied considerable doubt—"but you are powerless to return the life you have taken so heedlessly. There was no excuse—not the very slightest. You have revealed a low, brutal trait which I had hoped your nature could not harbor, and I am deeply shocked and—grieved." Just here a tiny, dry-weather whirlwind swept around the corner, caught ruffled white apron and blue skirt in its gyrations, and, pushing them ruthlessly aside, gave Weary a brief, delicious glimpse of two small feet and two distracting ankles.

The schoolma'am, pausing abruptly in the declamation of her views, blushed and retreated hastily to the shelter of the doorstep. She did not sit down

again, however; she still stood straight and displeased beside him. Evidently she was still shocked and grieved.

Weary tipped his head to one side that he might look up at her from under his hat brim.

"I'll get yuh another gopher—six, if you say so," he soothed. "The woods is full of 'em."

The angry brown eyes of the schoolma'am swept the barren hills contemptuously. She would not even look at him.

"Pray do not inconvenience yourself, Mr. Davidson. It is not the gopher that I care for—it is the principle."

Weary sighed and slid the revolver into his pocket. It seemed to him that Miss Satterly was somewhat unreasonable.

"All right—I'll get yuh another principle, then. Take mine; it's wide, and deep—and solid as——"

"Mr. Davidson, you are perfectly odious!"

"Is that something nice, girlie?" Weary smiled guilelessly up at her.

"Odious," explained the schoolma'am, haughtily, "is *not* something nice. I'm sorry your education has been so neglected. Odious is a synonym for hateful, obnoxious, repulsive, disagreeable, despicable——"

"I don't like cinnamon, nohow," put in Weary, cheerfully. "I never did have any use for it."

"I did not mention cinnamon, Mr. Davidson. I said——"

"Say! You look simply out uh sight with your hair fixed that way. I wish you'd wear it like that all the time," remarked he, looking upon her with his sunniest smile.

But Miss Satterly was not so easily cajoled. She continued to regard him coldly.

"I wish to goodness I were really out of sight," she snapped. "You make me exceedingly weary."

"Mrs. Weary," corrected he, complacently. "That's what I'm sure aiming to do."

"You're aiming wide of the mark, then," retorted she, valiantly, though

confusion waved a red flag in either cheek.

"Oh, I don't know. I think my aim is pretty good, girlie," he contended, mildly, looking involuntarily toward the gopher stretched upon its little yellow back, its four small feet turned pitifully up to the blue above.

"If you had an atom of decency, you'd be ashamed to mention that tribute to your diabolical marksmanship."

"Oh, mister!" ejaculated Weary under his breath, and began to make himself a smoke. His guardian angel was exhorting him to silence, but, being ever reckless of consequences, his angel preached, as usual, to unsentient ears.

"I didn't mention all them things," he began, with a suspicious meekness of tone. "It's you that keeps on mentioning. I wish you wouldn't. I like to hear yuh talk, all right, and flop them big words, easy as roping a calf; but I wish you'd let me choose your subject for yuh. I could easy fix it so you could lead in another brand—like admiration, and felicitation, and exhilarating, ecstatic osculation——" He stopped to run the edge of paper along his tongue, and perhaps it was well he did. There was no need of making the schoolma'am any angrier. Miss Satterly hated to feel that she was worsted.

"If you came here to make me *hate* you, you have accomplished your errand; it would be advisable for you to hike!"

Weary, struck by that incongruous last word, did an unforgivable thing. He laughed and laughed, while the match he had just lighted flared, sent up a blue thread of brimstone smoke, licked along the white wood and scorched his fingers painfully before he remembered his cigarette.

Miss Satterly turned abruptly and went into the house, put on her hat and took up the little tin lard pail in which her aunt Meeker always packed her luncheon. She was back, had the key turned in the lock, and was slowly pulling on her gloves by the time Weary recovered from his convulsion.

"Since you will not leave the place, I shall do so. I want to say, however,

that I not only think you odious, but all the synonyms I mentioned besides. You need not come for me to go to the Labor Day ball, because I will not go with you. I shall go with Joe."

Weary gave her a startled glance and almost dropped his cigarette. This seemed going rather far, he thought—but of course she didn't really mean it.

"Don't go off mad, girlie. I'm sorry I killed your gopher—on the dead, I am. I just didn't think; that's a bad habit cow punchers have—not thinking, you know. Say! You stay, and we'll have a funeral. It ain't every gopher that can have a real funeral with mourners and music when he goes over the Big Divide. It'll be an honor that he won't forget."

Miss Satterly took a few steps, and stopped, evidently absorbed in some difficulty with her glove. She certainly did not seem to be listening to Weary.

"Say! I'll sing a song over him, if you'll wait. I know two whole verses of 'Bill Bailey,' and the chorus to 'The Good Old Summer Time.' I can shuffle the two together and make a full pack. I believe they'd go fine, that way, don't you? You never heard me sing, did you? It's worth staying for, let me tell yuh—but yuh want to hang onto something when I begin. Come on—you be the mourner."

Since Miss Satterly had been taking steps quite regularly while Weary was speaking she was now several rods away—and she had, more than ever, the appearance of not listening to him.

"Say, Tee-e-cher!"

Miss Satterly refused to stop, or to turn her head the mere fraction of an inch, and Weary's face sobered a little. It was the first time that inimitable "tee-e-cher" of his had failed to bring the shine back into the eyes of the schoolma'am. Weary looked after her dubiously. Her shoulders were thrown well back and her feet pressed their imprint firmly into the yellow dust of the trail. In a minute she would be out of hearing.

Weary got up, took a step and grasped Glory's trailing bridle rein and hurried after Miss Satterly much faster

than Glory liked, though he followed obediently—albeit reluctantly and with slightly stiffened knees.

"Say! You wouldn't get mad at a little thing like that, would yuh?" expostulated Weary, when he overtook her. "You know I didn't mean anything."

"I don't consider it a little thing," said the schoolma'am, icily.

Weary, thus rebuffed, walked silently beside her up the hill—silently that is, save for a jingling of spurs. He was beginning to realize that there was an uncomfortable heaviness in his chest, on the side where his heart was. Still, he was of a hopeful nature, and presently tried again.

"How many times must I say I'm sorry, schoolma'am? You don't look so pretty, when you're mad—you've got dimples, you know, and yuh ought to give 'em a chance once in a while. Let's sit down on this rock while I square myself. Come on."

Miss Satterly kept straight on up the hill, and Weary, sighing heavily, followed.

"Don't yuh want to ride Glory a ways? He's real good to-day. He put in the whole of yesterday at all the cussedness he could think of, so he's dead gentle now. I'll lead him for yuh."

"Thank you," said the schoolma'am. "I prefer to walk."

Weary sighed again, but clung, by force of habit, to his general sunniness of temper. It took a great deal to rouse Weary; perhaps the schoolma'am was trying to find just how much.

"You'd a died if you'd seen Glory yesterday—he like to a scared old Slim to death. We was working in the big corral, and Slim got down on ~~one~~ knee to fix his spur. Glory seen him—he's always got his eye peeled for deviltry—and he give a running jump and went clean over Slim's head. Old Slim hit for the closest fence and he never stopped to look back till he was clean over on the other side. Mister! I laughed till my ribs was sore—and Slim a-cussing Glory through the rails. I thought Glory had done about everything there was to do—but I tell yuh



that horse has sure got an imagination that'll make him famous yet. You never can tell what he's got up his sleeve."

For the first time since the day of his spectacular introduction to her, Miss Satterly displayed absolutely no interest in the eccentricities of Glory. Slowly it began to dawn upon Weary that the schoolma'am did not intend to thaw that evening. He swung along beside her to the brow of the hill, pondering the problem. At the top he fell behind without a word, mounted Glory and overtook Miss Satterly. When he was close beside he lifted his hat nonchalantly, touched up Glory with the spurs and clattered away down the coulee, leaving the schoolma'am in a haze of yellow dust and bewilderment, far in the rear.

The next morning Miss Satterly went very early to the schoolhouse—for what purpose she did not say. A meadow lark on the doorstep greeted her with his short, sweet ripple of song, then flew to a nearby sage bush and watched her curiously. A little, fresh mound marked the spot where the gopher had lain, and a narrow strip of shingle stood upright at one end. Some one had scratched the words with a knife, "Gone, but not forgot." Probably the last word would have been given its full complement of syllables had space permitted.

Miss Satterly, observing the mark of high-heeled boots in the immediate vicinity of the grave, caught herself wondering if its occupant had been laid away to the tune of "Bill Bailey," with the chorus of "The Good Old Summer Time" shuffled in to make a full deck. She started to laugh at the thought, and found laughter quite impossible.

Suddenly the schoolma'am did a strange thing. She glanced about to make sure no one was near, knelt and patted the tiny mound very tenderly. Then, stooping quickly, she pressed her lips passionately upon the crude lettering of the shingle. When she sprang up her cheeks were very red, her eyes dewy and lovely, and—what a beastly shame Weary could not see her then!

If lovers could be summoned as op-

portunately in real life as they are in stories, hearts would not ache so often, and life would be quite monotonously serene.

Weary was, at that moment, twenty miles away, busily engaged in chastising Glory, who had refused to cross a certain washout. His mind being wholly absorbed in the duel for mastery, even telepathy was quite powerless to aid him; and that was a pity.

Also, it was a pity he could not know that the schoolma'am lingered long at the schoolhouse that night, doing nothing but watch the trail where it lay, brown and distinct, on the top of the hill half a mile away. It is true she had artfully scattered a profusion of papers over her desk, and would undoubtedly have been discovered hard at work upon them, and very much astonished at beholding a visitor. It is probable Weary would have found her quite unapproachable, intrenched behind a bulwark of dignity and correct English.

When the shadow of the schoolhouse stretched away to the very edge of the coulee, Miss Satterly gathered up the studied confusion on her desk, bundled the papers inside and turned the key, jabbed three hatpins viciously through her hat, and went home. Perhaps it was just as well Weary was not there.

The next night papers strewed the desk after school, and the schoolma'am stood by the window and watched the trail listlessly. Her eyes were big and wistful and her cheeks were not red, as they usually were—nor even pink. She looked a disappointed young lady, and it was a straight guess she would not soon offend Weary again—that is, if he had come then. But the trail lay brown and silent and lonely, with no quick hoofbeats to send the dust whirling up into a cloud.

The shadows flowed into the coulee until it was full to the brim and ready to spill a brown veil of shade over the golden hilltop, before Miss Satterly locked her door and went home that night. When she reached her aunt Meeker's she did not want any supper, and she said her head ached. But that

was not the exact truth; it was not her head that ached—it was her heart.

The third day, the schoolma'am fussed a long time with her hair, which she did in four different styles. The last style was the one Weary had pronounced "simply out of sight." Only, she added a white chiffon bow which she had before kept sacred to dances, and which Weary openly admired. At noon she encouraged the children to gather wild flowers from the coulee, and she filled several tin cans with water from the spring and arranged the bouquets with much care. Weary loved flowers. A few she put in her hair, along with the chiffon bow, and she urged the children through their work and dismissed them at eleven minutes to four. After she had swept the floor and dusted everything that could be dusted, and culled a few of the brightest flowers to pin upon her white shirt-waist, Miss Satterly tuned her guitar in minor and went out and sat on the doorstep and strummed plaintive little airs while she watched the trail. To-morrow night was the Labor Day ball, and so to-night he would surely come to see if she had meant it. (Miss Satterly did not explain to herself what "it" was; surely, there was no need.)

While she waited, a tiny cloud of dust rose over the brow of the hill, and her heart awoke and danced in her chest till she could scarce breathe. What a troublesome machine the human heart is, anyway!

The cloud grew and grew, and a speck rose over the prairie grass and proclaimed itself a horseman, galloping swiftly. The color spread from the schoolma'am's cheeks to her brow and her throat. Her fingers forgot their cunning and plucked harrowing discords from the strings. It was growing late—she had almost given him up—but he was coming! Coming at a break-neck pace, into the bargain. Miss Satterly smiled a satisfied little smile and revolved several pert forms of greeting in her mind. It would not do to let him know at once that he was forgiven—she would tease him a while first.

Now, he was nearing the place where

he would turn off the main road and gallop straight to her. Glory always made that turn of his own accord. Weary had told her, last Sunday, how Glory had fought at the turn until Weary had finally given him his way, and rode close by the schoolhouse door on his way to Meeker's.

Now he would turn. Miss Satterly raised both hands with a very feminine gesture and patted her shining brown hair tentatively, tucking in a stray lock here and there.

Her hands dropped heavily to her lap, just as the blood dropped away from her cheeks and the happy glow dulled in her eyes.

It was not Weary. It was the Swede who worked for Jim Adams, and who rode a bright sorrel horse which resembled Glory at a distance. She watched him mechanically out of sight, picked up her guitar, which had somehow grown suddenly heavy, crept inside and closed the door and locked it. Then she went and laid her head down upon the desk, among the sweet profusion of prairie bloom, and cried softly, in a tired, heartbreaking fashion, that made her throat ache, and her head.

The shadows had flowed out of the coulee and the hilltops were smothered in gloom when Miss Satterly went home that night, and her aunt Meeker sent her straight to bed and dosed her with thoroughwort tea and scolded her volubly for working so hard.

By morning the schoolma'am had recovered her spirit and planned revenge. She would teach Weary Willie Davidson a lesson he would remember to his dying day—and it was in this unsaintly humor that she started to Dry Lake with her cousin Joe. By the time the dance opened, however, her mood had softened. She decided that petty revenge is unwomanly, besides giving evidence of a narrow mind and shallow, and if Weary was truly penitent, why she would be divine—and forgive.

Weary was standing pensively by the door, debating with himself the advisability of going boldly over to the schoolma'am and claiming the first

waltz, which he felt was his by right, when Cal Emmett gave him a vicious poke in the lower ribs by way of securing his attention.

"D'yuh see that bunch of red loco, over there by the organ? That's Bert Roger's cousin from Iowa."

Weary looked, and wilted against the wall.

"Oh, mamma!" he gasped.

"Ain't she a beaut? There'll be more than one pair uh hands go into the air to-night, I tell yuh those. It's a good thing Len got the drop on me first, or I'd be making seven kinds of a fool uh myself, chances is. Bert says she's bad medicine—a man killer from away back.

"Say, she's giving us the bad eye. Don't rubber like that, Weary! It ain't manners. Besides, the schoolma'am's getting fifty, if I'm any judge uh women."

Weary pulled himself together and tried to look away, but a pair of long, blue eyes with heavy lids drew him across the room in a daze. The next he knew he was standing before her, and she was smiling up at him just as she used to do, and—well, Weary was doing things to the truth. He was telling her he was very glad to see her, when he knew he was not glad; he was wishing the train which brought her to Montana had wrecked and—never mind what, for it would look unchristian in print, and you would not believe that Weary could harbor such a thought. But all the same, he did think it, and he thought it more than once that night.

Her name was Myrtle Forsyth, and she continued to smile up at Weary, and held out her hand to him. When he took it, squirming inwardly, she laid her left hand upon his. Her left hand was covered with rings which gave sparkles and flashes when she moved, and it was soft and plump and white, and the nails were manicured to a perfection not often seen in Dry Lake.

"Why, *Will!* To see *you*—away—out *here!* I have been so *lonely* in this big wilderness I could *cry*—but *now*——" She broke off with artful hesitation and drew her fingers caressingly over his

hand, in a way that made many a man lose his head and say foolish things. "I wonder if you have forgotten how to *waltz?*" This, as the musicians showed unmistakable symptoms of starting.

What could a fellow do, after a hint as broad as that one? Weary held out his arm meekly and stammered something about her giving him a trial, and she slipped her hand under his elbow with a little laugh of pure triumph. Weary had said some rather hard things to her when he had talked with her last, and had hoped to heaven he never would see her again. She observed that he had not lost his good looks in grieving over her. She even decided that he was better looking; there was an air of strength and a self-poise that was very becoming to his broad shoulders and his six feet two inches of height. She thought, before the waltz was done, that she had made a mistake when she threw him over—a mistake which she felt it would be wise to remedy at once.

Weary never knew how she did it—in truth, he was not sure that she did it at all—but he seemed to dance a great many times with her of the long eyes and the bright auburn hair. The schoolma'am seemed to be always at the far end of the room, and she appeared to be enjoying herself very much and to dance incessantly.

Once he broke away from Miss Forsyth, and went and asked the schoolma'am for the next waltz, but she opened her big eyes at him and assured him she was engaged. He tried for a two-step, a schottische, a quadrille—even for a polka, which she knew he hated, but the schoolma'am was, apparently, the most engaged young woman in Dry Lake that night.

So Weary owned himself beaten and went back to Miss Forsyth, who had been watching, and learning several things, and making little plans of her own. And Weary did what he had never done before in his life; he sulked for a full hour, and would neither dance nor talk to Miss Forsyth. Had you seen him then, you would not have taken him for a sunny-tempered young man.

During his hour of sulking, Miss Forsyth drifted away from him, which was but natural. What was not so natural, to Weary's mind, was to see her sitting out a quadrille with the schoolma'am. It did not look good to Weary, and he came near going over and demanding to know what it was they were talking about. He was ready to swear to (and at) one thing: Myrt Forsyth, with that look on her face, was up to some deviltry—and Weary wished he knew what. She reminded him, somewhat, of Glory, when Glory was cloyed with peaceful living. He even told himself viciously that Myrt Forsyth had hair the exact shade of Glory's—and it came near giving him a dislike for the horse.

The conversation in the corner was going something like this, after the music had been commented upon, and each girl had discovered the other's favorite dance—which was the two-step, in the schoolma'am's case. Miss Forsyth, inclining more to sentiment, declared pensively that she dearly loved to waltz—with the right partner, that is. Apropos the right partner, she glanced slyly from the end of her long eyes, and remarked:

"Will—that is, Mr. Davidson—is an ideal partner, I think. Are you—but of course, you *must* be acquainted, living in the same neighborhood!"

"Certainly, I am acquainted with Mr. Davidson," said Miss Satterly, indifferently. "He does waltz very well—but there are others I like better." That was a—prevarication, of course. "You knew him before to-night?"

Miss Forsyth laughed—that sort of laugh which may mean almost anything.

"Knew him? Why, he is—was—that is, we used to live in the *same town*! I was so perfectly *astonished* to find him *here*—poor fellow!"

"Why 'poor fellow'?" asked Miss Satterly, the direct. "Because you found him?—or because he is here?"

The long eyes regarded her curiously.

"Why, don't you *know*? Hasn't it followed him out *here*?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the

schoolma'am, returning the stare. "I haven't seen anything following him."

Miss Forsyth leaned back and began twisting her chain, her eyes half closed—like a cat's, I am sorry to say.

"I'm *glad*, for he was a *dear* fellow, even if he *did*—but I never really *believed* it—I *couldn't*! If only he had *stayed*—but he was afraid——"

Miss Satterly glanced across to where Weary was sitting gloomily alone.

"I really can't imagine Mr. Davidson as being afraid," she remarked, quietly.

"Oh, but you don't *understand*! He is *physically* brave—poor, *poor* boy! And he did not even trust *me*—or rather *he was afraid* I—but I *believed* in him, *always*! He was so glad to see me—and when I *told* him I—oh! if *only* he had not *left* as he *did*!"

"Well," said the schoolma'am with some impatience, "and how did he leave, then? On a broomstick?"

Miss Forsyth carefully untwisted her chain.

"Don't you really *know*—what—he *did*?"

"I don't know anything to his discredit, certainly," said Miss Satterly, who had a horror of innuendoes. "Nor does anyone else, I think. I hope," she went on slowly, "he—did not—murder—ten people, and throw—their bodies—into a well?"

Miss Forsyth did not look disconcerted, but that is how she felt. This little, brown-eyed schoolma'am seemed to be holding her own very well. She eyed Miss Satterly furtively.

"There are *other*—sins—besides *murder*," she said, sadly.

The schoolma'am turned and looked squarely at Miss Forsyth.

"You intimated that you and Mr. Davidson were—more than friends. Do you know, if I loved him—any man—I should never be the one to betray him, though he did do a dishonorable deed. I should guard his good name as jealously as my own."

"There! I was *afraid* you *would* misunderstand me; but I felt *drawn* to you—one can never *account* for sud-

den *likings*, I think—and I felt I *must* speak to *somebody*. You don't *know* how much—how *strange* it was to *meet* him—and find him *not changed*. I wish I *might*—help him—but he—it would be *hard* for him *now*—if only he had *not left* as he *did*!”

It was the second time Miss Forsyth had referred to the manner of his leaving. The schoolma'am went bluntly to the point.

“Will you please speak plainly, and tell me how he left? It is evident you want me to know about it, and I am not good at riddles. You needn't be afraid. I—am—his friend, I hope.”

“Well, since you *ask*, I *will* tell you this much—I *can't* tell you what he *did*; you understand, I *can't*—seeing we—are—*more* than friends, as you *said*; I *can't* tell you *all*. But—*something happened*, and *Will* left home *hurriedly*; in the *night*, you know. He did not *even* come to tell *me* good-by! But the *poor* fellow *thought* I would—he did not *trust* me enough. Now that I have *found* him, why——” She smiled a dazzling little smile and nodded eloquently. “I *know* you will give me your—*sympathy*, for I—it has been *hard*——” Miss Forsyth had the knack of leaving a great deal unsaid, and thus implying the more. This method she found very useful when called upon to retract certain statements, as often happened, because she really said very little that was not the truth. It was her original manner of manipulating the truth that left her hearers believing whatever she wished them to believe.

Miss Satterly sat very still, scarce thinking consciously. She stared at Weary and tried to imagine him a fu-

gitive from his own home. And in spite of herself she kept wondering what awful thing he had done.

“A *man* can be so *cruel* to the woman he—but of *course* I *understood* just how he *must* have *felt* about it. And so—why, I did not *even* know where he *was*, and it has been *four years*! And then to find him *here*—after I had *almost* given up—and not *changed*——”

“May I have the pleasure of this dance, Miss Satterly?” It was Chip Bennett to the rescue, and the schoolma'am went with him gladly.

Weary, after dancing with every woman but the right one, and finding himself beside Miss Forsyth with a frequency that quite puzzled him, felt an unutterable disgust at circumstances rise within him.

After a waltz quadrille, during which he seemed to get Myrt Forsyth out of his arms only to find her swinging into them again, he made desperately for the door, snatched up the first gray hat he came to—which happened to be Chip Bennett's, and not his own—and went out into the dewy darkness.

It was half an hour before he could draw the hostler of the Dry Lake stable away from a crap game, and it was another half hour before he succeeded in overcoming Glory's disinclination for a midnight gallop over the prairie alone.

But it was two hours before Miss Forsyth and the schoolma'am gave over watching furtively the door, and it was daylight before Chip Bennett found a gray hat under the water bench—a hat which no one claimed and which he finally recognized as Weary's, and so appropriated to his own use.

[TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT NUMBER.]

# A TWO-FOLD VICTORY

BY CHARLES STEINFORT PEARSON

*Author of "Romances of the Race Course"*

A race up a mountain-side, with love and life as the stakes

**A** LONG the river road, covered deeply with snow, and with the cold crags of Bald Face towering high above, a young man was driving a spirited black horse attached to a light sleigh. The air was intensely cold, and the river, which during the summer plunged and roared in a series of little cataracts down its rocky bed, was ice-covered and silent.

By the side of the driver, who was well wrapped in a fur overcoat, was a hound, sniffing the air and looking from one side of the road to the other. The cutter was going at a sharp pace, the occupant apparently busy with his own thoughts.

Suddenly, as they passed a bend, a big buck, with a single bound, cleared the road a hundred yards ahead of the sleigh, and, pausing for a brief instant with a snort of terror, dashed away into the leafless forest.

The hound gave one yelp, then, at the command of his master, "Quiet there, Bose!" checked himself like a bronze statue, forepaws on the side of the sleigh, all a-quake with excitement. A tug at the reins stopped the horse, and almost at the same moment the driver had seized the rifle resting against his knee.

A bleat like that of a young fawn separated from the doe rang out on the air. So clever an imitation it was, the flying buck stopped short an instant, head turned to catch the sound. It was but an instant, but it was sufficient. In that short interval the man in the sleigh raised the rifle; a shot started the echoes

in the hills, and the deer, full two hundred yards away among the denuded trees, gave one convulsive leap forward and lay on the snow.

The hound leaped from the sleigh and made the air vibrant with his baying as he sped in the direction of the fallen quarry, followed by the man. The horse, ears pricked forward intelligently, stood immovable.

No need for a *coup de grâce* when the hunter reached the deer, which the hound was mouthing and sniffing with the keenest canine satisfaction. For a brief space the marksman surveyed the buck, bending over and laying a finger on the wound where the bullet had entered.

"Good shot, eh, Bose?" he said, patting the dog on the head. "A good shot under the circumstances," he repeated. "Right behind the shoulder, through the heart. Luck, pure luck, Tom Hartley," he declared to himself, with a little laugh. "That shot will be worth fifteen or twenty dollars to me at McKillip's. I won't have to ask for credit now."

With muscles tense, Hartley bent low, and by hard work lifted the deer on his shoulder, the head with its branching antlers hanging down behind.

Once in the sleigh, Hartley, a tall, clean-limbed, blue-eyed chap, with the frank, bright face of a boy, though he was twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, chirruped to the black, and they were on their way again to "McKillip's," the only-store in the country round and four miles distant.

It was Saturday afternoon, and a typ-

ical winter one in the north country at McKillip's. Lumbermen, jabbering in the French-Canadian patois, bargained with the proprietor and his assistant. Farmers from roundabout, weather-beaten, keen-eyed, sat about the wood stove chatting together, or read copies of the county papers, which they had just received from the hands of McKillip, postmaster at Catamount Lake. He was a hustling, bluff, hearty, good-natured man of Irish extraction, with a slap on the back and a cheering word for everybody.

For the most part, the men in the place appeared to be a happy, sociable set of fellows, willing to pass the topics of the day with one another, discussing the cold, the snow, the plentifulness of game in the surrounding forests, and kindred subjects. Only one man was solitary. A big, lanky chap, with gleaming black eyes which darted quick, suspicious glances from one to the other, huge black mustache and a long, livid scar ridging his left cheek, he sat carelessly on the edge of the counter.

He did not seem talkative, and the slight scowl with which he surveyed the scene did not invite conversation. For some reason he was a man apart.

McKillip, bustling about to get something from the box underneath the fellow's foot, gave him greeting, just as he would have done any of the others. He feared no man.

"Just lift up that number twelve a minute," he said. "Where have you been keeping yourself lately? Come to think of it now, Storm, I don't believe I've seen you since you and Hartley had the match race last fall."

McKillip paused a moment in contemplation of Storm's grim visage, with something of a teasing smile on his own face.

"My! my! that was a great trotting race!" continued the proprietor, contemplatively, and as if he had entirely forgotten about the business in hand. "Do you know, Storm," he continued, his voice dropping to a confidential tone, "I wasn't sure but that sorrel of yours could trim Hartley's black? I bet on Tom's horse more as a guess than any-

thing else. I didn't think the black was going to do the trick in two straight heats. Tom is a wonder at raising a horse. Have you seen him lately?"

Storm shifted uneasily. "No, I haven't," he growled, his bristling lip lifting above the yellow teeth. He spat viciously at the stove.

McKillip looked at him curiously for a moment, and the next his words came from somewhere down below, where he was reaching into a box.

"Tom seems to be keeping pretty close lately. I haven't seen him, either. I guess he's spending all his spare time in sparking Rose La Pier." A chuckle came up with the end of the sentence. "I understand they're very badly gone on one another," continued McKillip. "Rose is a mighty fine girl. I expect they'll be man and wife before another winter rolls around."

He did not look at the other's face, so he did not see that Storm had straightened up stiff and alert. The suspicion of a scowl had developed into the real thing; his face had changed from swarthy to pale yellow, and the scar on his cheek shone almost with a phosphorescent light in its lividness. Through the tightly-drawn lips came the words, fiercely muttered:

"I thought some one that Rose liked better than me was keeping company with her. Beats me horse racin' an' then takes my girl." The teeth shut with a snap. "Maybe so an' maybe not," he muttered again.

Outside the sound of sleigh runners on the crisp snow was heard, followed by the tramp of feet and a stamping on the porch.

The door opened and through it strode Hartley, bearing on his shoulder the body of the deer. For a moment the newcomer stood as if half blinded by his transition from the whiteness outside to the dark interior of the store.

"Hartley, I was just talking about you. Brought in some game, I see," called out McKillip, coming forward.

Hartley was greeted with cries of "Hello, Tom! been hunting, have you?" "Lucky as usual," "How's the horse, Tom?" for the young man seemed to be



well known to everybody about, and a prime favorite with all. He laughed and shook hands all around, answering the many questions fired at him with the utmost good nature. Suddenly he became aware of the presence of Storm. The smile faded from his face, he gave a curt nod in his rival's direction and would have turned away.

Storm sprang down from his seat with an oath intended for a pleasantry, and, catching hold of Hartley's fur coat with his left hand, extended his right.

"No use being stuck up, Hartley, just because you beat me in that thar race," was his salutation, with a grin. "I've got no ill feelin' against you if you did clean me last fall. Shake hands with me if you ain't too proud," coaxed the elder man. A close observer could have guessed that the whole business was for effect.

Hartley was plainly astonished. What was more, he did not seem inclined to take the other's hand. Finally he yielded. It was evident he was not sure of Storm's sincerity.

"You acted so all-fired cantankerous when 'Black Bill' won, Storm," he said, with a laugh, "I thought I was your enemy for life. Not that I think a fellow's horse beating that of another is anything to cause trouble between the two," he said.

"Pshaw! no," Storm hastened to reply. "You know I felt cranky over what happened. You would yourself, Tom, 'specially if you thought your horse was so good as I thought mine to be. You know how it was. Pshaw! I'm as good a friend of yours as I ever was. Don't you believe anything else, Tom."

For a time Storm was suspiciously talkative. It was remarkable how quickly his mood had changed at the appearance of his rival, but with it all there was a sinister look in his eyes, a forced something in his manner. As Hartley became engaged with McKillip in taking the worth of the deer from the store goods which he needed, Storm subsided into his former silence and sat moodily on the counter as before. The scowl again rested on his face. The little, beady eyes twinkled wolfishly as

they roved furtively in Hartley's direction. He appeared to be thinking intently.

Hartley, with his free and easy air of good-fellowship, had finished his trading. As the son of an ex-sheriff of the county, a chap who had grown up with the people, and who was known as an open-hearted, liberal fellow, he was welcome wherever he chanced. The truth of the matter was that Hartley was too open-handed for his own good. The fact that much of the money left him by his father had been spent in aiding friends who had met misfortune, did not lower him a whit in the estimation of those who knew him.

At this time Hartley was deeply in debt. The sawmill run by water power, which had been left him by his father, he had been persuaded by an agent for a machine company to shelve for steam power, with a greater capacity for turning out lumber.

From this time things had gone wrong. Accidents had occurred, and, possibly owing to the young man's having no head for business, for the first time in fifty years the mill at Goldsmith's Pond was shut down. A sum of several hundred dollars was still owing to the machine company, and how it was to be paid, now that no lumber was to be sold, Tom did not know. He had ceased to worry over the fact that probably he should lose the whole property. What was the use of worrying, when he still had left his horse, "Black Bill," his dog and his rifle? Ah! yes, above all, Rose La Pier, the bonny French Canadian girl who had told him she loved him, and who had confided in him that she both hated and feared Dave Storm. Hartley knew all about the latter's would-be wooing of his sweetheart.

La Pier himself was an easy-going, shiftless sort of a Frenchman, more than willing to accept loans of money from Storm rather than till his acres in the spring and summer and go to the woods with his team and ax in the autumn. It was tacitly agreed between the two that Storm should claim the hand of pretty Rose. The girl herself did not agree to

it. Certainly Tom Hartley would not consent. While Tom was fully aware of Storm's intentions toward Rose, the man himself, until the matter was revealed to him by McKillip, did not guess that Hartley was his rival. Tom was too clever a hunter for that; Rose was too wary game. Besides, it was none of Storm's business.

Who was that man Storm? Nobody could tell. He was not a native of those parts. Three or four years before he had appeared in that locality, apparently with more money than most of those whom he made his neighbors when he leased the Alderbrook Tavern property. His only companion was a dark-skinned fellow whom Storm stated was a gypsy. McKillip, who had prospected for gold in the Rockies and rounded up cattle in Texas and New Mexico, and was wise in the ways of the world, said that Storm's man-Friday was a "Greaser." The idea that Storm himself was a French Canadian, as he himself stated, McKillip also regarded as false.

"He don't understand the talk of these pea-crackers [French Canadians] any more than I did the powwowing of the Digger Indians out West," said McKillip. "He's no Canuck. That face? Maybe some day my memory will treat me right, and then——" He would stop mysteriously.

Horses were Storm's specialty. He gave himself out as a horse trader, and he was equally shrewd as a buyer and as a seller. When he was not driving around the country he could generally be found at his roadside tavern, which was run by the "gypsy." Old man Joe La Pier could be found there, too, much too often for his own good.

Storm was fully forty years of age. Tom Hartley was twenty-seven. The two had become acquainted by Storm's admiration of Hartley's horse, "Black Bill," soon after the stranger had elected to settle in that part of the country. He had tried to buy the trotter and failed.

The horse trader had been missing from his accustomed haunts for a month or so the summer before, when he suddenly appeared driving a high-stepping chestnut horse.

"Been clar to Ontario for him," he announced. "I got him for the express purpose of trimming Hartley's trotter—if he's willin' to race agin' me."

Tom had been more than willing. A match race had been arranged. The course was from directly in front of McKillip's store down the river road, which was straight and level at that point, to the first turn, fully a mile away. Two hundred dollars a side, best two heats out of three, were the conditions.

It was a crisp Saturday afternoon that the race had taken place, and it was a sort of gala occasion for the surrounding country. The residents, hungry for excitement, flocked to McKillip's in dozens.

Naturally, the arrangements were primitive, but they were sufficient. A man was agreed upon to start the two racers. Buckboards were the only available vehicles, and as Storm's horse was the more powerful of the two, it had seemed that the advantage was in his favor.

Considerable wagering was done on the result; of course, in a small way. While nearly all of the watchers would have liked to bet on Hartley and his horse, not a few were afraid of Storm's animal. While others may not have had supreme confidence in Tom's horse, they had in his owner-driver, and they bet recklessly—for them—on his "Black Bill."

Both sides of the road, stretching a furlong to the finish, were lined with the eager watchers, men and women. A start had been effected, with both horses neck and neck, and down the road they sped past the men posted at regular intervals to judge as to fouling.

When the first row of spectators was reached they saw that Storm was in the lead by almost a hundred feet. The backers of the chestnut roadster raised a yell at the prospect of taking the hard-earned dollars from the horny hands of their comrades. With face set and pale, but undaunted, Hartley spoke a few words of encouragement to the black, and his horse forged forward, steady as a rock. In vain did Storm first shout, then finally stand up and lash fiercely,

at his trotter to make him maintain the advantage gained over his opponent. Hartley and the black drew ahead and passed the finish a good length in advance of the chestnut, which had "broken" and was wildly galloping under the sting of its driver's whip.

Tom was radiant as he jumped from the buckboard and threw the blanket around his horse, leading him up and down before the next heat. The crowd made its way down the road to see the result of this heat at the other end.

Again they were off!

For half a mile they were neck and neck, moving together like a team. Evidently Hartley intended to take no chances this time, for he spoke to his horse, and for the second time the black, recognizing that his best effort was expected of him, strode away from the other. Storm, too, called upon his horse, but no such response followed, although it was but by inches that the black horse increased his lead. Seeing this, and uttering a string of oaths, Storm pulled on the right rein, and his horse dashed violently into Hartley's buckboard, almost upsetting it and coming within an ace of spilling him out in the road. But horse and driver escaped, and the black trotted past the finish far in the lead, the other coming slowly down the road, Storm wearing a malignant scowl on his face.

It was no heat, he protested vehemently, or if it was it should be decided in his favor, as Hartley had fouled him. Hartley, quiet but determined, told his side of the story—how the other driver, deliberately, it seemed to him, had turned his horse into him. One of the men watching by the roadside corroborated him. In spite of Storm's raging and threatening the stakeholder, the race was given to Tom.

It had ended with Storm driving away in a towering passion, shaking his fist at the assemblage and declaring that a stranger had no show. "Every darned one of you bet on the other horse," he blurted out. "You're a lot of robbers, and you, Tom Hartley, are the worst of the lot. You are meaner'n a horse thief."

Tom simply had laughed at him and held up tauntingly the bundle of bank notes he had won.

This meeting at McKillip's was the first time they had seen each other since the race.

When Hartley appeared to be on the point of leaving, Storm sauntered over to where he was standing, buttoning his coat around him.

"Going home, Tom?" Storm asked, cheerfully. "How's the black? Wouldn't like to part with him, eh?"

Hartley answered that he had driven the horse that day and still had no intention of disposing of him.

"I didn't s'pose you did, Tom," was Storm's smiling reply. "Look here, Hartley," he continued, his face hardening and his voice taking a menacing tone, "when you come right down to it, I don't believe that race back there in the fall proved that your black was better'n my chestnut. It wasn't no fair decided race, I don't care what the judges or anybody else says about it."

Others had ceased talking, and all interest was centered in Hartley and Storm.

Raising his voice, the latter continued:

"I still believe my horse is the best in this section. That race last October wasn't wuth shucks. If you're the man I take you to be, you'll give me another chance to show what my horse can do. What do you say, Hartley? If you're so certain that the black can show his hind hoofs to my horse, you'll give me another chance—if you've got any sporting blood in you. What do you say to havin' a race this time that is a race? Somethin' that will show the nerve of the driver as well as the bottom of the brute he's drivin'. What do you say to that, now, Tom Hartley?" he demanded, triumphantly, and with a deeper menace in his tone.

Hartley grasped the fact that something more than the superiority of their horses was to be decided—that back of all this lay a snare for him, a pitfall, a crucial test of his manhood.

Then Hartley, usually peaceful, and the acme of good nature, thought of

Rose. At the instant he felt he could take the man in front of him by the throat and crush the life out of him as he would a poisonous reptile.

"Dave Storm, I'd race you to the devil and back," he blazed out, his eyes flashing. "That is, if the devil wasn't the stakeholder," he added, contemptuously. "He'd be too much of a friend of yours for that."

As the hearers broke into laughter, Hartley, now the picture of anger, gazed straight into the eyes of his rival. Storm shifted his eyes, darting curious glances at the listeners, who, open-mouthed, had gathered closer about the two. Then he straightened himself and, with a sardonic grin on his face, his eyes narrowing, began, slowly:

"So you'd be willin' to race me anywhere, would ye? I've got your word for it, I have. They say ye are a man of your word, Tom Hartley. Maybe your horse is better than mine. I say, mebbe. But I don't believe you're as nerry a man as I am.

"What would ye say to this? It's a scheme that's jest come in me mind. It'll prove mebbe which is the best horse, but it'll sure decide as to the best man. What say you to a sleigh race to the top of Bald Face, by the Titan's Trail, Tom Hartley?"

Each listener was holding his breath for Hartley's reply. It was not long in coming.

"Dave Storm, when I said I would race you to the devil and back, I meant it. I reckon the closest we can come to it is the Titan's Trail. If you are in earnest, and won't crawl out of the proposition when the time comes, I'm your man. You can't make me take a dare," he declared, hotly. "I'll race you, and I'll beat you, too, as I did before. An' if you try any of your tricks with me, as you did before, I'll—I'll——" He choked with anger.

Storm seemed on the point of replying in kind to Hartley's defiant acceptance of the challenge, but contented himself with a scornful smile. Now that the first show of passion had manifested itself in both, they arranged the matter with the same coolness and cour-

tesy that would be employed by two seconds fixing the preliminaries for an affair of honor for their two principals.

As the spectators crowded around, wondering and wide-eyed at the manner in which two men could so arrange to take part in a mission which might cost them both their lives, all details were arranged.

The Titan's Trail was a marvel of the country. It was a mere shelf of rock winding around the peak known as Bald Face, from the base to the summit, a clear, level space of an acre, towering more than four thousand feet above sea level. No human engineer could have devised a fitter path to the mountain's head than existed as a remarkable natural phenomenon. It was a road cut from the solid granite, which wound around the peak with a gradual ascent to the top. It would have required years of work by men to make such a path. In many places the road narrowed to a few feet, with the high, stony face of the mountain on one side, the sheer cliff dropping straight to the river below on the other. In some spots the shelf—for it was nothing more—widened so that two vehicles might pass each other on it. These places were few. A driver who was sure of himself, with a horse he could trust, might drive safely to the terminus of the trail on the summit, under the most favorable conditions. It had been done two or three times on quiet summer days. Some years before, government surveyors had taken observations from the top of the mountain, and one of them had designated the rocky road as the "Titan's Trail."

In the winter the rocky ledges were covered with snow and ice, which might "chute" a man to death in a second. Besides the treacherous footing, icy blasts swept about the mountain face and might hurl horse and driver to destruction. The idea of two men calmly planning to race along this road where one could not venture with safety was more than preposterous—it was mad. But Hartley and Storm went about it as if they were engaged in an ordinary business transaction.

Only when Hartley had torn himself away from those of his friends who were endeavoring to dissuade him from what they regarded as a foolhardy feat did Storm step up to the side of his opponent and again engage him in conversation.

"We haven't fixed the amount of the stakes yet, Tom," he said, coolly. "It wouldn't be worth while to go into this thing just for the name of it. We'd better set the stakes at one thousand dollars a side."

Hartley stared at him blankly. So this was his game? To get him into it and then force him to withdraw, because he did not have the money. It was a good scheme to put him to shame. He was about to speak, when Storm raised a hand in protest—a hand covered with gimcrack jewelry.

"You don't need it," he whispered, hoarsely. "All you've got to do is to sign an agreement that—that in case you lose you'll give up Rose; that you won't see her any more. That will go against my thousand."

Hartley had lifted his hand to smite the tempter. His face flushed, then paled. Quickly the thought came to him that if he lost the losing would be in such a way that he never would see her again in any case. Why not tempt fate?

"This will be between us only?" he asked, restraining his desire to strike the man to the earth.

"Nobody will know about this but you and me," was Storm's suave reply. "I'll put the money in an envelope to be sealed; you put the signed agreement in another. They'll think it's your promise to pay. The first to the top takes both envelopes."

"All right, Storm, that will do," were Hartley's parting words; "but, curse you! I'll beat you as I did before!"

As he drove off in the fast-fading daylight his soul felt heavy within him. He knew that because of his rashness and temper he had allowed himself to become the dupe of the man who was his bitterest enemy. Glancing up, he saw far ahead in the dusk the snowy summit of Bald Face, and

at a dizzy height on the side nearest him the rocky ledge which formed the Titan's Trail. He shuddered in spite of himself.

All this time Dave Storm, chuckling and rubbing his hands in glee, was saying to himself: "Well, I didn't think he'd be so easy. Now we'll see who will get the girl!"

Hartley would not retreat. Even to the tearful pleadings of his sweetheart he turned a deaf ear after the first time she implored him to give up the venture.

"You wouldn't have that fellow going around making his boasts that he had bluffed me out of it, would you, Rose? Don't you be afraid. I'll win. I've got to."

He did not tell her the reason.

"I'll come over to the house the first thing after I win," he told her. "I won't come again until then."

In the early part of the week more snow came, then a cold rain, which froze as it touched the snow. The ice thus formed was hard enough to bear the runners of a sleigh without breaking. A horse's hoofs would break into the crust slightly.

Hartley had not gone near the place on which the dangerous contest was to take place, as he was already well acquainted with every foot of it. Taking great care that they should not be discovered, Storm and his man went over it from base to summit. When they had come to a certain point, Storm stopped and said something to his companion, who replied with a shrug. They spent fully an hour at this one spot. The rest of the trip they finished as rapidly as possible.

Saturday, the day of the race, arrived cold and cloudy. Occasionally a "spit" of snow was seen in the air, but it was too cold for much to fall.

As Hartley drove "Black Bill" up to McKillip's, soon after midday, he found a large crowd already gathered there. They did not greet his appearance with cheers, as they did on the former occasion. They stood around with shakes of the head and doleful prophecies. Hartley glanced eagerly around, for Rose, but she was not there.

Storm was. A grin was on his face as he came up to Hartley, with:

"Hello, Tom! I thought you wasn't comin', after all, but then I might have knowed you wouldn't disappoint us all."

Hartley affected not to notice either the hidden sneer or the hand which was stuck out in apparent friendliness, but busied himself about his horse and sleigh, seeing that the harness was adjusted properly.

He looked with curiosity at the shafts of his competitor's sleigh. They were not the ones with which Storm was accustomed to drive. They were new and remarkable for their thickness. In front they were joined together by a band of iron, so that they really made a solid piece.

"I thought it a good idea, in case the chestnut might stumble," Storm hastened to explain. "If I'd seen you, Tom, I'd have told you to have yours fixed that way."

Later Hartley saw Storm buy a box of horseshoes from McKillip and place it in the bottom of the sleigh.

"Good to steady it with," he declared.

In the store Storm made a great show of counting out ten one hundred-dollar bills, which he placed in an envelope and gave to the stakeholder. Hartley asked for pen, ink and paper, and wrote something which he shoved roughly to Storm, without looking at him.

Storm plodded through the paper with puckered brow. He nodded when he had finished, then the paper also was placed in an envelope and handed to the stakeholder.

That official, with the judges as to the finish and those of the crowd who wished to see the end of the race, hurried down the road to climb to the top of Bald Face by a safer and shorter path than the Titan's Trail, there to await the coming of the contestants. It was about four miles down the river, a turn off of a short distance, and three miles from the beginning of the treacherous trail to the terminus, making the race something more than seven miles in all.

At last they were off!

McKillip had given the word, and the

black and the chestnut stepped away over the frozen surface, side by side, as if their owners were taking a friendly drive as boon companions. A faint cheer rose from the onlookers.

Hartley held the reins lightly, eyes straight ahead. His figure betokened the alertness of youth; his face confidence in the ability of himself and his horse to overcome any obstacle. Storm's face was dark and sullen.

After giving the word "Go!" McKillip stood looking at the departing sleighs.

"That fool boy!" he said to himself. "If anything happens to him, you'll settle with *me*, Dave Storm."

By all rights the race should have been a test of nerve and endurance rather than of speed, but it seemed at the start that Storm would force it otherwise. The watchers at the store heard him chirrup to his horse, saw him flick the whip sharply across the animal's flank, causing it to prance madly for a moment, then settle down to a heart-breaking pace.

"He'll try to shut Tom off before they reach the Titan's Trail, so he won't have much chance left to pass him there," was the opinion expressed.

That was Tom's own idea, but he was not afraid. He spoke quietly to his black, and the faithful friend drew up closer to, though not on even terms with, the other.

Down the river they sped in this fashion. Storm looked neither to the right nor left, his face grim and forbidding as ever. He appeared to realize that the chances against his returning unscathed were no more than even.

For the entire four miles they raced in this mad fashion, the chestnut in the lead, Hartley in striking distance with the black. On several occasions Storm's horse broke into a gallop, and his driver, instead of striving to quiet the animal and keep it to a steady pace, hit it sharply with the whip. The horse was a highly nervous one at best. Under such treatment it was well-nigh frantic.

Such proceeding showed bad judgment and worse horsemanship, Hartley

knew. The suspicion rose in his mind that perhaps Storm was a victim of insanity, and that he himself was little better than a lunatic to follow such a course as he was doing. It was not too late even yet to abandon the race. Then he thought of the dastardly agreement not to see Rose again, and he gritted his teeth. He was in for it now, and he would see it through to the end—to the end of the Titan's Trail.

The creak of the runners on the snow, the beat of the horses' feet on the frozen crust, the occasional cry of the man ahead to his animal, the swish of the whip, the sighing of the winds in the pines along the roadside, were the only sounds. Once a rabbit ran along the roadside a little way, then sat up looking at the two sleighs speeding by.

Hartley neither gained nor lost as they glided over the white landscape. His own horse was not showing the slightest sign of laboring. He knew that if he chose he could draw up to and pass his opponent at any time, but he would allow the other to shoot his bolt and drop in the rear.

"Black Bill" was under his complete control. Never was horse that paid more attention to a word from its master.

When they had reached the turn-off place, for the first time Storm turned in his seat.

"Now for it, Hartley!" he shouted.

"I'm ready, Dave Storm!" was the reply. "May the best horse win—and the best man," he added. Storm laughed harshly.

They now had reached a space on the mountain side so wide that a dozen teams might line up side by side. Directly ahead was the beginning of the trail proper, wide enough at the start, but narrowing after a short distance. Along it, further on, a nervy driver could pass another. Just before the top was reached was another of these places.

Hartley became anxious. Now he would better dispute the lead with the other. He could run no chances. His own horse was fresh, and at a word "Black Bill" increased his speed.

Storm did not fight to hold the lead. Without protest, he permitted Hartley to forge ahead.

"My horse is tired a bit, but I'll catch you before we get to the top, Hartley," was all the excuse he gave.

As Hartley passed he even imagined he detected a gleam of satisfaction on his rival's face. What could it mean? Was the man really a coward at heart, afraid to trust himself to search the way along the treacherous trail? Had his nerve forsaken him?

"Get up, 'Black Bill,'" he urged. The horse started forward, crushing the snow under foot, at a steady, even trot. The only thing for Hartley to do was to hug the mountain side as closely as possible—and the race would be won! The trail was snow-hidden, but the whiteness was spread evenly on the surface.

Up they climbed, and up and up, until the air grew colder. They seemed to be suspended in mid air, in a world of ice and snow. At times Hartley was forced to halt his horse to a slow walk, when they came to a narrow place.

Occasionally Storm had dropped behind as far as a hundred yards, then again he would draw closer. His horse was reduced to an object of pitiful terror, shivering weakly in the shafts and dragging the heavy sleigh with difficulty up the ascent. "Black Bill" even had not been free from fear, but a few reassuring words from his master served to calm him.

Now they had reached a point on the trail where instead of continuing in the gradual ascent, it made a sharp decline of possibly a hundred yards, when the rise began again and continued unbroken to the top. The road at this point was probably narrower than at any other point.

Suddenly Hartley, perhaps eighty or a hundred feet in advance, awoke to his danger. In a flash he comprehended the truly fiendish plan which Storm had mapped out for his undoing.

A glance backward was all that saved Hartley from certain death. Much quicker than it took to evolve the truly devilish thing did he comprehend.



At the top of the decline, his face distorted with passion, Storm was lashing his horse to top speed.

Perhaps it was the fact that for a fleeting moment the animal stood on his hind legs, instead of running, as he did later with frightful speed down the narrow declivity, the heavy sleigh behind, the driver tugging at the inside rein, that gave Hartley respite.

But brain and muscle worked in unison. Hartley called to his horse and supplemented the call by a slap of the reins on the back. "Black Bill" darted forward.

Storm had timed the thing magnificently, had touched off his petard promptly. Eye and hand and nerve were not lacking. All that caused him to fail, and Hartley to win the stakes and his life, was the latter's own watchfulness, his alertness in scenting out the danger.

For scarcely had the hind end of Hartley's sleigh, possibly not more than two feet from the icy, upright, inner cliff, jerked swiftly forward by the plunge of the horse, when the iron-bound shafts of the would-be murderer struck a point on the cliff directly at the side of where Hartley's sleigh had been a second previous.

As the shafts struck the cliff side with the prodigious force gained by the momentum from the head of the dip, they shot out at a sharp angle, throwing the horse heavily, and still having enough force to carry the helpless animal, struggling vainly to rise, over the edge of the precipice.

But twenty feet away Hartley witnessed the occurrence.

First he saw the horse, wildly kicking to extricate itself from the tangle of harness, sink into the abyss. Next he saw the fate of the sleigh decided. Storm was clutching wildly at the uppermost side of the sleigh, his eyes, magnified by the nearness of death, looking out of a face which Hartley scarcely recognized as that of a human being. A moment later Storm threw up both hands, and went down with the falling sleigh—down, down, down.

With a feeling of intense nausea, but

finding it impossible to turn his eyes away, Hartley watched horse and sleigh plunging down the almost perpendicular rocky wall.

Horror-stricken, he saw the objects strike jutting rocks in their plunge—rocks, snow-covered, which sent out visible puffs of whiteness, like steam, as the flying figures passed. The tops of scraggly pines and balsams were swept away as if cut by a giant ax, in that fearful descent, little jets of snow following each point where they touched.

At last he discerned a flash in the air of what at that great height appeared a shower of crystal spray.

Dumbly he was conscious that the end had been reached—that man and horse and sleigh had landed from that dizzy fall, and were lying in the river bed, mere semblances of what they had been but a few moments before.

Hartley's heart beat like a trip hammer and he swayed in the sleigh seat. It was the first time he had ever seen a man die, and in such a soul-sickening manner!

Vaguely, through it all, the young man was aware that Storm himself had met the fate that he had intended for his rival. Now he knew why Storm had set the pace at first, pretending to tire out his horse, so that he could drop behind without arousing suspicion. The substitution of the sleigh shafts, with the strong iron band joining them together, could well be understood. His brain whirled and a clammy sweat came over him as he comprehended.

It was a plan as simple as it was deadly—that of wedging the iron-bound shafts, driven by the fearful momentum of the plunge from the rise above, between the rear end of his sleigh and the inner wall, forcing Hartley's sleigh over the outer edge, and himself into eternity.

How long he remained silent, with these thoughts surging through his brain, he could not have told. Weak and trembling from the cold and excitement, he climbed out of the sleigh, and, making his way carefully to the spot where the sleigh had fallen, he leaned over and peered down.

A groan came from somewhere below. Hartley drew back in sudden terror. Again the groan, plainer and seemingly closer than before.

Steadying himself, Hartley leaned far over, and could just make out a body caught on a shelving rock about twenty feet below him. It was Storm.

Then his enemy had not perished. At first, base though the thought was which came to his mind, Hartley was tempted to leave the man to his fate. It would be impossible for Storm to climb up the trail from the shelf where he had fallen, and he would freeze or ultimately fall to death. Why not let him meet the fate which the plotter had intended for him?

But Tom Hartley never could be guilty of such a thing.

Leaning over again, he called out encouragingly:

"I'll help you up, Storm, if I can. Don't move until I tell you. I won't be long. Are you able to help yourself?"

A smothered "yes" came from below, and drawing back, Hartley hurried to the horse and took off the reins, knotting them together and forming a loop at the end. He tied one end about a rock, then dropped the noose down to Storm.

It was the most hazardous proceeding in which Hartley had ever indulged, for there was little for him to brace himself against, and a slip would carry him to certain destruction. For hours, it seemed, he worked with the reins, pulling and hauling with his frozen fingers in the frigid air, until it seemed he must drop the lifeline and let the dangling human load fall. But he persevered, shouting words of encouragement to the man in the noose, and at last he was able to grasp Storm by the shoulders and drag him to safety.

Storm had been stunned somewhat and cut and bruised, but otherwise was uninjured. For a few minutes he lay on the cliff side, panting heavily from his exertions. Slowly he rose at last and held out his hand to Hartley.

Hartley would not accept it.

"I take no murderer by the hand," he

declared, his eyes flashing. "That's what you are, Dave Storm. It's lucky for me I'm alive. Don't offer me your hand—it's an insult.

"Now go, Dave Storm," he ejaculated. "I'm almost sorry I gave your life to you. Go, and it will be better for you never to show your face in these parts again. When my friends hear the story I've got to tell them, why, they'll shoot you quicker than they would a hound turned sheep killer. Keep that in mind, if you ever think of seeing Rose La Pier again."

Storm glared at him savagely. For a moment, as Hartley turned again to his horse, he seemed on the point of attacking him.

"I'm too weak. I couldn't do it—he'd best me now," he muttered. He slunk off down the trail, as Hartley gave the word to "Black Bill" and started for the summit.

It was reached without mishap. And who, among the group of eager watchers gathered on the blast-swept mountain head, was there but Rose La Pier? When she saw him she started down the trail. Halfway to him she collapsed in a dead faint. When she awoke to consciousness she was in the sleigh, with Hartley's face pressed against her own.

It required but a few words for Hartley to explain why they would not see Storm that day, nor at any time to come. The part he had played in rescuing his would-be murderer at the risk of his life came out with the rest. When that part was understood fully, a man with a lusty pair of lungs bade the wintry blasts defiance with:

"Three cheers for Tom Hartley, our next sheriff!"

The cheers were given with a will.

Dave Storm was not seen again. It was but a short while after the race and his rescue that McKillip, the postmaster and storekeeper, unearthed some old papers and found among them a circular sent out to postmasters from a detective agency in a Western State, offering one thousand dollars for the capture of "The Man With the Scar," who was wanted for murder. The description answered that of Dave Storm.

# THE TOLLIVER TANGLE

BY GEORGE PARSONS BRADFORD

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## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Rodney Taliaferro, of New Orleans, meets Ruth Hayes, an old friend of his, in New York, and she asks him to call on her. He goes to the address she has given him, 141 St. John's Avenue, Brooklyn, and finds the house gloomy and forbidding. He enters, however, and is made prisoner by a band of men, who force him to drink drugged liquor, but not before he has recognized their leader as a Southerner known as Major Engle, whose acquaintance he has recently made. About this time Rodney Tolliver, of Syracuse, who is out of work and in destitute circumstances in New York, encounters a man, evidently a Southerner, who gives his name as Colonel George Montgomery, and who tells him that if he will call at 141 St. John's Avenue, Brooklyn, he will be given work. Tolliver goes, and after agreeing to change the spelling of his name to Taliaferro, and to help the colonel in some mysterious business in which he is engaged, he, too, is rendered unconscious by means of drugged liquor.

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## PART II.—THE ADVENTURE OF THE FURNISHED APARTMENTS

### I.

The Statement of Mr. Rodney Tolliver, of New York—Continued.

**A**T first it was nothing but a strange face that bent over me; a thin, narrow face of a saturnine cast, set with two black eyes of extraordinary brightness and informed with an inquisitive expression wherein there was also something of anxiety—or of solicitude.

This masklike vision seemed to float above me unsubstantially, as a part of the general incoherence of the particularly vivid nightmare that I had for hours been assuring myself that I was undergoing. For many minutes, I suppose, I merely lay still and stared up at the pallid face, and wondered when it would vanish, or float away, or mysteriously transform itself into something equally grotesque.

But it did not go away. It stayed persistently. I looked it over, and marveled that it seemed to be so real and tangible. I could see the lights dancing in the pupils of the eyes, the stubby growth of dark beard that incrustated the chin and jowls, the very network of fine wrinkles that webbed about the eyes; and finally I made out that the lips were moving, with monotonous regularity, as though repeating over and over again some message intended for my ears.

So the thing was trying to speak to me, was it? I smiled feebly, I fancy, thinking that I was quite prepared for verbal developments, after the insane gyrations of my muddled brain throughout that interminably long, long night.

But the words, whatever they were, were lost—drowned in the drumming noise, the rush and roar and *crash-crash-crash* that was forever sounding in my ears, like the long roll of surf

upon a rockbound coast. I thought that I was struggling to catch the import of the phrases, but the best that I could do was to make out something that sounded remarkably like my name, insistently iterated:

"Tolliver—Tolliver—Tolliver."

That, I presume, at length brought me to consciousness. In all likelihood, that whole affair had not taken up five minutes—or even three, for that matter; on waking from dreams, such things are magnified gigantically by the action of an overwrought imagination.

I attempted to sit up on my couch—as I thought it; but a thin, cold, bloodless sort of a hand was pressed upon my brow and I was held down. The lips moved again, and I now was able to comprehend.

"Don't rise, sir, I beg of you," said a pleasant-sounding voice. "'Tisn't at all necessary, I assure you. I must beg your pardon for rousing you at such an unseemly hour, to tell the truth. But—does this belong to you?"

An envelope was thrust in front of my eyes—a long, fat envelope, inscribed with angular characters that seemed trying to dance madly. I stared at it and back to the face, opening my lips to speak. A dry rattle issued from my throat—no more than that.

"You're Mr. R. Tolliver?" said the voice belonging to the face.

"Eh—yes," I gasped, huskily.

"Then this does belong to you, sir"—triumphantly. "I found it on the floor, sir, just beneath the curtain, and concluded that you had dropped it from your pocket while undressing. No—no thanks. The pleasure is all mine, upon my word."

With that the envelope was thrust into my fingers, which closed upon it mechanically. The face vanished abruptly, with a friendly nod. There was a tinkle of metal, and darkness closed in upon that place wherein I lay panting.

After that I believe I slept, or lapsed into unconsciousness of some sort; for my memory is a blank until I sat up suddenly and bumped my head smartly

on a wooden surface that overhung my couch.

This caused me to see stars. I lay down again, still in blank darkness, and was aware that the place was unconscionably hot and close. The air seemed thick and heavy, stifling. And there were aloe in my mouth.

I moved my tongue mechanically, and it felt dry as any bone; my lips were feverish and cracked, and the whole interior of my mouth was as though caked with bitter dust. My throat burned with a thirst that I found almost unbearable.

"Brrrrr!" I exclaimed, angrily. How was I to assuage that devouring thirst? How was I to win to cooler, cleaner air? Where (this finally brought me to my senses, I think)—where was I, in point of fact?

I raised upon my elbow, cautiously, to prevent a repetition of that blow on the top of my hot and aching head; and, putting forth one hand, I felt around me for some clew as to my whereabouts. Indeed, had I been quite sane I should have known instantly, from the roaring racket that was going on so incessantly; but I was then much too confused to make sense of it.

My groping fingers first encountered rumpled and tossed bedclothing. That meant nothing. Then they felt of a rough cloth which seemed to be stretched tight over a wall some eighteen inches from where I lay. That also went for nothing. I swore feverishly and tried the opposite direction.

This time I learned something. I first touched a yielding, grained surface—some woven material that swung easily—a portière, in fact. This I pushed aside hastily. The tinkle of the metal rings on the curtain pole above sounded again, and a ray of murky light penetrated my resting place.

Almost stealthily I poked my head through the aperture in the curtains. And then I knew.

Opposite me were other draperies, exactly similar as to design and texture to those which I was handling. They were swaying in and out as though moved by a strong breeze, but fitful.

To one side I looked eagerly, and saw

no more than a long, deserted aisle, perhaps a yard in width, carpeted, hemmed in by walls of bellying portières, dimly illuminated by hanging lamps of brass.

The floor was vibrating steadily, like the floor of a machine shop; the lamps were swinging erratically; and there was a great noise all about me.

I knew now. I was in a sleeping car—in a Pullman forming a unit of one of the palatial expresses that dash madly out from New York every hour of the day and night.

But how came I there? And whither was I bound?

It made my head ache to think. I gave it up for the time being, and, moved to action by the scourge of my thirst, swung my legs out of my berth—it was a lower one—and stood reeling in the aisle. In another moment the train lurched and I was hurled bodily to the rear, bringing up—providentially, it seemed—hard against the water-cooler.

So far, so good. Other things might wait my pleasure. But as to my thirst! With prayers of thanksgiving I filled and drained the glass several times; then, somewhat refreshed, staggered back toward my berth.

Halfway there I was brought up smartly by a terrible thought. I had taken no pains to fix the location of that berth in my memory; now I knew no more where it was than I did the time o' day. And I did most consumedly want to lie down and rest my throbbing head, my weary bones and pain-racked muscles.

"Oh! the devil!" I muttered, glumly.

But that invocation was answered by no being more terrifying than a negro porter. He appeared at the forward end of the car, saw me and came quickly down.

He was a short, stocky darky—a personified grin. I grabbed him roughly by the arm.

"See here," I demanded, "do you know the number of my berth?"

"Yore berth, Mistah Tolliver?" He called me by name! "Yassir, I knows yore berth, sah. This is it, sah. How's yo' feeling this mawnin', sah?"

"Like the deuce!" I grumbled, plumping myself down on the edge of the berth and simultaneously noticing that I was decently attired for rest in new blue and white striped pajamas—which added to my general bewilderment.

"Look here, What's-your-name!" I insisted. "What train is this?"

The black face was momentarily lightened by a row of gleaming white teeth.

"W'y, doan' yo' know, Mistah Tolliver, sah? This hyeh train's the Louisiana Limited, sah, on the Pennsylvaniay."

I stared.

"Like blazes!"

"Yassah, that's jes' what hit is, sah. 'Deed 'tis, Mistah Tolliver, sah!"

I conceded that point.

"Where are we now?"

"Le's see, sah." He hauled out a thick, nickel-plated watch and consulted it with an air. "We done lef' Washin'-ton haff'n hour ago, sah. Hit's eight o'clock, sah."

I put my head into my hands and considered the chaos of the visible world.

"How the dickens do you know my name?"

"Gen'leman what brought yo' aboard las' night done tole me, sah. He done gimme this to take keer er yo', sah." He exhibited a five-dollar bill with visible pride and joy.

"What gentleman?"

"Ah dunno, sah. Yo' had orter know, sah. Leastways, yo' would ha' remembered ef yo' hadn't been——"

"What are you hesitating about? Out with it. Was I full?"

He exploded into a joyous laugh.

"'Deed yo' was, sah. Yo' was happy ez a June bug on a sweet pertater vine, sah, an' the minute yo' put yo' haid on that pillow yo' was daid to the wo'ld."

"That's pleasant, I'm sure. Look here, can you get me a B. and S.?"

"Ah reckon Ah kin, suh."

"Well, you try right hard—and get back here quick! Understand?"

"Yassah."

He vanished. I lay down. When he returned I took the drink, assimilated

it with care, and pulled up my window curtain. A dull gray light filtered in, and for a little while I lay still and watched a variegated landscape that swept past.

It was raining very purposefully and dismally. By that I knew that the porter had told the truth. Only south of Washington could there be rain instead of snow. I was beginning to remember things in an exasperatingly vague and unsatisfactory way, you see; I remembered that there had been a blizzard howling in New York town.

After a long time—an interval filled with the sounds made by my fellow passengers rising and dressing—I began to think connectedly. Up to that time a sort of stupor had possessed me, and I had lain content to doze and rest without thought.

But now, by accident, I put my hand upon what felt like a thick wad of crumpled paper. I picked it up, held it to the light and smoothed it over. The envelope!

In an instant the face of the man who had handed it me flashed across my mental vision; and was gone. In its place remained an overpowering curiosity as to the contents of that envelope.

And with that came enlightenment to some degree; for it was addressed boldly, in a large, round hand, to

*Mr. R. Taliaferro,  
Personal and Important.*

Now, I was not "R. Taliaferro." At the same time I recollected that I had agreed to be "R. Taliaferro." It was clear that the inclosure was intended for my private eye.

And yet, at this point, I felt it wise to restrain my burning impatience. It was time to rise and dress and have my berth made up for the day; a cautious peep down the aisle showed me that I was almost the only passenger who was keeping his bed. The man in the upper compartment was already bestirring himself. It behooved me likewise to move.

This I did. Presently, when I had dressed, my porter reappeared and be-

came obsequiously attentive. Did I care to breakfast just yet?

I shook my head. The other occupant of my section was already gone forward to the dining car, and I could count on having half an hour to myself for the undisturbed perusal of my letter. I bade the darky make up the berth, which he did without delay, and settled down to my task.

But first I glanced around the car to see if I could identify the person who had rescued my personal and important communication from the floor. I could see nothing of him. Indeed, the incident was so hazy and confused in my mind that I was well-nigh inclined to believe it no more than a distorted figment of my imagination.

And so, slitting the flap of the envelope carefully with my penknife, I drew forth the inclosures.

I say inclosures for the reason that I found more—much more—than I had dreamed of in my wildest flights of fancy. And my state of mind was by no means of the calmest, as you may imagine, when you consider one fact which I have neglected to set down in its proper place; that in dressing I had discovered myself to be the possessor of an entirely new outfit of clothes, from hat to shoes.

Nothing that I knew for a part of my own raiment had been left me—not even underclothing or a handkerchief. The pockets of my coat I found well stocked with the little things a man lugs around with him—keys, a penknife, a little nail file, and so forth, to say nothing of a plentiful supply of cigars. But none of these things had I ever before possessed; they were all brand new to my proprietorship.

And thus my imagination had been stimulated to the most fantastic speculations. This is what the letter actually contained:

A second envelope, sealed and similarly inscribed; three brass trunk checks; tickets—regulation through passage and sleeping-car section—from New York to New Orleans; a neat, walrus leather bill fold containing one thousand dollars—to me, untold wealth

—in bills ranging from ones to a five-hundred dollar gold certificate; a card-case stocked with various unintelligible memoranda in what was apparently my own handwriting, and a number of cards, engraved in script as follows:

MR. RODNEY TALIAFERRO

— ESPLANADE AVENUE

There was also a small booklet, paper bound, entitled "Pocket Guide to New Orleans"—a miniature street directory, with a large and fairly well-printed map in the back of it.

But the cardcase capped the climax of my thorough stupefaction. There was something so completely personal about it. It was by no means new; the leather, of a good quality, had worn shiny on the edges. On the outside my initials had been monogrammed in colors—and the tints were worn and faded from long use. The contents, too, were of a nature totally obscure to me; those memoranda—which I had undoubtedly written, since the chirography was so plainly my own—had, some of them, been written two years previously, as was indicated by the scribbled dates!

It was then, while looking at that little leathern book, that I began to doubt my sanity. I examined myself with increasing wonderment. The clothes which I wore—they were all I had to put on—fitted me to a nicety; and yet never in my born days had I been possessed of attire so distinctively Southern in cut and fashion. I had never worn a sombrero-like slouch hat of black felt; on the other hand, this hat fitted me, its band was discolored by perspiration, and my initials were on the inside of the crown, in gilt papier-maché letters!

"Look here, my son," I said, slowly, "let us consider this thing reasonably. For some reason or other, you lost control of yourself and got most swinishly

intoxicated last night. You are not yourself now—you suffer from an hallucination. Therefore get something in your stomach in the way of solid food, and these illusions will dissipate by degrees. Postpone everything until you have eaten."

That seemed eminently sensible advice. I prepared to take it by bestowing the miscellaneous contents of the large envelope about my person. Thereafter I proceeded to the dining car, breakfasted with an appetite that does not as a rule appertain unto the stomach of a man with what is vulgarly termed a "hold-over," and at once went to the smoking car, where, over one of the excellent cigars I had found in my pocket, I gave my attention to the letter contained within the smaller envelope.

It was of considerable length and neatly typewritten. There was no mistaking the meaning of a single phrase—nor any understanding of the thing as a whole, so far as I was concerned. It follows:

BROOKLYN, Jan. 13th.

MY DEAR MR. TALIAFERRO:

(For you must bear in mind you are to spell and write your name as above from this time forward.)

I deeply regret to say that, in view of the rather powerful effect upon you of our famous corn whisky, I fear you have but little recollection as to the precise terms of our agreement. I will, therefore, recapitulate as briefly as possible.

You have bound yourself to serve me with implicit obedience for a term of two calendar months from this date. I have bound myself to provide you with all expenses, even down to spending money, lodgings, clothes and board, during that term, and further to reimburse you for your services with the sum of five thousand dollars, payable at the termination of our contract, on the twelfth of next April.

My instructions to you, which I depend upon you to follow without question, even to the smallest detail, follow:

First—You are to proceed to New Orleans by the train upon which you find yourself while reading this. You



will thereupon go at once to No. — Esplanade Avenue (the number corresponding to that upon my engraved cards), where you will find bachelor apartments, completely furnished, with a negro valet in attendance, who will profess to have served you for years. You will not contradict him, nor will you seek to swerve him from his statement. His name is 'Rastus. You will take up your residence in these apartments, and continue to live therein until such time as I release you from my service.

Second—Your conduct of life during this period will be that of a New Orleans young man about town, as exactly as you can pattern it. You will meet various persons who will claim your acquaintance, and you will associate with them upon terms of equality; you will, furthermore, in no manner, shape, nor form seek to controvert their claims of old acquaintance with you. This applies in every instance.

Third—You will constantly sign your name, when necessity requires you to do so, as Rodney Taliaferro. This will be no strain upon your conscience, since it is really your name; your customary mode of spelling it being a mere Northern corruption.

Fourth—In answer to inquiries, if inquiries of such nature be made, you will reply that you have arranged satisfactorily your business abroad, and that you are now prepared to take up a permanent residence in New Orleans. If questioned more particularly, you will assume a reserve and say that you do not care to go into further details.

Fifth—If at any time or place prior to and including April 12th, you should meet or see me in the street, you will not recognize me by word or gesture.

Sixth—In all other matters you will conduct yourself with discretion, entering into no entangling alliances beyond those which you will be given to understand already exist.

In other words, you will cease, for the time being, to be Rodney Tolliver, of New York, and will assume the habits and mode of life of a non-existent person—Rodney Taliaferro, of New Or-

leans. I regret that circumstances do not permit me to take you more wholly into my confidence. I can only assure you that I have good and sufficient reasons of a business nature for employing you in this innocent masquerade. You will find in this envelope the sum of one thousand dollars, which you will be able to spend freely, inasmuch as additional expense money will be forthcoming when needed. You will also find your railway tickets, trunk checks, etc., together with a pocket map of the city of New Orleans, with which you will at once familiarize yourself, in order that you may be forced to exhibit no lack of knowledge concerning the city or its places of interest.

Again regretting that circumstances do not permit me to give you these instructions a second time by word of mouth—for your early appearance in New Orleans is an essential part of my plans—I have the honor to be

Faithfully yours,

GEORGE MONTGOMERY.

I folded the letter carefully and replaced it in my breast pocket. I lighted a second cigar, and set my wits to work upon what seemed an impenetrable mystery.

The train sped on through a land fairly teeming with interest for me, who had never before set eyes upon it; but now my eyes were all for inward contemplation of the inexplicable.

I felt vaguely confused and ill treated. I had been tricked—as event after event of the past two days recalled itself to my memory, in its proper order, this became more assured to my mind—I had been tricked into putting my name to a contract, the character of which I could not at the time comprehend. I was given to understand that I had agreed to perform certain services for Colonel George Montgomery, the very nature of which reeked of the underhand.

The underhand! That meant, possibly, the dishonorable. It spelled, for all I knew, the criminal intrigue. The matter shaped itself like a page from some middle-age romance; the spirit of

medieval intrigue was as the breath of its being.

But to what end? Toward what tended this formidable conspiracy (if I guessed aright its nature)? What was to be accomplished by the services demanded of me?

I confessed myself baffled. I may have been slow of wit, but then I saw neither rhyme nor reason in the affair. The incomprehensible walled me about on every side, like a veritably tangible blank wall of stone, against which my speculations dashed themselves to no purpose.

I saw nothing clearly, save that my feet were on the verge of carrying me into the paths of dishonor—how or why, I did not conceive; but the suggestion of the secretive in the affair was totally repellent to my every instinct.

Moreover, I had been played with. Oh! I saw that clearly! I was convinced that I had been made a tool of, was like to be used as a cat's-paw in some business, to touch which would soil my hands. Even in my desperation I have ever made toward the ways of decency, and so now, abruptly, I found myself arrived at a conclusion upon the grounds which seemed to me unchangeable.

I was resolved to have nothing more to do with the business of Colonel George Montgomery, the man who had so greatly altered his appearance for a reason quite unconvincing, when one came to consider it in the light of cold afterthought. Metaphorically, I washed my hands of him and his schemes, whatever their nature—and that much as I needed the lift in the world which his proffered reward would mean to me.

The result of my ponderings thus solidified into unalterable determination, I rose and walked through the train, thinking over what action I had best take.

That was a simple matter, when it presented itself finally. I would leave the train at the next station, put up at a convenient hotel and telegraph Montgomery that I could not go on with his business without being taken more completely into his confidence, without be-

ing given some satisfactory understanding of his aims, of the end to be accomplished by means so surreptitious.

With this thought, I summoned my porter—the same with whom I had talked earlier in the day.

"What is the next station?" I asked him, without circumlocution.

He gazed at me, a smile broadening on his round, black face, his white teeth glistening like an inlay of ivory in the ebony of his countenance.

"Next station, Mistah Tolliver, sah? Does I understand yo' wants to know whar dis hyeh train makes its next stop, sah?"

"Just that, you grinning idiot. Are you going to answer me, boy?"

"Yas sah, mos' cert'n'y I is, sah. 'Scuse me, sah, but hyeh's somefing I was tole to give yo', sah."

He grinned yet more broadly into my astounded eyes, drew an oblong envelope from a pocket, and put it into my hands. Then, before I recovered, he had quietly effaced himself from the scene.

"What the deuce will this be?" I growled, angrily, promising that darky the maximum of a tongue-lashing for his astonishing insolence. Almost dazed, I opened the note, which was addressed to me—that is, to "R. Taliaferro, Esquire."

"My Dear Taliaferro," I read: "This is to be handed to you only in event of your contemplating a foolish course of action. The porter is instructed to give you this should you seem to contemplate leaving the train anywhere this side of New Orleans. He has been paid to do this, and is not to be blamed. Permit me to assure you that I have not intrusted you with a mission of a nature so delicate without making sure that you will carry out my wishes. Permit me also to remind you that you have passed your word in guarantee of your good faith. You stand committed to finish your journey, according to my instructions. Other movement on your part will not be countenanced by

"Yours truly,

"GEORGE MONTGOMERY."

"Should you persist in your folly, evidence of the truth of what I have stated will be promptly forthcoming. You stand well advised to carry out your part of our contract."

I sat still for a moment, a flush of rage coloring my thoughts.

I was threatened! With what, I cared not. It was sufficient that this man Montgomery dared to threaten me with his displeasure. That settled the case, finally and forever.

My porter appeared, hesitant, in the far end of the car. He approached in obedience to my summons. I reached into my pockets and found a dollar bill which I handed him.

"The next station?" I demanded.

He told me. In my anger at what followed, I forgot the name of the city; nor to this day do I recall it.

"How soon do we stop there?"

"In half an hour, sah."

"Very good. I have decided to leave the train there. Take these checks to the baggage car, and tell them to put my trunks off."

"Yas, sah."

His brown-pink palm was outstretched, when there came an interruption which prevented his ever fingering my baggage checks.

A slim, dark man, who had been sitting across the aisle, quietly absorbed in a paper-covered novel, abruptly arose, stepped to my section and bent over to whisper in my ear.

"Pardon me," he said, with a certain deference, "but may I induce you to reconsider?"

The porter drew off. I stared at the intruder.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," I told him, stiffly. "I hardly understand your attitude."

He turned and glanced about us as though to assure himself that we were in no danger of being overheard. In that moment I recognized him for the man who had handed me my envelope when first I had awakened that morning. I started; here was a tangible clew to my mystery, after all.

The porter was slowly drawing away.

None of the other passengers gave us the least heed. My courteous intruder again bent toward me, and spoke in a low and guarded tone. A casual observer might have thought him imparting some confidential little joke, so quietly genial and pleasant was his manner.

"I merely wish to request you to think well before putting into effect any plan which you may contemplate toward leaving this train."

"By what right——" I began, hotly.

"One moment. Let me explain. I am a Reutlinger detective." He threw back the lapel of his coat, displaying a small badge. "I am under instructions to see that you go on to New Orleans."

"You—you——" I gasped.

"Don't misunderstand me. I am not threatening you. I merely advise. I am informed that you are conveying certain valuables between New York and New Orleans, for a private party. If you leave the train before reaching your destination, it is to be taken as evidence of intended fraud."

"And in that event?" I asked, recovering something of my composure.

"In that event, I am sorry to say that I shall be forced to have you apprehended by the local police."

His eyes never left mine; they were cool and clear and determined in expression. I saw that he meant what he stated, that he would act as he proposed.

A minute passed, during which I thought swiftly. The Reutlinger man smiled slightly, and made some inconsequential observation concerning the weather—so maintaining his attitude of a good-humored chance acquaintance.

At first I tried to look him down, defiantly; and failed. I was beginning to understand that he was right, that I had best act with caution. On my person I had the sum of one thousand dollars, intrusted to me for a certain purpose, to carry out which I stood pledged in honor. If I attempted to evade this trust—the detective's menace was justified.

In other words, I was powerless until I reached New Orleans. Disgustedly, I

settled back in my seat, and, catching the porter's eye, shook my head in negation to his mute inquiry.

"You are right," I told the Reutlinger man. "I will stay. But will you be kind enough to inform your employer that I wish to resign my trust immediately upon reaching New Orleans?"

"I am instructed to do so in event of such an attitude on your part, sir. You will pardon me for my interference. Do I understand that you intend to carry out your part of the agreement?"

"Only until relieved of my trust. That must be at the earliest possible opportunity," I stated, firmly. "Meanwhile—I stick to my word."

He returned to his seat with a bow and a smile. I nodded briefly, and, thoroughly disgruntled and stunned by the completeness of Montgomery's plans, abandoned myself to bitter denunciations of my own stupidity in allowing myself to be drawn into such an affair.

And presently, quite unable to glimpse even a ray of light in the black heart of this mystery, I took up the first book that came to my hand—which happened to be the guide of the city of New Orleans.

## II.

That day wore on drearily enough. I had much food for thought, but it was unpleasant to my taste; nevertheless, I found cause to swallow it without making a face wry enough to attract attention.

It seemed that I had surrendered my liberty for a period of sixty days; a glance across the car aisle at my imperturbable friend, the Reutlinger man, was sufficient to resolve any doubts which I might have held on that subject. The thought, however, soured my naturally even and sunny disposition; in fact, I've no doubt but that I sulked like a bear with a sore head.

Do what I could, I saw no way of escape from the position into which I had managed to blunder so successfully. Upon one thing only was I able to determine; and that was that I should ac-

cept the situation only until I had reached New Orleans, when I intended to put myself into immediate communication with Montgomery with a view to severing completely my relations with him.

The detective appeared to understand that such was my attitude. At any rate, he did not bother me throughout the remainder of the day, but rather kept his eyes persistently on the pages of his book, which seemed to have for him an absorbing interest. I envied him its possession; I longed for something to swerve my own thoughts from their one eternal round of futile conjecture—and found it only in the trite pages of the guide to New Orleans.

At dusk I dined, and soon after—as early, indeed, as any one of my fellow passengers—I turned into my berth, and, although somewhat worried for the safety of my thousand dollars, dropped off to sleep almost instantly and slept peacefully the night through.

The morning found me more cool and composed, more inclined to accept the inevitable, to laugh at my fears of the day before. Ere I dressed, indeed, I caught myself arguing that I had no cause for suspicion of any sort, no tangible reason to believe that I had not been employed on some errand perfectly legitimate, although requiring secrecy in its execution.

With that uppermost in my mind, I rose and went to breakfast—having first assured myself that my money was safe; as it was, in fact. My second impulse was to look about for the Reutlinger man. Him I missed at once.

Evidently he had left the train at some stop made during the night. At any rate, I searched thoroughly as I thought, but found no trace of him in any of the cars; a total stranger was occupying what had been his section, and it was plain enough that I was no longer under surveillance—at least, not under his. That puzzled me a bit, until I considered that he had, in all probability, merely resigned his job to some one unknown to me. I doubted much that I was to be left unwatched, unguarded, during the succeeding twenty-

four hours. With the sample of my temper and mental attitude which Montgomery, or his agents, had received, it was little likely that they would trust with childish faith in my succeeding good intent and behavior.

Nor were they so foolish. Though it was not merely to test this theory that I took that action which I did immediately upon alighting from the train, in the New Orleans terminal, at six that evening.

It was already twilight—a dark, damp twilight at that. The storm which had scoured the eastern half of these United States had not touched Louisiana, it developed; but on the other hand New Orleans had been indulging in a little private rainfall of its own. The down-pour had ceased by the time of my entrance into the city, but a shroud of dark and lowering clouds still obscured the day's dying light, and the gutters were running knee-deep with roiled waters. Already the electric lights were springing into life.

As I stepped from the train, a negro boy in some sort of livery stepped up and insisted upon burdening himself with the small hand bag with which I had thoughtfully been provided. I surrendered it to him with the understanding that he was to pilot me to a cab. A moment later I found myself at the step of a comfortably appointed vehicle—appearing to be one of the licensed hacks. A plump negro man was on the box; he bent a respectful ear for the address which I was to give him.

I tossed the boy a quarter, and he scurried off at once, promptly losing himself in the crowd. And—

"The St. Charles," I told the driver, mentioning the name of a hotel which I had always heard associated with New Orleans.

He touched the brim of his hat with the hand in which was held his whip.

"Yas, sah," he said, cheerfully.

I stepped inside, and drew to the door. The cab at once set forth at a rapid pace. For a little while I peered out of a window curiously, but the swiftly darkening twilight blurred the aspect of the unknown streets, and my

unfamiliarity with them robbed them in a certain measure of any great interest. I conceived that I should inspect them more at my leisure in daylight, and sat back wearily—fagged with the physical fatigue of my journey no more than through the mental strain induced by my peculiar position.

I think the drive must have lasted fully three-quarters of an hour. I know that I was growing impatient by the time we finally drew up at a curb.

The driver jumped down, and held open the door, and I piled out instantly, thankful enough to escape the cramped confinement of the carriage. In another second, with a really astonishing display of agility for a negro of his bulk, the man was back on the box.

"Hold on, there!" I cried at him, angrily.

Indeed, I think I had cause enough for anger; for, instead of being taken to the Hotel St. Charles, as I had asked, I had been deposited unceremoniously in front of a tall, gaunt-looking house of the old Spanish style of architecture.

No lights appeared in any of its windows, save one on the second floor; and that was but a dim and feeble illumination. A high iron gate protected its courtyard from invasion, set flush with the entrance to the arched carriage way which ran through the middle of the ground floor. Through this dark tunnel I caught a glimpse of a watery and desolate sort of a courtyard, decorated with several bedraggled-looking plants, or dwarfed trees.

Certainly this was no world-famed hostelry—this ancient and uninviting residence.

"What's this?" I demanded, furiously, of my cabby.

He was gathering up the reins. He paused ere touching his horse with the whip and turned to me a blank and stolid, round and black visage.

"Hit's all right, sah," he said, with evasive reassurance; "hit's all right. Ah done been paid, Mistah Taliaferro, sah. Thank yo' jes' ez much!"

"Hold on, you limb of Satan! I thought I told you to take me to the St. Charles——"

"Did yo', sah? 'Deed, an' Ah thinks yo' mus' be mistaken, sah. Ah's suah yo' said to take yo' honor to Esplanade Avenue, sah. 'Scuse me, but Ah's got 'n 'gagement."

He flicked the lash over the animal's back. I shook my fist at his broad back, in my utter exasperation, promising to break his black neck if ever again I laid eyes on him. Though by then he was too far away to hear—or care, for that matter.

I saw it all, again. I had been tricked—befooled completely. My admiration for the thoroughness with which Montgomery had planned was, however, tempered by my dawning fear of, and hate for, the man. He was too, too far-sighted; he left nothing to chance, had foreseen every contingency and every impulse that might move me to disobey his orders. The thing savored a bit of white magic—of omniscience. I then began to be a little afraid of Colonel George Montgomery—whoever he was or pretended to be.

The darkness deepened momentarily, but I forbore a moment to enter this house. Instead, I set my bag down on the damp flagstones which formed the sidewalk, and turned to try to get some notion as to the character of the neighborhood.

It was a curious aspect that Esplanade Avenue showed my Northern eyes; and yet, in a moment, I saw that it was a street of the utmost respectability, in one of the best quarters of the town, speaking socially, if not one of the richest.

The houses that rubbed shoulders with that in front of which I stood were all of a type—ancient-appearing edifices of stone in good repair, ornamented for the most part with wide balconies of iron, wrought with an eye toward the artistic; houses somewhat blank and stark as to their street face, but alive with lights and with the signs of inward comfort and cheer.

More than this I failed to see clearly. It was with an imprecation that I finally resigned myself to my fate—for which read Montgomery. I picked up my valise in desperation.

"The devil!" I swore more sulphurously upon reconsideration. "I'm in for it, it seems. The man's too cute for me. So here goes for a look at these famous bachelor apartments of mine."

To thoroughly test matters, I turned aside and made as though to walk up the street, away from the house. I had taken no more than six paces ere a shadow detached itself from another shadow, which was that of a tree, some slight distance ahead, advancing as if with the intention of intercepting me.

"Watched closely!" I conceded, furiously; and turned on my heel.

There was a door set in the wall by the side of the iron gates. I rang a little bell which I found on the jamb, and whirled sharply around, with my back to the door.

My "shadow" was, at the moment, passing; and an electric arc, swinging high above the green foliage of the trees set in the parked middle of the avenue, opportunely sputtered, throwing a bright lance of light upon his face.

"Well," I admitted, "I am damned!"

The man was my Reutlinger detective. He had not abandoned me, after all, it seemed. I began to have a high opinion of his astuteness.

At that moment the door opened. I swung about and faced a brightly lighted doorway, with an aged, white-headed negro servant standing aggressively on the threshold.

We looked each other up and down for a few seconds. The darky's face was so kindly of expression, his attitude so watchful and yet so simple, so alert and yet so naïve, that I must have smiled.

In an instant I was overwhelmed.

"Marse Rod!" fairly shouted the old fellow. "Ah 'clare tuh goodness ef hit ain't yo'seff! Lawdy, Lawdy, but yo' is a sight for ol' eyes, Marse Rod! Gimme yore bag, sah! Fo' de Lawd's sake, wuffer dis hyeh niggah keepin' yo' standin' on de step fo', anyway?"

I remembered my little lesson.

"Well, 'Rastus," I said, as pleasantly as I could, "you weren't expecting me, eh?"

"'Deed'n Ah wasn't—who's dat?"

By then I was in the hall, and 'Rastus had closed the door behind him. But incontinently, upon the sound of my voice, he dropped my hand bag, and came shuffling toward me.

"Who's dat talkin'?" he demanded. "Look hyeh, man, who is yo'? Lemme see yore face? Ah 'clare I thought yo' was——" I turned beneath a lamp to look him squarely in the eye. He stopped, an expression of total consternation settling upon his face. "Why," he expostulated, "yo' is Marse Rodney Taliaferro!"

"That's my name, 'Rastus."

This was pure comedy to me. For the moment I lost sight of its significance, and had interest only for the old negro's bewilderment, which I found infinitely amusing—in stage parlance, "comic relief," after the rather strenuous life I had been leading.

He looked me over carefully, even affectionately, shook his head doubtfully, sighed and took up the satchel.

"Yo's Marse Rod, all right, sah," he assented. "But yo' cert'n'y did give dis hyeh niggah a staht. Le's see, yo's been gone nigh onto a whole yeah, Marse Rod, trapesing 'round in furring pahts, and Ah done 'spect yo's powerful changed. Ah shorely didn't know yo' voice, sah. 'Scuse me, sah."

"Lead the way, 'Rastus," I told him. "I suppose I am changed."

"Yo' is, sah, yo' is!" he assured me, fervently. "Never knowed nuffin' like hit en all mah bawn days. But yo's Marse Rod, all the same."

He seemed satisfied; and I comforted myself with the thought that he was right. I knew of no other Rodney Taliaferro in this world. And yet it might be——

Before I had time to pursue this train of thought to its logical terminus, 'Rastus had preceded me up a single flight of stairs, and, throwing open a hall door, stood aside to give me precedence into a faintly lighted room.

"Welcome home, Marse Rod!" he told me, enthusiastically.

"Thank you, 'Rastus."

I entered with as easy an assumption of familiarity with the scene as I could

master. By then I had come to the conclusion that the whole affair was of the nature of some huge hoax—some tremendous practical joke. The thought which had occurred to me a moment gone, for some strange reason, now appealed to me as quite too absurd for a moment's consideration.

Besides, I had my instructions, to which I had agreed. Upon a sense of honor—perhaps mistaken—I conceived that I stood. Until I could get into negotiation with Montgomery and definitely withdraw from all connection with him, I was bound to act out the rôle he had written for me.

But I assured myself rather confidently that that interview was not likely to be postponed, in view of my actions of the past two days. With a thousand dollars at stake, Montgomery was not the man I imagined him if he lost time in safeguarding his interests. I looked for him by morning at the latest.

In the meantime, I was content to examine the apartments to which he had so strangely introduced me. I found them of an absorbing interest.

'Rastus switched on a blaze of electric light, and moved over to the long windows, opening upon a balcony, and overlooking the street, which formed the greater part of the front of the room. Here he turned to the slats of the Venetian blinds; and then, receiving my assent to his suggestion that I would want a bath and my evening clothes, shuffled out into a little hall. I heard him talking excitedly to himself in another room for some minutes; a little later the bell rang, and from the subsequent sound I had no difficulty in deducing the fact that my trunks were being brought upstairs.

But by then I was lost to every consideration save those thoughts which were roused by my inspection of the single room wherein I stood.

It was large, and very high as to the ceiling; a long room rather than one narrow. The street wall, as I have indicated, was practically nothing but two great windows, running from floor up the full height of the walls. Another boasted a great marble chimney-piece,



with a large open fireplace, the whole surmounted by one of those ponderous, gilt-framed mirrors of the old days—of the earlier days of the nineteenth century.

As to the rear wall, it was broken in two places—in one for a low door giving into the hallway wherein 'Rastus had disappeared; in the other for an arched opening, covered with light portières of summery material, between whose folds I could discern the outlines of a heavy brass bedstead and a dressing table in the alcove room beyond.

But it was the personal character of the furnishings that compelled my most intense interest.

They were mostly of ancient design—large, broad and deep armchairs, upholstered in shiny leather, showing signs of long service, a big mahogany table occupying the center of the room, smaller tables of rich design and admirable workmanship here and there, a small escritoire of dark wood intricately carved by hand, a heavy bookcase stuffed full to overflowing with books of all shapes and sizes and bindings—a thousand articles fairly crying aloud their testimony of ownership by a man of taste and refinement.

Books and magazines were scattered about, giving an impression that the room had been vacated hardly for more than a day or two. I picked up one of the periodicals—a New York publication dated a year back, but scrupulously free from dust, its pages half cut. Across the cover—I was forced to the conclusion—I had written my name in assertion of my proprietorship!

Turning almost dazed from this rank anachronism, I glanced about the walls, which were hung with a variety of pictures; some paintings, some engravings, a few modern photogravures, with here and there a photograph.

Of the latter, one was an excellent portrait of a man—a cabinet size. I hardly know what attracted my attention to it, for it was inconspicuously placed, but I saw it first among the lot and stood before it in two seconds.

The man was myself—no manner of doubt as to that. I turned into the bed-

room, picked up a hand glass from the dressing table, and silently compared my features with those of my counterfeit presentiment. There was absolutely no difference, in so far as I could see. Only—it had been taken two years prior to that date by a man named Clark, whose studios were on Canal Street, New Orleans.

And never before that day had I set foot in the city.

With an incredulous exclamation, I gave it up. By this time I had begun to doubt my own sanity—seriously, indeed, to doubt my possession of my senses. I had a passing fear that I was bewitched or, in the latter-day acceptance of that term, hypnotized and under the influence of an intellect so powerful as to make me see and believe these things that were impossible.

"Clearly the height of absurdity," I muttered, and, abstractedly, removed a framed photograph from the chimney-piece. "Let's see whom I associate with—what manner of man—"

I stopped. It was a woman's face that was looking out at me from the little French-gilt frame; the face of a woman—rather, of a girl budding into her womanhood—of whom one might have dared dream reverently in his dreams, but whose surpassing loveliness seemed a thing hardly to be considered real, mortal, of this earth.

There were eyes that were perilously sweet, large, yet not overlarge, shadowed by lashes long and up-curved, speaking a language heady as ripe wine. There was a forehead low and broad and marvelously pure, unmarred by a single line, framed in the soft, sweeping curves of a *coiffure* a princess of the blood royal might envy. There was a nose that might have been chiseled by Phidias himself. There was a mouth of maddening seductiveness, full-lipped and distractingly sweet. There were—

But, if I rave now, I was quite mad then—insanely in love, for the first time in my life, with a girl whose existence I had never until that moment even surmised, for whose being nothing vouched but the picture in my hand.

Indeed, my fingers trembled, my

whole body shook with an uncontrollable agitation for a little while. I was scarcely able to do that which first came into my mind as a possible means for satisfying myself of this girl's identity; which was to take the cardboard from the frame and ascertain what, if anything, might have been written upon the back thereof.

I ripped it from the metal holder, well-nigh crazed with desire to know more of this entrancing beauty. Nor was I to be disappointed. A woman's hand had penned a few lines across the blank reverse of the picture. I shall never forget the words:

*To Rodney Taliaferro—  
To him in whose dear keeping is  
my heart—  
Delphine.*

In whose keeping? In mine! In Rodney Taliaferro's! I think it was then that I felt my reason tottering on its throne. It was then that I abandoned definitely everything in the shape of a desire to unravel the tangle of this mystery in the sinuous coils of which I stood enmeshed.

I turned the portrait over, placed it face upward on the mahogany table, and bent over it, looking long—Heaven alone knows how long!—and with absorbed earnestness into the eyes—the eyes that seemed to look up into mine with an ever-changing meaning, to be trying to convey to my intelligence some telepathic message which my poor wits were powerless to comprehend.

Or so, at least, I felt. And the world dropped from about me as I pondered that inscrutable expression—the world and its cares and my plight were as nothing. And then—

"Marse Rod, sah, yore baff's ready, sah."

'Rastus' voice brought me back to the realization of a mundane existence. I stared at him stupidly for a full minute ere I woke from my dream. After which I said, irritably: "Oh, go to the devil!" and, striding into the next room, began to throw off my clothes regardless of where they landed.

More than I desired anything in all

the world I wanted to ask the darcy for the name of that girl—her full name, and her address, and—and of many matters concerning her. The consciousness that I dared do no such thing was like a knife in my side; or as though my hands were bound, with Paradise within my reach.

For a question would undoubtedly rouse suspicion, and suspicion would lead to instant exposure, and exposure meant the loss of this woman who knew Rodney Taliaferro well enough to let him know that her heart was in his keeping.

Though I moved in a sort of dumb daze while I undressed, bathed, dressed partially, and allowed 'Rastus to shave me ere I donned the suit of evening clothes which he had unearthed from my trunks, and though I mechanically assented when he proposed that he should order dinner sent in for me from a nearby restaurant—through all this I was aware, as one realizes the gnawing agony of a broken heart, that the veil was lifted, that I, who had been crassly blind to the most self-evident of facts, had penetrated what until that hour had seemed impenetrable.

The minute the wish to know the truth had left me, I had comprehended the essential inwardness of the plot of Colonel George Montgomery.

I was not Rodney Taliaferro, of New Orleans—that "non-existent person" of whom Montgomery's letter advised me. I was Rodney Tolliver, of New York, a man resembling most miraculously his namesake and kinsman of the South, and now engaged in standing in that kinsman's shoes at the behest of a conscienceless scoundrel who schemed some mischief to the real Rodney Taliaferro through this deception.

What Montgomery hoped to accomplish by means of my masquerade I failed to see so clearly; but certainly I had sufficient grounds for believing his motive in keeping with the phase of his character I had seen. I believed him entirely unscrupulous.

But that was a side issue—now. My eyes had been opened; I saw the light—the danger signal of his villainy.

And if up to then I had protested against what I feared, but did not understand, and had at the same time weakly yielded when some little pressure had been brought to bear upon me, *now* at least my resolution was definitely formulated—a resolution both abiding and unshakable by any event or combination of circumstances within my power to imagine as possible.

I had made up my mind to pretend a passive obedience to Montgomery's commands, to play out my part—however thankless it might prove in the ultimate outcome—in the performance for which Montgomery had set the stage—and that whatever its nature, whether farce or drama, comedy or tragedy—till the last curtain.

But I would act for my own ends, not for those of my nominal employer. I would act in the interests, so far as I might judge, of the real Rodney Taliaferro, the man whom I believed related to me by ties of blood; and through it all I would relax not for a single moment my efforts to find him and apprise him concerning what was being conspired against his welfare and his interests.

In the rear of my bedroom, connected with the living room by the short hall which I have mentioned, there was a small dining room. Thither I was presently summoned by 'Rastus, and there I sat me down, and, thoughtfully deliberating ways and means toward the circumvention of Montgomery, disposed of an excellent dinner.

The old darky served me with exquisite attention, clucking solicitude to anticipate my every want. I began to envy this Rodney Taliaferro in whom I had just come to believe, who could command such a desirable mode of life. It became more and more apparent that he was a man of means ample to satisfy his least desire. But where the deuce was he all this time?

The hours had been full since my arrival in the city. When I had finished my coffee and strolled into the living room, I was surprised to remark, by the silvery chiming of an ormolu clock that it was already nine.

I went to the window, and looked out through the narrowed slats. Esplanade Avenue lay still and picturesque in a flood of moonlight; for the storm clouds had passed to the east, and now a sky of darkest blue, unflecked by a shred of cloud, though studded with a million glittering bosses, arched above the city.

Carriages were passing or waiting in front of some of the neighboring residences. I noticed that one was presently filled by a party of men and women in evening dress. The feminine voices, low and sweet of tone, thrilled gayly on the night's quiet, bland air.

After a bit I hoisted both blinds—the windows were already open—extinguished the lights, and, drawing up an easy-chair, settled down to enjoy my cigar in peace and comfort, if I was to be permitted so to do.

As a matter of fact, I found myself restless, in a state of strained, nervous expectancy. I seemed to be waiting for something to happen—something not precisely pleasant. Before long I remembered the reason: a visit from Montgomery was to be apprehended, and I was not quite settled in my mind as to in what manner I should treat with him.

'Rastus keeping discreetly in the background, I was not disturbed; and I passed into a brown study, a profound consideration of this strange affair in its every phase. Perhaps for this reason I failed to hear the tinkle of the door-bell; perhaps, again, it was not used.

At any rate, it was with an extreme astonishment that I found that my privacy was being invaded. The sole warning I received was a murmur of voices at the private door. I heard 'Rastus' deferential greeting, and then a little, delighted cry—a woman's voice. There followed a swish of silken skirts and the *tap-tap-tap* of small slippers.

By then I was on my feet, facing the rear of the room. A shaft of moonlight, having access through the French window at my back, fell over my shoulder with all the brilliance of a spot light from a calcium.

In this radiance a girl appeared sud-

denly, and paused. I caught my breath sharply, and dug my nails into the palms of my hands to restrain an exclamation.

She saw me—in my evening clothes no more than a shadowed shape, I suppose. Her eyes widened, and she blushed faintly. Her lips parted. One little, gloved hand went out toward me appealingly—or so it seemed.

"Rodney!"

There was the least shadow of dubiety in her tone. I dared not trust myself to speak—my voice would betray me, I feared. But there was madness rioting in my veins; in my temples the blood was hammering furiously, and I was lost to every honorable consideration. For which I have since paid penalty with many a bitter *Mea culpa!*

Silently I touched the switch upon the wall, and at once a flood of light enveloped us. The girl blushed, adorably

this time; and I saw that her eyes were wet with tears. She smiled, yet seemed to hesitate.

"Rodney!" she cried again.

"Yes," I whispered, huskily.

"Don't—don't keep me waiting, dear heart——"

"What?"

"The lights!" She stamped a foot impatiently. "Don't you know they can see from the street, stupid!"

Hastily I turned the switch again. The shadows closed about us; and in that moment she was in my arms, her head nestling upon my shoulder, her lips to mine.

"Rodney!"

This was after a little interval of pure lunacy on my part. I found my tongue—I dared speak now.

"Delphine!"

She was the girl of the photograph, you see.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

# THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE CLAIM

BY GEORGE AUSTIN SNOW

Which demonstrates some of the advantages and disadvantages of procrastination in modern business methods

**T**HOMAS SWAZEY, senior member of the firm of Swazey & Lawrence, dealers in crockery and glassware, looked up from his papers as the junior member entered the office, and said:

"Richards & May write us, this morning, that our last consignment is of absolutely no use to them. It seems it got caught in a wreck somewhere down the line, and is all smashed up. You had better put a claim in with the railroad, while it is fresh in its mind."

"I will see that it gets off in the first mail," was the reply. "Maybe we can

get it into this month's business. To-day is only the ninth."

An hour later the following communication was speeding toward the claim agent's office of the X. Y. Z. Railroad:

A box of glassware, consigned by us to Richards & May, has been received by them in a very bad condition. Your agent tells them this box was in a wreck near Colton on the third. We inclose you herewith our invoice for same, in amount of forty dollars, and await a speedy remittance.

"The X. Y. Z. seems to be showing a tendency to help us out in our Richards & May claim," the junior member re-

marked a day or two later, throwing a letter down on the senior member's desk. The latter picked it up, and read:

Yours of the ninth to hand. We have the matter of your claim under consideration, and will see that same is given our earliest attention.

"That is what I call push," commented the senior member. "Even railroads are beginning to realize that it pays to attend to matters of this sort with a little promptness." Then he laid the letter aside, and thought no more of it.

It was not until some time during the next month that the matter again came up.

"How shall I enter up that first consignment of glass to Richards & May?" the bookkeeper inquired one morning. "Profit and loss?"

"Thunderation, no!" was the reply. "Hasn't the railroad remitted for that yet? I had forgotten all about it. Miss Blake, take this letter, please."

The Saturday following brought this reply to the senior member's letter:

Yours of the sixth to hand. Your claim is still under investigation. We will give it our undivided attention and advise you as soon as possible. Thanking you for calling our attention to the matter, we are—

"I rather thought that would bring them to time," he said, after perusing the above, and the whole matter immediately gave way to other business transactions.

It was the junior member who, a month afterward, took the next whirl at it.

"I'll bet this will wake them up," he said, after dictating a sharp note, demanding immediate settlement of the claim.

Monday of the next week, he triumphantly flourished an official-looking envelope, bearing in one corner the card of the railroad.

"Takes young blood to bring them to time!" he cried. "I knew that last letter of mine would accomplish something." Then, tearing open the en-

velope, he quickly extracted the letter, and read:

In reference to your claim O1246-A-349, we beg to advise that this company has made it an invariable rule to refuse to allow claims for pig iron lost in transit. Your claim is therefore denied.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" he said. "Who in thunder said anything about pig iron? Miss Blake, a letter, please."

For the next fifteen minutes the office fairly reeked in brimstone, the junior member slowly pacing up and down, constructing a red-hot, scorching epistle for the edification of the claim agent of the X. Y. Z. Railroad.

The reply was received the next day. It read:

We seem to be unable to find any record of such a claim as you mention. Kindly send us at once all of the correspondence bearing on the subject.

An hour after the receipt of this the correspondence had been looked up and mailed. This brought the following, rather familiar acknowledgment:

Yours of the fifteenth to hand. We have the matter of your claim under consideration, and will see that same is given our earliest attention.

"I should think it was about time," said the senior member, "but I would rather have seen the forty dollars than this letter. In the meantime, we will keep up our end of the deal. Have Miss Blake write them every day, drumming them up."

One week, two weeks, three weeks elapsed, but the daily letters brought forth no response. Then, goaded to desperation, the junior member again took a hand in the game, and a regulation sizzler, such as only the junior member could evolve, was mailed. The answer came promptly:

In regard to the lifeboats, claimed by you to have been received in a damaged condition, we beg to state that this is a matter for you to take up with the shipper, and not with us. As the shipment was prepaid by him, claims for damages would have to be filed by him with the agent at shipping-point.

The junior member groaned. "Lifeboats, pig iron!" he snarled. "Let me at them. I'll tell them this time that we'll either get that forty dollars or tie up their whole blamed road. And I mean it, too."

If the X. Y. Z. worried over the threatened suspension of its traffic, it failed to show it in its reply, which read:

We seem to be unable to find any record of such a claim as you mention. Kindly send us at once all of the correspondence bearing on the subject.

"Didn't the blanked idiots write us that same letter once before?" growled the junior member, as he consigned the letter to the wastebasket. "How in blazes can we send them the correspondence when they have it already? Miss Blake!"

Two days later he nervously tore open another official-looking envelope, and read aloud to the senior member:

Yours to hand. You say you have no records regarding your claim. As we have nothing on file here, we fail to see how you expect to hold us accountable. We regret that we cannot allow this claim.

"Don't stop me!" he cried, throwing the letter down. "I want to get out in the open air and walk around a while. I've murder in my heart."

"How shall we route this stuff for the X. Y. Z.?" asked the shipping clerk, who had entered the room.

"What?" The junior member leaped high in the air. "Will!"—calling to the salesman—"have we sold anything to the X. Y. Z.? We have? When? That's the stuff. Terms, one per cent. for cash on date of shipment, you say? Whoop! They will, will they? I guess we'll show them a thing or two. Ship it by local. It will take at least a week to reach them, and by that time we'll have their check. But let me show you what to send. Just put that shipment of yours to one side for a day or so."

Ten days later the purchasing agent of the X. Y. Z., after undoing sundry wrappings, exposed to the light a choice assortment of broken glassware. "Hot

stuff to pay fifty dollars for!" he said. "Put in a claim."

The reply was received, special delivery. "There's a firm of hustlers," the purchasing agent said, then read:

Yours of the twenty-first to hand. We have the matter of your claim under consideration, and will see that same is given our earliest attention.

The next week, letter number two, also bearing a special delivery stamp, and being in reply to one sent the day before, was laid on the purchasing agent's desk:

In reference to your claim P. D. Q.—41144—Ante Domino 468-1/2, we beg to say that this company has made it an invariable rule to refuse to allow claims for lost, strayed or stolen canal boats. The claim is therefore denied.

"They must be crazy," he said, after he had finished reading the letter. "Write them again."

At 2 A. M. of the following morning the doorbell of the purchasing agent's house rang violently.

"Special delivery," was the laconic greeting accorded him, when, pajama-attired, he cautiously raised a bedroom window.

The purchasing agent descended the stairs, opened the door, and took the letter. Then, striking a light, he read:

We seem to be unable to find any record of such a claim as you mention. Kindly send us all correspondence bearing on the subject, which we will endeavor to lose. Also send us the broken glassware, tagging each individual piece in some identifying manner.

Early the next day the purchasing agent dropped into the office of Swazey & Lawrence.

The junior member was closeted with his visitor for almost an hour. Then they emerged and left the office together. When the junior member returned he was puffing on a big perfecto and looking extremely happy.

"Tell the shipping clerk to get that glass for the X. Y. Z. off to-day sure," he told the clerk. "Here's a check to balance that claim of ours against them."

# The Mystery of Woodoonga

BY HUGH H. LUSK

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE MAN WE TRACKED.

I THINK my own eyes must have flashed back again that look of Horton's. It was our man, then, after all—the same man who had left Woodoonga without “a hat to his 'ead,” as Tom, the stableman, had said, and as if “'ell were arter 'im,” as he had told the magistrate. I felt as if we had got him in our hands at last, and could go back again and make a fresh start—whatever that might mean—feeling that Mr. Leslie's murder was not unavenged.

My thoughts moved quickly, and I was back at Woodoonga already in imagination, though conscious, too, that I was leaning back against the rough wall of the little gold fields inn, watching the curious effects of the newly lighted lamp that was just set down on the table in the middle of the room.

“Well, I dunno wheer 'e lives, not rightly, neither, in a manner o' speak-in'.” These were the next words I heard clearly through the mist of my thoughts, and it was the gruff, hoarse voice of the big man that said them. “Somewheer down near the lowest water 'ole, in the 'ut as Lame Joey lived in afore 'e got speared—that's wheer 'e sleeps.”

“Got speared?” Horton asked, in a tone of surprise. “You've not got any blacks round here, have you?”

“Ain't we just, mate?” another voice broke in. “Heaps on 'em, and you'd better believe it.”

The big man laughed hoarsely. “So I've 'eerd once or twice afore, Martin,” he said, contemptuously. “So I've 'eerd; but I ain't never come across one yet. No, you take my word for it, theer ain't none o' them blacks round here, not worth mentionin' anyhow.”

“I suppose you carry pistols, or something, don't you?” Horton asked, looking across the table at the man who seemed to be Martin—the pioneer of the gully, no doubt, which bore his name.

The big man laughed boisterously. “Pistols, mate?” he growled. “Pistols for one or two o' them rats? Not much.”

“Oh, well,” Horton replied, “I suppose it's all right; but suppose a dozen or two of them got together? They might put a spear in some of you that weren't lame like Joey. A pistol might come in handy then.”

Like an echo to Horton's last word there came the sound of a long “coo-ee.” It seemed to rise like a faint, low whisper out of the darkness, then to swell into a weird, threatening murmur, and at last to die away in a faint sigh of pain in the distance.

I confess I had started at the sound, and though most of those present showed nerves under better control than mine, I noticed that every eye turned toward one or other of the two small windows, that looked like darker blots on the dark wall since the darkness had closed in.

Again that long, low note rose and swelled and died away, and this time it



came from the other side. Everybody listened, and when it ceased it was Martin's voice that remarked:

"There's more than one o' them this time, Bill. Are all hands here, I wonder, except Lone-Hand Charlie?"

Every eye seemed to turn to its neighbor, as if to repeat the question, and several voices said at once: "Where's Nuggetty Sam?"

Whoever he might be, it was evident he was not present, and there was a murmur as men turned and spoke to their neighbors in low tones. Nuggetty Sam was a more popular character than Lone-Hand Charlie, at any rate.

"Asleep, most like," a voice suggested. "He was off on a tramp after new ground yesterday, and only got back after dinner time. I saw him getting tucker as I passed."

The suggestion met with general acceptance, and it was evident that the chance of a native spear finding Nuggetty Sam was looked on as serious.

"Adn't somebody better give 'im a call?"

Scarcely had the suggestion been made, when a quick footstep sounded on the harder ground outside, and next moment the door opened, and a tall man stood in the opening. For a single instant I thought it might be the man we were in search of, but a second look would have corrected the mistake, even if his appearance had not been hailed by a general exclamation of welcome.

"Was just a-comin' for to give you a call, mate," said Bill.

"Right ye was, mate," was the answer, given in a hearty tone. "I'm here all right; but thank ye all the same. 'Tain't altogether healthy sleeping by yerself wi' them wildcats whinin' around in the dark, I've a notion."

He came forward as he was speaking, and seated himself on the bench near the foot of the long table, nodding as he did so to the landlord, who hastened to supply him with a tumbler which seemed to contain his recognized refreshment.

"More'n one o' them devils about to-night, ain't there?" Martin remarked, as soon as the other had been supplied.

Nuggetty Sam nodded before burying his nose in the tumbler.

"I believe ye, mate," he replied, as he emerged once more. "Squealin' around the flat like tomcats of a moonlight night they are. Wonder what's brought them around? Mightn't mean nothin', in course, but ye can't never be sure."

A general grunt of acquiescence passed around the room.

"Didn't you say there was somebody else that hadn't come in?" Horton said, after a minute had passed.

"On'y Lone-Hand Charlie," Bill replied, carelessly. "'E never come up, 'e don't. Got something wrong with 'im; blue devils or something."

Nuggetty Sam drained his glass, and rose quietly to his feet.

"He mightn't care for black devils even then, mate, I've a notion."

He took his hat from the bench by his side as he spoke, and stuck it on his head.

Horton sprang to his feet. "I'll go with you, mate," he said, "if you're going to fetch him. I've got a pistol here, too, in case we're attacked."

"Oh, ye won't need no pistols," Bill said, with a laugh. "Them niggurs was never knowed to face two white men. Besides, it's dark."

The two men took no notice of Bill's remark, but went toward the door. I had risen and made one step forward to join Horton, but as he passed me he whispered: "Better not, Stevens—one's enough; but I must see him safe here."

Nuggetty Sam opened the door. "Ah, that's better," he said. "The moon's rising, mates. That'll frighten them devils off; but we may as well bring him in, fear of accidents."

The two men stepped through the doorway, and looking after them I could see the misty gray light of the moon's dawn whitening the desolate ridges and hollows.

"And it was here Moncrieff had come to in his career of selfishness," I thought to myself. "Good God! could any penalty be worse than this?"

The men walked rapidly down the slope on the top of which the Wallaby's Rest had been built, Horton following a

yard or two behind his companion. There was not much light, for though the moon was rising, the sky was not clear, and it was still some way below the horizon. Gray as it looked on the top of the ridge the hollow into which they were descending lay black and impenetrable. A kind of mist seemed to have filled it, which lay in heavy folds over everything, so that at a few yards distant nothing whatever was visible. The only words that had passed had been when Nuggetty Sam had led the way, throwing the words over his shoulder in passing: "Better let me go first, mate. I know whereabouts 'tis."

The words seemed to be cut short by another wild call that came up out of the darkness, and was echoed by several others that sounded like the long, despairing shrieks of evil spirits. Sam hurried on, as if he recognized that they were nearer than before.

At last there was the shadow of a tent on the right, which disappeared as soon as it was seen. Then, after a few minutes of tramping through the soft sand, another on the right—then two more at intervals.

"We're nearly there now," Nuggetty Sam whispered. "He's in Lame Joey's hut."

Almost as the words left Sam's lips a call, wilder and more despairing than ever, rose from the shadows in front, and was echoed first on one side and then on the other, till there seemed to be scores of low, shuddering shrieks echoing one another on every side.

"Good God, mate!" Sam whispered. "There's hundreds of them!"

A step or two more and they were at the place.

Sam stooped and entered the miserable hut, and with his hand grasping his revolver, Horton followed. Nobody seemed to be there. They stood for a moment staring around in the dim, shadowy hut. Then Horton moved, and as he did so his foot hit something. He stooped hastily, and his hand touched something; he recognized with a shudder that it was a face.

"He's here," he whispered. "They've killed him!"

Nuggetty Sam was on his knee in a moment, feeling the prostrate figure with his hand. "No, mate," he said, in a low tone, "I can't feel no spear; he's alive, too! I can feel his heart beat. Give me a hand to get him on my back, mate; we can't leave the poor devil here."

"Poor devil, indeed!" The words rang in Horton's brain like the sound of a death-knell, as he lifted Moncrieff's senseless body from the sand to the shoulders of Nuggetty Sam.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### VENGEANCE IS MINE.

A hush of expectation had fallen on the party at the Wallaby's Rest when the door closed behind Horton. Big Bill contented himself with an occasional look of scornful amusement at the company in general between long puffs at his pipe, and the rest of us even forgot to smoke; we were waiting for news. My own eyes were fixed on the shadowy window, minute by minute growing grayer as the light increased outside. I was picturing to myself the meeting of those two men; and the picture was ghastly.

Suddenly the chorus of ghostly yells that had startled Horton at Lame Joey's hut reached us, too. Distant and faint as they were, one thing was certain—the blacks were more than two or three in number this time. I think every man of us started, and more than one rose from his seat.

"Wot did I tell ye, mate?" It was Martin that spoke, and he looked at Bill.

Bill looked a little uncomfortable, but he put a bold face on it. "Well, if so be as there was twenty on 'em, wot o' that? Wot's niggurs like them?"

"'Tain't niggurs I'm talking about, Bill—it's spears." I could stand it no longer; I walked to the door, and opened it.

"Better close the door, mate." It was the voice of the landlord behind me. "We'll hear them before they get here."

I moved back reluctantly, and was

in the very act of closing the door when something passed me with a sharp whirring sound, and an exclamation, sudden and inarticulate enough for a sob, passed around the room. I shut the door quickly, and turned to see what it meant, and as I did so my eye caught sight of a slender rod that stood quivering in the middle of the rude table, not a yard from where Bill sat staring at it. For a moment I hardly understood what it was—then I knew. A native spear had passed me and buried itself in the table.

Every man in the room was on his feet in a moment, and there was a quick movement toward the door.

"Hold on, mates!" It was Martin's voice that arrested the movement. "Who's got anything to fight 'em with?"

"Seems to me we've all on us got hands, mate," Bill exclaimed, as he lifted a huge fist above his head and made another step. Martin pointed to the slender spear that quivered still. "Where's the good o' fists? Ye can't throw 'em at the niggurs, can ye, mates? Who's got a pistol?"

The men looked at one another. "Hain't got none." "Left mine in the tent." "Got no ammunition for mine this month back." The answers to Martin's question came more or less reluctantly, but in effect they were all alike. Seven or eight men out of the five and twenty had guns or pistols; but not one carried them with him.

"Damn pistols, mates—here goes!" Bill exclaimed, as he made for the door, dragged it open and plunged out into the gray darkness. "Come on, ye devils!" he shouted. "Let's see what ye're made on!"

There was no answer, and he stood for a moment or two staring into the darkness.

"Here they come!" Bill shouted suddenly. "Come along, you fellows! They're a-fetchin' of that lone 'and. There ain't no niggurs 'ere."

He made two or three quick steps down the slope, and already a dozen of us had sprung from the doorway at his call. Suddenly we saw him wheel half round and throw out one great fist as

if to strike somebody—then he staggered blindly forward and fell. We had reached him in an instant, and I stooped over him. What was this? Another slender shaft still quivered where it had struck him in the breast.

"Back, mates!" I shouted. "You'll only get speared, and never see where it comes from."

It was true enough. Even as I waved my hand with the sudden instinct of saving life, a sharp pain passed down my arm like an electric shock, and I saw that a spear had stuck in the fleshy part near the shoulder. My warning hadn't been heeded, for already other spears had flashed through the gray shadows, and more than one of the party had been wounded; there was a general retreat that was almost a flight for the house.

I would have followed them myself, but there was that figure lying at my feet, with that horrible spear, which still seemed to me to quiver, in its breast.

I stooped low and tried to lift the head and shoulders from the ground; and as I did so I heard a groan. Bill wasn't dead, then. I knelt and put my unwounded arm under his head.

"All right, mate," a hoarse, husky whisper said close to my ear. "All right! 'Tain't no kind o' use—thank 'e all the same. Them niggurs ain't no sort o' good—pore trash—on'y get my hand on 'em——" As he spoke, the words came more brokenly from his lips; then they died away, and the great hand which had involuntarily been clinched as he spoke sank slowly down. Bill had given the last expression to his contempt for "niggurs"—nothing had altered his opinion.

How was I to get back to the shelter of the house? I looked around with a strange, shrinking feeling that was new to me, and then I heard a sound—it was footsteps. An instant more, and I saw through the dim haze the loom of figures. I leaped to my feet.

"Horton," I exclaimed, "stoop low, and run for it! They're all round us here."

Something whizzed past my ear with a kind of sob, so close that it felt as if

it had grazed my cheek. The figures—I noticed now that there were two—did stoop, but they made no attempt to run. It was madness.

"Didn't you find him?" I whispered, as the recollection came back that had been driven away by the events of the last few minutes.

They were close to me now, and I could see that one of them carried a man's figure on his back, though it was evidently all he could do.

"Yes, we've got him; but he's fainted. Where are they?"

"The blacks? All about us. You can't see them, but they're close by."

I had pulled out the spear that hung in my arm by a great effort, and for a moment I felt faint, though by a sort of instinct I followed the others toward the house—then I recovered, and seemed for the time to be all right.

At that moment there came a yell from behind, followed by others on both sides, and half a dozen flickering shadows flew past us; one of them tore a piece out of the leg of my trousers. I stooped lower and hurried on.

"Ha, there they are!" The words came from Horton, and they were followed by a flash and a report—then another and another. Then there was a yell—a different yell from the ones we had just heard—and a shout from a dozen voices in front.

"That's right, mate. You got two of the devils."

The shout was close at hand. I raised my head, and though my eyes seemed to swim, I could see through a faint haze that made it look as if surrounded by a rainbow, the light that streamed from the door of the Wallaby's Rest, and the faces of a dozen men who had rushed out once more to bring us in. I staggered, and felt myself caught by the arm, and then I seemed to find myself suddenly in the big, shadowy room once more.

"Horton!" I muttered. "Horton! Are you all right?"

Horton's face looked at me out of what seemed to be a cloud, and his voice said: "Yes, Stevens, but *he's* hit."

I suppose I must have fainted, after

all, from loss of blood, but at the time I felt as if only a minute had passed till I was fully conscious again. I was half sitting, half lying, in a corner of the big room propped up with a pillow without a cover, and resting on a dark-colored blanket. Somebody had tied a dirty-looking piece of cloth very tightly around my arm, which felt benumbed, but scarcely painful. It took me, I suppose, a minute or two to notice these things, but then perfect recollection of all that had happened seemed to come back at once. Where was Horton? And Moncrieff—what of him? Then Horton's words, the last I could recall, flashed across my mind: "He's hit!" *He?* Did that mean Moncrieff? If it did, was he seriously wounded?

I roused myself and sat up. The place looked the same, and yet somehow it was different. The lamp still burned smokily on the rough board table, but nobody seemed to be drinking there now. My eye caught sight of the windows, and I could see that they had been barricaded with something; and I seemed to understand that it was to keep out spears.

I could see several figures, perhaps a dozen or more, some sitting with their backs against the wall, and some lying on the floor—but nobody like Horton. Where had he gone? And Moncrieff—where was he?

Somebody pushed a door open, and a stream of light came in through the opening. I hadn't noticed the door before, but it led, no doubt, into another room, and even as the conviction came to me I caught the sound of low, whispering voices. Horton must be there. I struggled quietly to my feet, and as I did so I noticed that the effort was greater than I should have imagined possible.

Yes; there were voices in that room, and one of them reached me. It said: "Poor devil!" I walked quietly, though perhaps a little unsteadily, round the table; then I crossed to the door, and pushed it open. It was a bedroom; or at least there was a bed on the floor in one corner, on which somebody was lying. It was not Horton, at any rate,

for now I could see him standing at the foot of the bed, gazing fixedly at the man lying there. A curious shiver passed through me—it must be Moncrieff.

I crept forward till I could see his face. I had been right; it *was* Moncrieff. I stood and stared helplessly at that face. Suddenly Horton turned away.

"Here, give me that tin billy, will you?" he said, in a low tone, to the man who was standing next him.

"What for, mate? There ain't a drop in it, I tell ye."

"I'll get some."

The man looked at him for an instant in silence. "It's as much as your life's worth, mate," he said at last. "It's a good hundred and fifty yards to the water hole. Ye'll never get back."

"Won't I?" Horton said, in a grim whisper. "Anyhow, it's worth trying. Look at him!"

The last words were spoken in a fierce whisper, and they were echoed by a low, choking sob that seemed to gasp: "Water!" It came from the bed.

The man looked; and then he fetched the tin pitcher with a lid, which I had already learned to recognize as a "billy," and handed it to Horton. Then he opened a door, leading apparently into a room at the back of the house, and said, in a whisper:

"Well, mate, if ye must, ye must; anyhow, that back window's your best chance. Down the slope straight, and good luck!"

I would have stopped Horton if I could, but I seemed to have lost the power of speech. That face, I think, and that gasping appeal had done it. It was as much as Horton's life was worth, I knew, and for what? For the self-confessed murderer of a friend—yes; but also for a man dying, haunted by memories a thousand times worse than any penalty man's vengeance could wreak on his devoted head. No, I couldn't say a word, even if the expression of Horton's face had not told me plainly it would be useless. And so he went.

I leaned against the wall and listened. It seemed to me that every faculty I possessed was absorbed in the effort to hear. The minutes crept on, and there was not a sound.

At last there came the faint echo of a native call—then another, and a third. It seemed to me they were closing in on some point at the back of the house. Then there came the quick, sharp report of a pistol. At the sound, the figure on the bed started, and almost sat up, while his face worked, and his eyes glared, as if he saw something terrible. There were more reports, and then a scream—and then the cries died away. What had happened?

A minute or two passed, and then there was a footstep in the next room, and a whispered question and answer, and then the door opened, and Horton came in. His face was pale; but he never looked at me or at anyone but the man on the bed, whose eyes met his with a strange, agonized question, as Horton knelt on one knee beside his head, and held the "billy" to his lips.

Moncrieff didn't drink. His eyes were fixed on Horton's, and he seemed conscious of nothing but what he saw there. Then I thought he tried to speak, but the effort ended in a gasp. Horton's hand went tenderly to support his head, and for just a moment the cool water touched his lips. Then the look of terror and pain died out of Moncrieff's eyes, and a look of peace—a look that was almost a smile—took its place. The eyes, the weary, hunted eyes, grew calm; the head fell backward; the struggle was over.

Slowly, and almost tenderly, Horton let him sink to the pillow. His task was ended. He had captured Mr. Leslie's murderer; he had handed him over to the judge.

As the thought passed through my brain I saw him lean forward—lower still, and lower. He would have fallen across the dead man's breast if the man beside him had not stooped hastily and caught him in his arms.

"Here, mates," he exclaimed, "one o' them devils must ha' put a spear in him."

## POSTSCRIPT.

BY ANOTHER HAND.

He came back at last. I knew he would, for he had promised; and yet I had told myself a hundred times that he would never come. It was months, and the months seemed years after we heard about his wound. I didn't dare to write to ask about him, for somehow it seemed to me everybody would know how I felt; and they would say I had no right to feel, for he was nothing to me. Nothing to me?

Elsie knew. I couldn't keep it from Elsie, of course, though I never said a word—but then she was like myself, almost, and it didn't seem to matter so much. But, oh, it was a dreadful time: weeks and weeks, after that last little formal letter, written by himself the day they left Port Adelaide, had gone by, and not a word—not a single word.

At last we heard—at least, Elsie heard. She got a letter from Mr. Stevens telling her about him: the most terrible story, but the most wonderful story, too, and the grandest I ever read in all my life. He had found that awful man at last, when everybody else had failed. He hadn't brought him back, nor handed the wretch over to be punished; but that was because he had been punished already—he was dead. But somehow, though I had thought once I had cared more to have that man punished than anything else in the world, I didn't seem to think much about that now. It was the story of how he had rescued the miserable creature from the blacks; and most of all, how he had actually risked, and nearly lost, his life to get water for him when he was dying—oh, that was wonderful!

And at last he came. We knew they were coming, for Mr. Stevens had written again to tell Elsie, and we had the drag taken over to meet the train. It was late when they got back, and they went straight to Mr. Roberts' cottage. He had recommended Mr. Roberts as manager on the run when he went away, because he was an old friend of his—in spite of what Elsie had written about

coming to the house. Both Elsie and I were vexed, and even auntie, who had said it was quite the proper thing to do, was uncomfortable, I was glad to see, when we heard from Tom how thin and pale he still was; for of course we could have made him far more comfortable at the house.

And yet, after all, I don't know that I was not a little glad, too. It was something to have time to get accustomed to knowing he was there, before I had to see him. I suppose it was foolish; but then it had all been so strange, and so terrible. It was different with Elsie, of course. She was just wild to see Mr. Stevens, and ask him questions about it all; but then—though she did blush a little when auntie said she mustn't be too anxious to see him—she could easily laugh it off, as she always does. She had nothing dreadful to remember like me; for, of course, I couldn't forget that last day before he went—and what he had said, and how he had looked.

He came at last. He had sent a message in the morning, when Mr. Stevens came up to call, that he hoped to be allowed to see me in the afternoon. Fancy his doing that! I don't know why I did it, but I felt as if I *must* see him in that same room. We hardly ever used it at all now, but somehow it seemed the right place, and perhaps—perhaps it would make it easier, I thought.

I waited for him there, and I know I was terrified. What would he look like? What would he say?

And it was all different from what I had thought. He was pale, and thinner, too, but he was not changed; and when he stood in the window again, as he did that other dreadful morning, it all came back. I know I could hardly stand up to shake hands, and I'm sure my voice must have trembled when I said how glad I was to see him looking so well. He looked at me out of those eyes that seemed so large and strong, and he said:

"Yes, Miss Leslie, I've come back to tell you that I failed to do what I undertook when I saw you last."

"Failed!" I cried, indignantly. "Oh,

no, you must not say that; you never failed. Or if you did, no success was ever half so great as yours."

There was a new light in his eyes, I think, as he looked into mine, where he must have seen the tears that had come into them at the thought of what he had done for me, and how he had done it.

"But I have more to confess," he continued, after a moment's pause. "I wanted to tell you that I am glad I failed. When I left you I went on a mission of vengeance—thank God I did not succeed! I came back to tell you this."

He said no more, and we sat there without speaking for a minute or more. He moved at last—I thought he was going.

"Oh, Mr. Horton," I managed to say at last, "you are not going?"

"Going?" he repeated, looking down at me, as I sat almost trembling. "Yes. What else is there for me to do?"

Was it wrong to say it, I wonder? At any rate, I couldn't help it.

"Stay!" I exclaimed. "Stay with us!"

He looked at me—oh, so strangely. "Stay? But it was your father who sent me away, Miss Leslie."

"Why did he do that? Tell me why, Mr. Horton."

"Because"—and the words seemed to force themselves from his lips one by one—"because I told him that I loved you. I must go now, because I love you more than ever."

"No, no, no!" I cried, as I rose to my feet, and laid my hand on his arm. "No, I say, you shall *not* go. Why should you go away, if you love me?"

He bent his head, as if he were afraid to look at me, but he said, in a low, steady voice:

"Because my grandfather—my grandfather—was a convict." Then he raised his head, and looked me proudly in the face. If I hadn't loved him before, I think I should have loved him for that.

I clasped my other hand round his arm, and I exclaimed: "Your grandfather? Yes, I know, but you are not your grandfather, and I love *you*."

I had said it. I had dared to say it. Ah, yes, and I shall never regret it. We were happy—happy at last!

And Elsie? Her laugh—her own happy, light-hearted laugh, the first I had heard since they went away—reached me at last from the garden. Elsie would be happy, too.

THE END.

## BONDAGE

WE only know we're caught within the stream,  
And feel the ceaseless drag of all desire.  
We only know of toil, food, sleep and dream,  
And as we bow, so we escape his ire.  
We only know we have so much to do,  
And do we must, let it be joy or rue.

See how you stand, the great world rolling on;  
Its light awakes, its shadow lays you down.  
And this thing hunger—ceaseless, yearning pain—  
Its slave you are. Denying so is vain.  
Some one hath touched you saying: "Feel desire."  
His will you do—you run, you run, aspire!

THEODORE DREISER.



# THE PRECIPITATOR

BY CECIL WHITTIER TATE

The crisis a young Eastern man had to face when he took service in a Western smeltery

THE straggling group of red, iron-sheathed buildings on the side of Universal Hill composed the plant of the Universal Gold Reduction Company. The mill is located near the town of Navajo Springs, about forty miles, by railroad, from the Cripple Creek mines, whence the Universal obtains its ore for treatment.

The place has a picturesque location, lying on the edge of the foothills; to the east the boundless prairie with its monotonous covering of wavering dry grass, stretches forth for hundreds of miles; to the west is the great wall of the Rockies, silent, towering and grand. Pike's Peak stands out prominently, its snow-capped crest alternately bathed in the sun or wrapped from sight in the fleecy clouds.

To the Easterner, standing at the foot of the hill, it was a wonderland: The massive formations of nature awe and inspire her children, and Carson was not the least susceptible of these. He filled his lungs with the dry, enervating air, and thought of the East, which at the moment seemed petty and small compared to this place.

He crossed the brook and toiled up the steep incline, passing the buildings, alive with the roar and crash of the machinery they contained, and finally stopped at the crest of the hill, before the brick office building. There he found himself confronted by two doors and was debating which one to enter, when the clatter of hoofs sounded behind him. Instinctively he turned. The rider, a trim, well-dressed young man,

dismounted and looked him over curiously, a smile of recognition finally coming into his face.

"Blame me, if it isn't little Carson!" he exclaimed, stretching out his hand.

Carson grasped it. "Jim Whiting, by all that's remarkable," he said.

"What are you doing out here, Billy?" asked Whiting. "I thought that you were still at the old 'col.'"

"Graduated—last June."

Whiting tied his bronco to the tethering post, and led the way into the office, where he seated himself at a desk, comfortably disposing his feet thereon, and motioned Carson to a chair. They talked for some time about "God's country," as Whiting called the East, and then turned to personal matters.

"So you're looking for a job, eh?" inquired Whiting, eying his friend keenly. "What can you do, Billy?"

"Well, my 'pigskin' says I'm an engineer," he said, modestly; "but I guess chemistry is my specialty."

"When can you start in?" inquired the other, abruptly.

Carson looked at his friend wonderingly. "What do you mean? What are you in this place?" he queried.

"Oh, I'm assistant superintendent of this mill—the Universal. I've a job in the precipitating department—where they precipitate the gold from the solution—which is open. You'll be the head of one of the shifts. Pretty fair job. Pay good. But it's dangerous work, Billy, and you'll have to keep a level head on you. Have to stand a pretty mean 'stink' of chlorine—that's our

process—but you'll get accustomed to it. Will you take it?"

Carson looked out of the window a moment. No, it was not the kind of a place he wanted, right there in the body of a mill among a crowd of uncouth laborers, probably; but—he felt the thin roll of greenbacks in his pocket and remembered, painfully, that it was all he had.

"Yes, Jim, I'll take it," he said.

"All right. Be here to-morrow, seven o'clock, and bring overalls and jumper, also buckskin gloves. See Dickson—he'll be your first helper, and I'll tell him to-night to put you onto the job."

Carson nodded, expressed his thanks and departed. Whiting sat watching the small figure striding down the hill, and a smile crept about the corners of his mouth. "Little Billy Carson," he muttered; "wonder if he can stand up against the work. Thunder, won't the boys put it into him? But he always was a plucky little devil. Yes, I'll bet on Billy."

Carson was short, and had always borne the *sobriquet* of "Little Billy," for, besides being short, he was small of body. He was always faultlessly dressed, and his taste was almost foppish. His face was oval, like a girl's, with small, finely molded features, and he had steady blue eyes. Whiting remembered that some one at college had once described Carson as an "overgrown boy doll," and they had all laughed, Carson blushing furiously, which made them laugh the more. But he was unfailingly good-natured, smart as a whip, and a prodigious worker.

Carson took up his work the following morning, or rather, started to collect information as to how the work was done. He found that the precipitating department occupied one end of the largest building in the plant. Around its four sides were a number of huge wooden tanks; some of them tall and broad, others long and slender, according to their several uses. In some of these tanks the precious solution was allowed to settle, in others the gold was precipitated from the liquid. Several filter presses, in the middle of the de-

partment, contained many pounds of gold sulphides. The place was odoriferous of chlorine and sulphureted hydrogen. Once in a while, when the gas became too strong, the precipitators were forced to leave the building.

Behind his back, the new chief's men called him "the babe," yet they were obliged to admit that he was a first-rate chemist, and that he "caught on" rapidly. Carson found that he liked the place better than he had expected to, and he realized that he had misjudged his assistants, who, for the most part, were gentlemen, although they were inclined to resent his polished ways. He realized instantly, however, that Dickson, his first helper, was against him. He was an Englishman, and a very capable, though self-opinionated, fellow; big of body, strong of arm and good to look upon. When the former head precipitator had left, he was expecting to be promoted, and was disgusted to find that "a baby" had taken the place which he regarded as his own. He was a compatriot of Stetson, the "shift boss" on Carson's shift, and Carson noticed that they were very good friends. He loved harmony, and resolved to win the man over, if possible.

Time passed rapidly and Carson became acclimated and began to like his work, for there was the omnipresent element of danger, the novelty of which pleased him. Whiting watched the department closely until he was fully satisfied that "the babe" would do. But through it all Carson realized, from one experience and another, that Dickson was not the only one against him, for Stetson took every opportunity which offered to block him. One of the disturbing elements in the Universal was a keen rivalry between the men, each striving to outdo the other, resorting to petty means rather than excellence of work. Stetson, Dickson and several others comprised the chief malcontents. Whenever a new man was taken on, or a change was effected, they immediately claimed that a blow was being aimed at them. They strongly resented Whiting's methods, representing that he brought out Easterners and put them

over experienced men, and they had a personal grudge against the assistant superintendent because of his success.

The full force of this storm of pent-up feeling was now being expended on Carson. Every effort was made to belittle his work, and to tie up his department so as to have it make a poor showing as against the other two shifts. Carson was usually able to get ahead of these schemes by some hook or crook, and his other men, spurred by the inequality of the fight he was carrying on, rallied to his help, so that he succeeded in keeping up to the standard in spite of opposition. Seeing this, Dickson resorted to underhanded means and made sport of his chief's evident lack of physical strength, of his clothes, and in every way possible he sought to make life miserable for the little fellow.

Carson suffered in silence, for he knew that the spirit of the place required that he grin and bear it rather than appeal to the powers. Yet he often felt like resigning, but pride came to his rescue and demanded that he fight the battle to a finish. Had he been physically as powerful as his enemies, he could have settled the fight, but as it was he could do nothing but bide his time, hoping for some chance to carry the war into the enemies' camp, or to finally win them over.

Following the way of men, who seem to delight in endeavoring to accomplish the barely possible, Carson found himself hopelessly in love with the girl whom Dickson had been striving to win for some time, and his marked attentions to her naturally brought the two men into sharper conflict than before. Dickson now took every opportunity to ridicule his chief before Elenora Stone, and, as she was a great lover of physical courage and strength, a quality which Carson never gave any evidence of having, he found his path an easy one. Carson bore this with all the grace possible for a man under such circumstances, his unfailing good humor standing him in good stead; but he kept doggedly on, hoping against hope that he would yet be able to win the girl. Six months passed thus, and Carson was forced to

admit that he had failed in making the man his friend, nor had he been able to settle the score between them. Miss Stone was friendly, but no more, and she certainly appeared to favor Dickson.

The fall set in and with it came the social season, which was to be opened by a barn dance at one of the nearby ranch houses. Carson, who was then on night shift—from four till twelve—had given Dickson permission to leave at nine, for he was to take Miss Stone to the dance. He was going up there later himself, as Jennings, one of the other precipitators, was to relieve him an hour earlier than usual. Miss Stone intended coming up about eight, to be shown over the mill, and then she and Dickson would ride out together.

That night was a very busy one, it being the end of the month, and the "clean-up" came on the morrow. Early in the evening Carson had instructed Dickson to clean out one of the empty tanks, and he observed that the Englishman had neglected to do it. The solution was running very fast, and the tank would soon have to be filled again. He knew that there was a great deal of sand at the bottom of the "settler" which would have to be taken out for the "clean-up."

Eight o'clock came, and with the hour Miss Stone arrived. She came immediately to the precipitating department, where she knew most of the men, who took great pleasure in explaining to her the workings of the place. Dickson went over and seated himself beside her. Half an hour slipped by, and still he made no move to clean the tank. Carson watched him narrowly, and fell to biting his lip in sheer exasperation. Then he called him over.

"Have you cleaned number four yet, Dickson?" he asked.

"No, let one of the other men do it."

Carson looked him over from head to foot. Inwardly he was raging against the man, but when he spoke it was in a quiet, though firm, voice. "I told you to do it, Dickson."

Dickson noted the ring in his chief's voice, and knew that open disobedience would go hard with him, so he pulled on

his rubber boots and climbed to the top of the tank. Getting the air line from another man, he thrust it through the top, and ran an electric light extension in. A settler tank is about twelve feet high and seven across, having an opening at the top large enough to admit a man. From this hole to the bottom is a ladder for the man who cleans it to go up and down on. Compressed air is pumped into the tank, for there is usually a very foul odor of chlorine gas inside.

While Dickson disappeared through the aperture, Carson walked over to where Miss Stone was sitting. He had hardly greeted her when there was a cry from the top of the building, and, looking up, he saw the man at the sulphureted hydrogen generator waving to him frantically.

"The air line is filled with gas," he shouted; "don't open the valve." He did not know that Dickson was in the tank.

"My God!" gasped Carson. "Dickson will be killed!"

For an instant a savage joy took possession of him; his enemy and rival would be killed; and then—then the manliness within him asserted itself.

In a moment confusion reigned in the department. Whiting was just leaving for the night, and had entered the place to give Carson some instructions. In a flash he realized the situation and sent a man off for some rope. "Dickson will be killed, though. That gas works frightfully quick," he said to Carson.

Together they climbed to the top of the tank, followed by the rest of the precipitators. Hours passed, it seemed, before the messenger returned with the rope, which, however, was at length procured. They peered into the tank, but could distinguish nothing in the inky blackness; for Dickson, in his struggles, had broken the electric light. He was in there, they knew, but whether dead or alive all feared to guess. Meanwhile, the noxious odor spread through the building, and several of the men, unable to stand it, hastily returned to the floor.

"Wet your handkerchief, Jones, and

throw it up here," shouted Carson to one of them. The man did so, and Carson thrust the soaking cloth into his mouth.

"I'm going down after him, Jim," he said.

Whiting shook his head. "It'll kill you, Billy. I'll go—I'm used to it—though it's sure death to go into that hole."

Carson's face wore a look of determination, as he replied: "No, you don't, Jim; I sent him down, and I'll get him out."

Whiting gazed at his friend curiously. Then suddenly he reeled backward, overcome by the large quantity of the gas which he had inhaled while looking into the tank. There were still two men left with Carson.

"I'm going down," he said to them. "Pull up the rope when I signal."

He walked to an open window over the top of the tank, and put his head out, filling his lungs with the pure night air. While he was there, and it was but a moment, many things flashed across his mind. He thought of his home and the mother he had left; and then of Elenora Stone, and once more the savage feeling of hate for his rival, who had done so much to belittle him, took possession of the man. He gazed at the wonderland about him. Above were the stars; off there was the great, ragged mountain wall, silhouetted against the moon. In the presence of this gem of Colorado scenery he felt small and mean, and the evil thoughts which had all but consumed him a moment before gradually faded away. No, she loved the man and he would save him for her sake. As for himself, it did not matter, he would probably die like a rat in a hole, but—she would know that he was no coward, and perhaps she would be sorry—afterward.

A hand touched his shoulder gently. It was Miss Stone, who had realized the situation and had come up to the top of the tank.

"Don't go down there," she pleaded; "the men say that Howard is dead. Don't kill yourself."

He looked at her wonderingly, and then replied, simply:

"It is my duty. I sent him down there. He may not be dead. I must go, Elenora."

Once more he filled his lungs with the pure air, and motioned her to keep her head out of the window so as to escape the gas, and then he went to the mouth of the hole. He hastily put the rope under his arms, and made it fast about him, tossing the other end to the men. Then he gathered up the other rope, and slipped through the hole.

Down the ladder into the darkness he plunged, but it seemed a long time before his foot touched the bottom. He inhaled a breath of the stuff, and it seemed as though a heavy weight was pressing against his lungs. Then he feverishly began searching for Dickson, finally finding him, lying with his face against the side of the tank. He dragged him out, and hastily tying the free rope under the Englishman's limp arms, signaled to those above to pull the body up. Gradually they hauled Dickson up, and Carson felt a sensation of loneliness, as though he was in the depths of an abyss.

The weight about his lungs seemed to increase, and he struggled to get to the ladder. Where was it? He stretched out his hands and felt for the wooden rungs. Oh! were it not for the darkness he could have reached it instantly. Why didn't they pull him up? Then he realized that he was dragging the rope about with him, for they had lost their hold upon their end, and it had fallen into the tank. He seemed to have been there for hours, and no attempt had been made to rescue him. Had they forgotten him? He shouted, but his voice seemed strange and hollow, and that confounded gas kept pressing against his lungs. Why didn't those fools turn off the valve instead of pumping the deadly stuff into the tank?

He ran about wildly now and realized that he was steadily growing weaker. He tore and clawed at the air in a mad endeavor to find the ladder. Then suddenly he heard a thump against the side of the tank, but it seemed muffled and distant.

He tried to struggle over to where

the noise had sounded, but somehow, he couldn't understand how it happened, he found that he was lying flat upon the floor. His nose touched the cool slime at the bottom of the tank, and—it felt so refreshing—he plunged his head down into it. Yes, they would find him there, some time—to-morrow, perhaps—and Elenora would be sorry she had thought him a coward. Was he dying? No, not yet—soon.

The big carpenter drove his ax home with a blow which severed the iron hoops encircling the tank, and he rapidly cut through the wooden side and the lead lining. Another man crawled through the hole thus made, and searched about for Carson. He found him shortly, face downward, buried in the sand and slime. He dragged the body over and thrust it out of the hole. Strong hands caught the limp body up and bore him out to the open air on the hillside.

Whiting looked at his friend a moment. "It's all up with him, boys," he said, softly. But nevertheless, he ripped Carson's shirt open, and put his ear to the man's chest. A silence fell over the watchers, and even those who were busy trying to restore Dickson stopped.

"No, I can't tell. Perhaps there's a faint movement," muttered the listening man. He held up his hand for silence as some one shifted his feet noisily. "Anyway, there's a chance, and we'll try it," he added, as he caught up one of the arms. A ready hand grasped the other, and Miss Stone, who had been hovering about the group, sat down at his head, and lifted it upon her lap, while they worked over him endeavoring to produce artificial respiration.

Whiting glanced up at the girl. In the moonlight her beauty and the look of anguish on her face appealed to him. "You had better go inside and wait. It's cold here, and—this is no place for you," he said.

She divined his thought and shuddered, but her voice was very firm: "No, I'm going to stay. There may be life still, and perhaps I can help."

They had sent for a physician, but it seemed a long time before he came. Dickson was unconscious, though recovering rapidly, but Carson appeared to have succumbed. Sometimes, there seemed to be a faint pulsation of his heart, but they feared that it might be merely imagination.

When the doctor finally arrived he cast a hurried glance over both men, and then knelt down beside Carson. Taking a stethoscope from his case, he listened for the heart-beats. Finally he shook his head.

"I'm afraid it's all over," he said, softly, to Whiting.

"Do what you can, doctor," came in low, tense tones from Miss Stone.

The medical man looked at her curiously for a moment, and then hastily returned to his work. For a long time he worked over the man. Death, the great Phantom, seemed reluctant to release the hold it had obtained upon him. Whiting will never forget that scene out there in the moonlight, amid the resounding echoes of the nearby machinery. The two unconscious men stretched out on the desolate hillside; the hushed crowd of fellow workmen, a few of them silently hurrying hither and thither at the physician's directions; the doctor, cool and collected, deftly superintending the work; the girl at Carson's head, gently stroking his cold temples, her face haloed and beatified in the pale moonlight.

"The big fellow will pull through all right," said the doctor to Whiting, "but I'm afraid the little one is done for."

Whiting saw Miss Stone shudder convulsively.

At length Carson slowly opened his eyes. "It's a cold night," he murmured,

softly, and lapsed off into unconsciousness.

When he came to again, they heard him call very gently for his mother. Then he began to murmur something which was painfully incoherent. Whiting put his ear down to the man's lips. When he looked up his eyes were shining.

"It's the old rallying song we used at college games," he whispered to Miss Stone. She burst into tears.

After a time Carson fastened his wandering gaze upon Whiting, and the assistant superintendent nodded to him encouragingly.

"Jim," he murmured, weakly. Whiting put his head down. "Tell Elenora I'm done for. I saved him for her. Did he live?"

But before Whiting could answer he was unconscious again. Miss Stone dried her eyes and tried to smile bravely. "To think," she said, "that I should have thought him a coward."

"He was the pluckiest man at college," replied Whiting, simply.

For some time more he hung thus, as the tide gradually ebbed away, but when it had turned he was still breathing, and as the flood began to swell he was borne in with it, slowly, very slowly, but in another hour the doctor stated that he thought he could pull him through.

Carson recovered rapidly, and was back at the mill in three weeks, but he is out of the precipitating department now, for he was appointed assaying chemist soon after his return. He is to be married shortly, so a persistent rumor has it, and Jim Whiting, who always detested social functions, is congratulating himself that Dickson, and not he, is to be best man.

# Captain Bantam, Kingdom Jumper

BY WALTER WOOD

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[NOTE.—Jacob Bantam, an English sea captain, and a former special maritime emergency officer, joins forces with Curtis Webbe, an ex-officer of the royal navy, who is backed by a London syndicate in his project of establishing a kingdom of his own in Africa. Their adventures will be depicted in a series of amusing stories under the above title, each of which will be complete in itself.—THE EDITOR.]

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## III.—THE CRUISE OF THE "PROMISED LAND"

(A Complete Story)

"**B**EAUTY isn't the word for her!" exclaimed Captain Bantam, in subdued ecstasy. "There's only one description, and that 'perfection.' She is as honest a piece of work as was ever sent out in sections to East Africa. Come below, Mr. Webbe, and let's split a bottle of whisky to the luck of this new steamer that the syndicate's supplied us with. I'll forgive the world a lot of the scurvy tricks it's played me in consideration of its decency in giving me a command like this. I feel a real sailor again."

The *Promised Land*—her name was the creation of Captain Bantam—was a shallow draught steamer, built for lake and river work; but she was a good sea boat also, for the master had represented that the lake was capable of raising heavy seas. The syndicate was doing its business with no mean hand. It had a large capital, and was spending its money lavishly. The *Promised Land* was the best that a famous Clyde yard could produce, and Captain Bantam was enchanted. "There isn't a fault in her," he assured Mr. Webbe. "She'd be a credit to the royal navy." Then

he added: "We will, if you please, start at eight o'clock in the morning for Bantam Creek. I've got a deal on there with a Portygee from Zanzibar. After which we'll go on to Bantam Bay, to settle that little matter of the beads and uniforms with King Gobo. After that we'll run across to a spot which I've charted in a way that wouldn't disgrace the hydrographic office of the American navy. I've called it Bellaville, out of compliment to my wife."

"You're Bantamizing the whole region," observed Webbe, ill-naturedly.

"I'm only doing what I said I'd do," replied the captain. "I told you I'd make my name immortal in the heart of Africa. Every man's got his ambition, and that's mine. You'll please remember that I discovered all these places, and I've always understood that an explorer has the right to name the places he finds. Besides, it's what I'm paid for, isn't it, this pushing ahead with things?"

"I suppose so," admitted Webbe, languidly. "You certainly give the syndicate its money's worth."

"I never took wages that I didn't



earn, and I'm not going to start now," said Bantam. "Well, eight o'clock sharp to-morrow morning. We've got wood enough on board to last us a fortnight, and, thank Heaven, we've no mean owners to put a tight fist on it."

"Doesn't she go beautifully?" he demanded next morning, as he stood on the bridge beside Webbe. "Doesn't it remind you of the best days you had in the navy, and won't she reflect credit on the syndicate that's sent her out? By gosh! If all steamers were as well found as this, and as well navigated, you'd never hear of vessels posted up as missing or have 'em written down as never heard of."

"You're like a child with a new toy," said Webbe, ill-naturedly. "Wait till the gilt wears off, and you tire of your plaything."

Bantam did not answer. He walked up to the end of his little bridge and looked ahead for a long time, listening to the soft thudding of the engines, which made the sweetest music he had heard since he left the coast.

The little twin screws of the *Promised Land*—they were manganese bronze and painted white—flashed in the water as they whirled round and drove her ahead on the lonely lake, which had never known till now the thud and clank of engines. Huge hippopotami and vicious crocodiles made off at her approach, and marveling natives on the banks fell down and worshiped, not knowing what else to do.

"What's your deal with the Portuguese fellow?" asked Webbe, when the captain was steering for Bantam Creek.

"If you can wait till to-morrow you will hear with your own ears," Captain Bantam replied.

"That isn't good enough," said Webbe, peevishly. "You forget that I'm your superior, and am entitled to know. I hate this mysterious working in the dark."

"And you forget, Mr. Webbe, that I have special authority from the syndicate to work when and how I think best, when it's a case of engineering the *Promised Land* and opening out new country. I am engineering her now.

It's strictly maritime work, and I'm going to tell you about it when it suits my ticket. It isn't convenient now." He strode to the engine-room telegraph and pulled savagely to "stand by." Ten minutes later he signaled to "dead slow," and picked his way carefully into the creek, then began steaming through what appeared to be a perfect cataract—a narrow channel between two jutting headlands which were so near that from the bridge of the *Promised Land* a stone could have been thrown ashore on either hand with ease.

Captain Bantam did not speak until they were safely through the swiftly flowing shoal water, and in a smooth stretch, where the river widened out. Then he got the steamer so close to the bank that by throwing out a gangway they could walk ashore. Having anchored the steamer, and made her fast also, he turned to Webbe. "This is the place where I'm to meet the Portygee," he said, "and I'm trusting to you not to spoil the game."

"I shan't do that, because I shan't be here," said Webbe. "I'm going after big game. When do you return?"

"Not later than to-morrow night, if my man turns up," Bantam told him. "And I fancy he's here, because I can see the smoke of fires over there. So please be on board, Mr. Webbe, not later than sundown, or you may get left."

"All right," Webbe answered, sourly, and went his way.

Captain Bantam now carried out his mission, which was to arrange with the Portuguese for guides and carriers into the country, where ivory was plentiful, coffee grew wild, and gold had been reported. The Portuguese spoke fair and false, but that Bantam did not learn until he awoke on the following morning, after a strangely heavy sleep. Then he found that he was alone in the camp, and the fires were smoldering. From the position and heat of the sun, Captain Bantam knew that the day was well advanced. He tried hard to throw off the heavy feeling which oppressed him, and when he had done that he groaned heavily and swore much, for he

discovered that he was bound hand and foot.

He shouted, but there was no answer. He struggled desperately, but the bonds which held him had been made with the skill of a sailor, and he could not get free of them. He desisted on seeing that his writhings only increased his torture, and added to the intense thirst which oppressed him. Suddenly he cast a strange look at the nearest fire, in which a few embers were still glowing. Toward these, with much painful exertion, he made his way, snake-like; then, without hesitation, he thrust his feet into the burning ashes. His boots were burned to cinders, and the heat and pain made him groan with anguish; but he held grimly on until the rope about his ankles was scorched to worthlessness, then he snapped it, and with a sound of triumph rose to his feet. To free his hands was a simple matter. "I'll bake the man who's done this," vowed Captain Bantam, fervently. "You may think you've scored one, Mr. Portygee, but I never let a man take the wind out of my sails yet, and I'm not going to start with a foreigner."

He hobbled from the camp, which was some distance from the water, and laboriously made his way toward the spot at which he had secured the *Promised Land* on coming ashore. He found the place easily enough, but on reaching it a groan of mingled rage and grief escaped him. The *Promised Land* was nowhere to be seen.

For one awful moment Bantam was assailed with a suspicion that Webbe had been guilty of treachery, that he had been a party to the betrayal, and had deliberately left him in this dangerous and inhospitable region to perish. He was pulling himself together after this great shock, when Webbe rushed up and joined him.

"Hello!" exclaimed Webbe, in amazement, "what in Heaven's name's the meaning of this? I hurried back within my limit time, and got to the steamer's berth to find you here and her gone. I thought you'd left me—and I felt certain when she passed me up the river and never noticed my hail."

"Up the river! Then we're safe, Mr. Webbe!" exclaimed Bantam. "There's a current higher up that the *Promised Land* couldn't face with six times her horse power. It isn't a current, it's a sluice. Whoever's taken her up, Mr. Webbe, will have to come back, even if it's stern first. The skunks have stolen her—and we've got to steal her back."

Webbe laughed wildly. "You might as well talk of stealing the jewels from the Tower," he said.

"That's been done, and so can this be," snapped Bantam.

"How?" demanded Webbe.

"This way—follow me." Captain Bantam began to lead the way across the country to the narrow channel through which the *Promised Land* would have to pass on her forced return to the open water of the lake. To go round the headland by water represented a distance of half a dozen miles, while the space across which Bantam and Webbe must work their way was a tenth of that distance. But it was a bit of hard country, rough and rocky where it was not swampy. Before they were halfway over Webbe showed signs of exhaustion. "I'm done up," he gasped.

"I'm done up, too," replied Bantam, grimly, "but I'm not going to squat here and die. The place doesn't attract me as a burial ground. Try this, and sit down a minute."

Webbe sank upon the ground, and drank from the small flask which Bantam produced from an inner pocket. "I feel better," said Webbe, "but all the same you'll have to leave me."

"I never turn my back on a countryman," said Bantam. "Come, buck up. You've got to take your choice between this spot as your churchyard and making a spurt for the *Promised Land* to cut her off when she comes down—as she'll be forced to do. If we stay here we give up the ghost, you may be sure."

"Go ahead—I'm fit again," said Webbe, staggering to his feet.

Bantam took his arm and helped him along. They plunged into a swamp, and fought through it, breast high. At the other side Webbe threw himself on

the ground, face down. "I can't go another step," he panted. "Go on. If you're lucky, come back; if not, I'd just as soon die here as ashore."

"I don't want a corpse round, anyway," said Bantam. "Finish this." He offered the brandy again, and Webbe swallowed it. Then he staggered blindly to his feet. "Come on—let's get it over," he said.

Bantam smiled grimly. He had seen a man look like this on one of his tramp steamers—a fireman who went mad and sprang overboard in mid-Atlantic, shouting that he had a letter for his mother, and was going to post it.

"At last!" gasped Webbe, when they were across the tongue of land, and on the shore. "And we're too late, anyway. While we've been fighting through this awful slough they've got the *Promised Land* round and brought her down. Now, Master Bantam, you pride yourself on getting out of queer messes. How are you going to get out of this and back to our starting point?"

"By the *Promised Land*," said Bantam.

Webbe laughed a hard laugh, which had no mirth in it. "We're both mad," he said. "I thought I was the only lunatic."

"Pull yourself together, Mr. Webbe," said Bantam, angrily. "The game's not finished yet."

"Why should I bother?" said Webbe, wearily.

"Because, Mr. Webbe," replied Bantam, in a low, tense voice, "the *Promised Land's* ashore! She's stuck hard and fast, and it'll take a better man than the Portygee to get her off. If they grind astern for a week they won't get her clear—they'll have to lighten her, and they can't do it, because they don't know the hang of the ballast tanks. Stones and sand are the only ballast they're used to."

Webbe had risen while Bantam spoke, but the captain ordered him to lie down again. "If they see us," he said, "it will wreck my plan for getting the *Promised Land* back again. They think you're lost and that I'm tied up or dead at the camping place. Keep your excitement

down and your pluck up, Mr. Webbe, and if you don't find yourself back again in the steamboat an hour after it's dark, you may kick me for a dago."

They withdrew to a corner behind the headland, from which they were invisible to the people of the *Promised Land*, and Bantam foraged round and procured some cocoanuts. These, with water from the river, made a meal for them.

"What's your plan?" asked Webbe, taking a final draught of water from a shell.

"If you trust me, wait and see," replied the captain.

"Oh, yes, I trust you," said Webbe, wearily; "besides, I'm half dead, and feel as if I don't care what happens. I'm going to lie down and sleep. Call me when you're ready and I'll pull in with any plan you've got, even if there's the final kick at the end of it." With this he threw himself down, and almost instantly fell into an untroubled sleep.

Bantam sighed. "I'd like to sleep, too," he said to himself, "for I feel as if I'd been on the bridge through thirty solid hours of North Atlantic fog and icebergs; but we can't both sleep, and I've noticed that if one of us has to go to the wall, it isn't Mr. Webbe."

He leaned his chin on his hands, and kept incessant watch on the *Promised Land*. Those on board were making strenuous efforts to move her, as he could tell by the milky look of the water about her stern; but she remained fast. "They've brought Jenkins up," he muttered, "but I don't know the man if he'll tell 'em any more about the tanks than he thinks fit and good for 'em—and that'll be nothing. How slowly the time goes! And the heat!" He drew a wet hand across a wetter brow, and went on watching and waiting.

As soon as it was dark he roused Webbe. "Now," he said, "the time's come. Are you still game?"

"I am, no matter what it's for," said Webbe. "What's the plan?"

"After your own heart—it's boarding," replied Bantam.

For a moment Webbe was silent.

Then he said: "It may be genius, Master Bantam, but it isn't feasible. For boarding you want boats."

"Even if you can wade neck-high through the water?" asked Bantam, sarcastically.

Again Webbe paused. "What about the crocodiles?" he said.

"When you're running neck and neck with death you've got to take risks, Mr. Webbe. This is one of 'em. Personally, I'd rather risk the snap of a crocodile than rot here, or wait for the first horde of bloodthirsty niggers to do the business for us."

"Lead on. I'll follow," said Webbe.

They made their way to the water's edge as soon as it was dark. Bantam was the first to plunge in. "You needn't worry," he said, reassuringly. "It's safe walking all the way. I know, because when I was here before I sounded every yard of it. There isn't a patch between here and the *Promised Land* that's more than neck-high for me—and you're six inches taller, Mr. Webbe. I'll go first, and you stick to me. When we get aboard, use your fists or anything else that comes handy. We're fewer in number than they are, so we shall have to reckon mostly on the surprise of our visit."

When they were alongside the *Promised Land* the screws were still working, and such noise as they made was lost in the greater noise of the machinery and swirl of water. "Now," said Bantam, "give me a lift onto your shoulders—thank Heaven she's got such a low freeboard! Then I'll hoist you up."

He struggled on to Webbe's shoulders, and clambered thence to the deck of the *Promised Land*. Leaning over, he gave Webbe a hard pull, and the two men stood panting for a moment.

All the people on board the *Promised Land* were either aft or in the engine room, striving to make her move. Among them were the two European engineers and the chief officer, who formed, with Bantam and Webbe, the white members of the company. Being taken by surprise and overwhelmed by numbers, they were forced to lend a hand in freeing the vessel. But neither

the engineers nor the chief officer hinted at the lightening of the ballast tanks, and the engines thrashed and thudded without moving the steamer in the least.

"This way!" exclaimed Bantam, hoarsely. He rushed toward the cabin hatchway, where he seized a fire ax from the buckets. "Get the other, and come on!"

Webbe plucked the companion ax from its place, and Bantam led a rush toward the little crowd astern.

"Rush forward, Mr. Thompson and the others," he shouted, "and get some belaying pins. Then run back aft and smash into this mob with 'em!"

He swung the ax round as he fell on the startled mob, and Webbe, with wild shouts, did the same. Half a dozen Arabs fell on the deck, some badly hurt and some terrified. The Portuguese and the rest leaped forward, where the chief officer and the two engineers assailed them with belaying pins.

A small boat was swinging outboard, and toward this the Portuguese rushed. He was wildly attacking the slip lashings with a knife when Bantam pounced on him. "Get below," he said, "or I'll brain you." He swung the ax round, and the gleam on its cold steel was matched by the gleam in the quailing eye of the steamer thief.

He cowered from the fierce figure, and slunk below, and Bantam, Webbe and the other three drove the survivors into the cabin to keep him company.

"Now," said Bantam, when the work was done, "we'll have a drink and a square meal to celebrate things. Then there'll be a bit of doctor's and undertaker's work to do, and to-morrow some judge and jury business."

In the morning, clad in white uniform, with white canvas shoes on his still smarting feet, Captain Bantam concluded his work. He had the Portuguese brought on deck before him. Each Englishman had a loaded revolver convenient for use.

"Now," said Bantam, "I'm going to deal with you first, as you're the most important. I came to do fair and square business with you, by arrangement, and

to open out this new kingdom of ours. You did more than one dirty and dastardly thing; but the worst of all was stealing my steamer and leaving me to take pot luck with starvation and fever. In a way, I can understand your stealing my ship, because she's such a beauty that she'd tempt a saint, and I'm not saying that if it had been somebody else's steamer I shouldn't have thought it rather smart work; but as it stands I don't see the humor of it. Now, I always give a man a chance, Mr. Portygee, and I'm going to give you one. It's there—take it. It's as good as you gave me."

As he finished speaking he pointed to the lake and the shore, and at the same instant sprang forward and seized the Portuguese by the throat, rushed him against the rail, and hurled him overboard. There was a wild cry, and a splashing and struggling in the water, which was not caused entirely by a drowning man's attempt to swim, for the lake was infested with crocodiles.

"Bring up the rest," said Bantam. "Now, my men," he continued, when they were arrayed before him, "you know a bit of English, and I know a few words of your lingo; so you'll savvy enough to follow me. You've shown that you can work when you've got a proper master—and the man overboard there had his good points, or he'd never have caught me napping. You're used to a warm climate and warm work, and I'm going to keep two of you as firemen, because niggers won't stick at it, and white men die. Draw lots, and the lucky ones can go home."

The lots were drawn and the men who were not wanted were put ashore. The two who had drawn blanks said it was the will of Allah, and went into the stokehold resignedly.

"They'll have some fine tales to tell ashore," said Bantam, "and until the excitement simmers down a bit we'd better give this part of the lake a wide berth. But that won't matter, Mr. Webbe, for there's plenty more land and water to explore, and lots more rousing work to do before we come to the end of this game."

For several weeks the business of kingdom jumping progressed famously.

"It pays better than salvage," Captain Bantam declared. "And look at the result, Mr. Webbe. We've civilized fifty different tribes enough to make 'em believe that our tin kettles and nickel-plated stuff are worth more than their ivory and gold dust, and we've done it all without bloodshed. We've painted this lake and its shore red for five hundred miles from that spot where we first landed. I'll never rest till we've got the whole region the same color, then I'll buy a joint annuity for the missis and myself, and go and die in my bed in a Christian country, which will be England. But before that happens, may I be able to wipe the floor with two or three people who've done the same with me when I've been under the weather."

"What's the next freak of the *Promised Land* to be?" inquired Webbe, ungraciously.

"By talking of the *Promised Land* as if she was a waxwork or a fat woman in a circus, you wound my feelings, Mr. Webbe," replied the captain; "but I can well understand a man being envious, particularly a seafaring man, as you've been, when he sees a companion on the bridge of a beauty like the *Promised Land*, more especially when he is, so to speak, out of collar himself. Which is no offense to you, Mr. Webbe, for you do very well when you mind your own business."

"The business of the *Promised Land* is as much my concern as yours," asserted Webbe, hotly.

"Not by many cables' lengths," answered Bantam, "except when it pleases me to tell you. It does please me now, so I don't mind telling you that our next trip is to go seeking that hog of a slaver whose dhow is giving me more nightmares than I ever got from salt horse."

"If you're going to plant British banners for all the niggers hereabouts to squat under, and are going on wild-cat chases after every dirty slaver that shows his nose on the lake, you're going to have more work than the *Promised Land* can do," said Webbe; "and I

can tell you, good Master Bantam, that the syndicate won't thank you for wasting time and money over a game like that."

"This swine is poaching in British waters, which are British territory, and he's wanting to fill his dirty dhow with poor creatures of men and women and sell 'em into slavery," retorted Captain Bantam. "If your blood doesn't boil at the notion, I can tell you mine does, and I'm going to hunt the brute down, whatever the consequences might be. This lake isn't large enough to hold both him and me; one of us has got to go—and I don't mean to be the man. If you don't stomach the work, say the word, Mr. Webbe, and I'll put you ashore."

Webbe retired routed, as he always was when he came into collision with Bantam. This was happening pretty often, and yet, dissimilar though they were, there was a strange bond of sympathy and understanding between this pair of adventurers.

Captain Bantam rang the engine-room telegraph. "Nor'-nor'-east," he said, and the steersman mumbled the words after him. The *Promised Land* had no chart room, but in its stead there was on her bridge a sort of glass showcase. "Come this way, Mr. Webbe," said Bantam, and, propping up the glazed lid, he spread out one of his own charts, and with a pair of compasses measured off certain distances. "This is our position now," he continued. "My information is that the dhow is just here and I believe it's true. It comes from one of the firemen we kidnaped on our maiden trip, and I've promised him that if it proves fact he can either have his liberty and go home to his wives, or stay on and get an extra shilling a month, and a Glengarry cap and a life-guard's breastplate. He says he'll stay on, for his wives were too much for him, and he's just sick to rig himself out in the Glengarry and breastplate. Those patent chest protectors are the best investment the syndicate ever made. The idea was mine, you'll remember, Mr. Webbe."

"I never wanted to share the honor

with you," answered his companion, curtly. He bent over the chart. "You say the dhow's people have been prowling round here, and have collected slaves to put on board and carry to the coast?"

"They have, and I hope I shall catch 'em red-handed, because that'll make justice easier."

"And who will dispense justice?" asked Webbe.

"I will," Bantam told him, placidly. "I think I'm a good hand at that. We shan't want a jury."

"Or a hangman?" said Webbe.

"The rope isn't what I call a clean method," replied the captain. "I think there are better ways; and, besides, a man who fights is entitled to more honor than that."

"There's the good old plan of plank walking," added Webbe. "But I'm going to warn you, Master Bantam, that you're running heavy risks in taking the law into your own hands like this. Do you know that by the law of England, if a man aims at a cat in his garden, and shoots a man who's over the wall, he can be tried for willful murder?"

"You astonish me, Mr. Webbe. I didn't know; but you'll oblige me by explaining how potting cats has anything to do with hunting slavers on an East African lake. Call me at eight bells," he said, addressing the quartermaster, "and you can tell the lookout man that next time I go for'ard and catch him asleep it won't be cold water that I'll pour down his back."

It was only six bells when Captain Bantam was roused by the tidings that there was a sail straight ahead.

"There's your friend the dhow, sure enough," Webbe told him. "The wind is all right for him, and he can stand a lot of sea. They've both got up since you turned in."

Captain Bantam rubbed his hands joyfully. "Shove her ahead for all she's worth," he ordered, speaking down the tube which communicated between the bridge and the engine room. The engineer, who was already doing his best, paid no heed to the words.

"It's queer," said Bantam, some time

afterward, "but we don't seem to be getting on very well, considering that the *Promised Land's* a twin-screw and the dhow's only got sails." He took a pair of glasses and watched the chase anxiously.

"Dhows that are built for work like this are built to go," said Webbe. "I've known some of them get clear of even ships of the royal navy, let alone river gunboats. The dirtier the work the cleaner their heels, as a rule."

"By gosh! but she can travel!" exclaimed Bantam, in admiration, as the dhow leaned perilously over to the breeze.

"Yes," said Webbe, dryly, "but the fact isn't comforting. She's beating us!"

"She is," Bantam admitted, reluctantly.

"And she'll get away," added Webbe, producing a cigar and lighting it, after the fashion of a man who is resigned to unpleasant things.

"I'm sorry to spoil your smug satisfaction, Mr. Webbe," said Bantam, turning half round, "but she won't escape."

"She's doing twelve knots, and you couldn't get more than eleven out of the *Promised Land*, even if you had the coal that saved the *Calliope*," asserted Webbe, placidly. "It's only a matter of time, and slave dhows are accustomed to hang on."

"You're a proper Job's comforter, you are," retorted Bantam, rather bitterly. "I might almost suppose from your tone that you want the hooker to show us a clean pair of heels. I suppose, Mr. Webbe, you don't happen to be running that dashed dhow on commission, with slaves packed in her like sardines, and poisoning, poor devils, in the reek of their own atmosphere?"

"No," answered Webbe, good-humoredly. "I'm only calling your attention to facts. I've played this game before, you know, in the royal navy."

"I'm aware of that, Mr. Webbe, and I thought you'd follow me when I said she won't get away. I take it that when you were dhow-chasing you had something that could travel faster than the

runaway, eh? Something after this style, for instance?" Captain Bantam stepped aside, and tenderly patted a covered six-pounder quick-firer.

"But you won't use that?" exclaimed Webbe.

"Do you think I carry guns for ornament?" Captain Bantam demanded. "Yes, Mr. Webbe, I shall use that, and if the wind doesn't drop in ten minutes, or the dhow heave to, I'll sink him."

"But," protested Webbe, "she's showing Portuguese colors."

"I don't care if she's showing all the colors of the rainbow," answered Bantam. "She's poaching in British waters, and she's a slaver—and that's enough for me. Here, quartermaster, give me the wheel. You've been in the navy and understand quick-firing guns better than me. Cast that thing loose, and shove a cartridge in."

The man resigned the wheel, and looked at Webbe. He had been in the British navy, and knew that Webbe had been a naval officer. Instinctively he waited for orders from him.

"You'd better think a moment," said Webbe, looking at the master. "You're doing what may be considered an unfriendly act."

The man still hesitated.

"Mr. Webbe," said Bantam, calmly, but with an ugly look in his eyes, "I want you to remember that I'm the captain of the *Promised Land*. And as for you, my man, if you don't do as I've told you, I'll see how the crocodiles like the taste of your tough hide."

The quartermaster did not wait for more. He was a handy man with a small quick-firer, though somewhat rusty for lack of practice. The rights or wrongs of the case were no concern of his. "I'm ready, sir," he intimated, when the gun was stripped and loaded.

"When I say 'Fire!' let her have one as plump through her spars and sails as you can plant it," said Bantam.

"Yes, sir," replied the quartermaster.

Webbe was watching the dhow with intense interest, and with some nervousness, for he recognized that such strong action as this on the part of a trading and exploring syndicate, which had no



royal authority to proceed to such extremities, might have unfortunate consequences.

Captain Bantam had no misgiving. The dhow was not to escape, and if she cared to run the risk of an encounter the fault was hers. Besides, the captain sought comfort from the probability that if the worst came to the worst, there would be none of the dhow's people left to tell tales.

Again Webbe looked at this extraordinary sailor, but he held the spokes of the wheel as placidly as if he were at the helm of some tramp in mid-Atlantic, in clear summer weather.

"Are you ready?" said Bantam, after a pause, during which it was clear that the *Promised Land* was being left behind by the dhow.

"Yes, sir," answered the quartermaster.

"Fire!" snapped the captain.

There was a crash, a burst of flame, and a growl from the gunner. "This isn't much of a platform, sir," he said, apologetically, for the shot had gone wide of the target. "If you was to bring her to a dead stop I could smack her through both sides like paper."

"There's plenty of ammunition, isn't there?" asked Bantam.

"Yes, sir," replied the quartermaster, who looked after the magazine, among other things.

"And you can reel it off pretty slick, can't you?" continued the captain.

"Yes, sir," the quartermaster assured him.

"Then blaze away till you cripple him. I'm not going to stop," said Bantam. But all the same he rang off to dead slow, and made the *Promised Land* go as easily as he could over the waves.

There was an angry fusillade from the six-pounder, but the flying dhow remained uninjured.

"Your shooting's pretty big and large, isn't it?" asked Bantam. "I'm not a naval expert for the newspapers, but you seem to me to be off color. Is your hand too much out of the game, or have you been taking too much whisky?"

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Webbe, "let

me have a turn. I was reckoned rather smart at this sort of work."

"By your leave, sir," answered the gunner, with a parched mouth, "I'll keep it up till I smash him now. Even the *Promised Land* couldn't do her best till she'd had her trial trip."

He pulled himself together, and there was that on his face which prevented Webbe from making further interference, and brought a grim smile to the captain's features.

After two more shots the gunner got his target, and with cruel precision he set to work to obey orders. He began with the upper works of the dhow, and in three shots he had her spars and sails a mass of trailing wreckage in the water. His fourth would have cut through the slaver's vitals, and he was about to fire it when Bantam shouted: "Stop! That'll do!"

The gunner straightened himself and drew a black hand across his sweating brow. "I can do the business for her with just this," he said, pleadingly.

"You've done enough," Bantam answered. "I take back what I said a minute since. Take the wheel again."

The quartermaster obeyed, and the *Promised Land* soon ranged alongside the wreck.

"Stop, or I'll sink you!" cried Bantam to the dhow's captain. "The things you're throwing overboard are useful. Have you any slaves on board?"

At first they made pretense of not understanding him; then a sallow man replied that he was an honest merchant, and that his government would take the matter up, and make the assailants smart.

"Honest merchants don't jettison their cargo in fine weather," said Bantam, "and don't try to slope from friends. But I'm coming on board to visit you. Keep your eyes on him while I'm away, Mr. Webbe, and if you think you ought to fire for hanky-panky work, don't stop for fear of hurting me."

He went on board the dhow. "If you're an honest trader," he continued, "what do you want with two big tanks and a cask full of fresh water, and what use can you find for a hold half full of



mixed sand and mud? And tell me, mister, why your afterhold's full of coconuts, and why you've got about twenty sleeping mats for each member of your crew? You can either come on board the *Promised Land* and have an inquiry into things, or you can be tried here. Are you slave-cadging or aren't you? You might as well acknowledge that the game's up."

"I was going up the creek there to get some people on board," the captain of the dhow admitted.

"Black passengers, eh?" inquired Bantam, pleasantly. "And you do this, although you know that you're in British waters, and roaming about British territory, and that where the Union Jack's hoisted there can be no slavery?"

"This country belongs to anybody," asserted the captain, sourly; "and as for the British flag, no one's ever seen it here."

"That's because they haven't looked, or because some nigger belle has stolen it for a petticoat. There'll be another there before sunset. Come this way, sir, and if your people don't want scorching, tell 'em to come also. I'm going to fire this dhow."

When the last man from the dhow was on board the *Promised Land*, Bantam returned to the slaver and set her

on fire. When he saw that she was doomed he hastened back to his own steamer, and, being in great good spirits, chanted to Webbe, who was on the bridge watching the operations, "Lights are burning bright, and all's well." A moment later he turned to the gunner and added: "You were keen on putting another shot into her. Let her have it now, and if she sinks in two minutes I'll give you a glass of whisky that hasn't any fusel oil in it."

The gunner won his drink, and the informer, having made his choice, elected to be clothed in the Glengarry and the cuirass.

"So far, so good," said Webbe, when the *Promised Land* was comfortably steaming back; "but I'm worried about the results of playing a strong game like this."

"Make your mind easy," answered Bantam. "According to your reading of the law you can shoot a cat if it's trespassing in your own garden. This fellow was poaching for slaves on British soil, and he's been very lucky to get off as easy as he has done. What am I going to do with 'em? Put 'em ashore at the first handy spot—and I don't know the breed of 'em if they don't give out that they're distressed seamen, and that their dhow foundered in a squall."

*Another adventure of "Captain Bantam" will appear next month.*

## DECEMBER 31, 1904

DEAR Father Time, to-morrow morn another year you'll bring.  
Don't have it full of war and strife and every horrid thing.  
All battle, murder, sudden death, we hope you will omit;  
The last was far too full of them—we weren't pleased a bit.

We want a year of peace and rest, prosperity for all.  
If you must put some troubles in, please have them very small.  
It's time you brought a good year to us—don't you think you should?  
I am sure you'll find us grateful—we'll promise to be good.

ROBERT T. HARDY, JR.

# BELOW THE DEAD LINE

BY SCOTT CAMPBELL

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[NOTE.—When Inspector Byrnes commanded the New York Police Force he found it necessary to issue an order calling for the instant arrest of every crook found day or night in that part of the metropolis lying south of Fulton Street. This stringent order quickly gained for the district the title "Below the Dead Line," at least in police circles. As the lower part of the city contains Wall and Broad Streets and Maiden Lane, where the great diamond houses are located, various efforts were made by the "under world" to evade the order. For several years a number of crooks, headed by an unknown but extremely clever criminal, succeeded in operating in the district despite the police, and it is to chronicle their doings and their ultimate capture that Mr. Scott Campbell has written this interesting series of stories. Each story will be complete in itself.—THE EDITOR.]

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## XII.—THE CASE OF THE TAN GLOVE

### I.

"NO, no, Jimmie, you can't keep a good man down," smiled Mr. Felix Boyd. "It's utterly impossible. You may get him down, mind you, and by fixing a cast-iron grip upon him you may, perhaps, keep him down for a time. But the instant you loose your hold, take my word for it, Jimmie, he'll bob up serenely from under your arm, or betwixt your legs, or from some utterly unexpected quarter, and have at you again. No, no, Jimmie, you can't keep a good man down."

The Central Office man smiled complacently over his Blue Points, in the consumption of which he was too diligently absorbed to reply, and Felix Boyd presently added, in ruminating mood:

"So it is with the Big Finger, Jimmie. We've had him down half a score of times in the past year, or as good as down; and in each and every case, just before its culmination, just before our final blow was dealt, we'd have wagered our very lives against his escape."

"So we would, Felix," admitted Coleman, with a dubious nod.

"Yet in each and every case, Jimmie, he has slipped like an eel through our fingers," continued Boyd. "Owing to no fault of ours, mind you, no lack of precaution or shrewdness on our part; but merely because Satan, so it seems to me, often derives infinite satisfaction from serving his own at such critical moments."

"Very likely," laughed Coleman. "That's surely a philosophical way of looking at it."

"I think so, Jimmie."

"He certainly is a good man, this Big Finger, or he never could have balked and baffled you as he has done. Yes, he's a good man—in his infernally bad line!"

"And, as I said in the beginning, Jimmie, you can't keep a good man down," added Boyd, a bit grimly. "Take my word for it, the cover will slip again before we fairly know it, and like an ugly jack-in-the-box the Big Finger will again bob up, to give us renewed anxiety and additional trouble."

"Think so, Felix?"

"I do, indeed, Jimmie," nodded Boyd. "Idleness is as alien to that evil genius as beneficence is to a hog. We certainly shall hear from him again."

"Yet a full month has passed since that Sing Sing affair, resulting from the Convict Code."

"A month is but little in the life of a man."

"That's true enough, Felix. Yet we succeeded in landing every man of his gang—save him alone."

"Humph! He soon will organize another."

"Do you believe it?"

"It's as sure as death and taxes, Jimmie. A month, did you say? Yes, so it is. Two weeks in Bellevue, nursing a brace of broken ribs; and two weeks recuperating in the Adirondacks. I marvel that the Big Finger did not seize the opportunity presented by my absence, to develop and execute one of his infernally crafty and—hello! break off for a moment, Jimmie! I've an idea that yonder men are talking of me."

And Felix Boyd bent a furtive glance in the direction of two young men, who were seated at lunch in the main room of the café.

The scene was a popular downtown restaurant, within a few blocks of the busy section of New York included below the dead line, the territory specially assigned to Detective Coleman of the Central Office, and the field of most of Felix Boyd's remarkable exploits.

It was, as Coleman had said, just a month since that great police raid designed and directed by Boyd, which had resulted in the wholesale capture of the accomplished gang of crooks dominated by the notorious Big Finger, whose criminal operations below the dead line long had been a menace to every great financial institution there located.

As previously related, the escape of this obscure master criminal had been entirely accidental, a mishap which had cost Felix Boyd not only his chief prisoner, but also two broken ribs and other less serious injuries.

The couple referred to by Boyd, as above noted, appeared to be discussing

some object which one of them had produced from a small wad of white cotton, taken from his fob pocket, and which had led his companion to glance occasionally in Boyd's direction. Returning it after a brief examination, he remarked, with a smile:

"It looks all right, Gerry. In my opinion the diamond is a valuable one."

Gerry replaced the glittering gem in the wad of cotton, then jammed it back into his pocket.

"Glad to hear you say so, Delmore," he rejoined.

"As a matter of fact, however, my opinion is valueless, for I am not a judge of precious stones," added Delmore, who was a reputable Wall Street broker of the younger set. "But there's a very easy way of getting at the truth."

"How so?"

"Submit the stone to Mr. Felix Boyd. He very quickly will pass upon it for you, and his judgment is infallible."

"Mr. Felix Boyd?"

"Don't you know him?"

"I can't say that I do."

Delmore's brows arched perceptibly.

"Humph! Is that so?" he murmured, surprisedly. "I thought everybody knew Felix Boyd."

"I have been abroad for three years," remarked Gerry, with apologetic humility. "What about this man—Mr. Felix Boyd?"

Delmore dipped his fingers into the cut glass bowl the waiter had placed before him, then deliberately dried them with his napkin.

"Well, Gerry," he presently rejoined, "one might say a good deal about Felix Boyd, and then leave much unsaid. There are few, indeed, who could tell it all; for Boyd, and his secret relations with some of the financial kings of Wall Street, are mysteries yet to be unveiled. If you have finished your lunch, Gerry, I will introduce you to him. He sits at the single table in the alcove yonder, with Detective Coleman of the Central Office."

"I'll go with you at once," said Gerry.

"They are coming this way, Felix," said Coleman, as the two men approached.

"So I see, Jimmie."

"Know them?"

"One only—young Delmore. His father is on my list of clients."

Boyd did not so much as glance up when the two men drew near, yet Delmore at once said, familiarly:

"How are you, Mr. Boyd? I hope we don't intrude. I wish to introduce a friend of mine, Mr. Talbot Gerry. He has just returned from a three-year jaunt abroad, and I wish you to know him."

Boyd's drooping lids were raised with indolent interest, yet his gaze lingered oddly for a moment upon Gerry's face. He laid aside his napkin, with lips relaxing to a smile, and extended his hand.

"Pleased to know you, Mr. Gerry," said he. "I saw you in Algiers two years ago last Thursday."

Gerry started slightly, then laughed.

"Well, really, Mr. Boyd!" he exclaimed. "That's curious. I confess I was in Algiers about that time."

"At precisely that time, Mr. Gerry," smiled Boyd. "I was there seeking an antique Moorish scimitar, which I wished to add to my collection. I observed you only by chance."

"Well, well, you must have an excellent memory, Mr. Boyd, to have recalled the date so readily."

"Tolerably good, yes. What's the news, Delmore?"

And Felix Boyd bowed and smiled to the one, turned conventionally to the other, and then relapsed into his former indifference much as if the episode had ended.

"Nothing new, Boyd," replied Delmore. "By the way, Gerry, let's see that stone. We'll ask Mr. Boyd's opinion of it."

"Delighted, I'm sure," cried Gerry, hastening to produce the wad of cotton.

"Have a look at this, Mr. Boyd, will you? You are said to be a judge of such things, and we'd like to know what you make of it. I call it a diamond, and a very good one."

Felix Boyd accepted the proffered gem, and studied it for several moments in the palm of his hand. Presently he looked up and said:

"Where did you get this stone, Mr. Gerry?"

Gerry colored deeply, then covered his momentary embarrassment with a laugh.

"Well, to tell the truth, Mr. Boyd, I loaned an acquaintance forty dollars last night, and accepted that stone as collateral."

"He was a bit hard up, eh?" smiled Boyd, with a sharper glint in his lifted eyes.

"So it appeared."

"A friend of yours?"

"Well—no—not exactly," faltered Gerry. "Merely an acquaintance."

"Been long acquainted with him?"

Gerry laughed again, rather half-heartedly.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Boyd, I never saw him until last evening," said he. "I ran across him while doing the town in a rather rakish fashion, and we traveled a bit in company. Incidentally he complained of being temporarily strapped, and I made him the loan mentioned."

"Naturally you learned his name?"

"The name he gave me, in return for my card, was Peterson. Yet I cannot say it was reliable, nor where he now may be found."

"That is very much to be regretted," said Boyd, with curious intonation.

"Why so, sir? Is there any doubt about the stone?"

Boyd rolled the glittering bauble across the damask table toward his questioner.

"The stone is a production of art, Mr. Gerry, not of nature," said he, with quiet significance. "It is one of the best artificial diamonds that I ever saw."

"Artificial!"

"Precisely. Yet it is so good that it might deceive even a practiced eye. As I remarked, Mr. Gerry, it is much to be regretted that you cannot locate your friend of last evening. Should you again encounter him, I would suggest that you have him detained by the police."

"I'll do that, at least!" exclaimed Gerry, quite red and heated. "Come,

Delmore, I feel the need of a stimulant. Will you join us, Mr. Boyd?"

"I think not now, thank you," said Boyd, smiling. "Some other time, if agreeable to you."

"Charmed at any time, I assure you."

Boyd gazed after the two men as they left the room. Only his eyes betrayed his quickened interest. They had taken on a gleam like that reflected from a polished blade in the moonlight. Presently he drew out a leather notebook, and with a pencil jotted down the name of Mr. Talbot Gerry.

"What do you make of that, Felix?" inquired Coleman, curiously.

Boyd shook his head significantly.

"It is another of those paste diamonds, Jimmie, of which I told you," he replied. "This is the second I have seen, yet I plainly could have learned no more than before concerning the maker. He must be found—located—annihilated! His art is dangerous. His skill is a menace. Such imitations threaten the financial safety of every jewelry dealer in the country, if not in the world. I again must warn my clients in that line of the existence of these remarkable counterfeits. Are you through, Jimmie? Come, then. I'll attend to it this very day."

Coleman had merely nodded in response to the question, and the two men left the restaurant in company. As they emerged to the sunlit street, thronged at that hour with hurrying people, Boyd briefly paused and asked:

"Where now, Jimmie?"

"I'm going up to headquarters for a spell," replied Coleman. "I have a report to turn in, and two letters to write."

"Shall I see you later?"

"I'll drop into your office about five."

"So long, then."

The Central Office man bowed and departed.

Boyd lingered for several moments in the restaurant doorway, with his brows knit in thought. He had in mind the artificial gem he had just seen, a most remarkable imitation of a genuine diamond, and no man was quicker to discern the alarming possibilities such counterfeits afforded.

Boyd had on his list of clients several wealthy diamond importers and brokers of Maiden Lane, as well as two large retail jewelry houses; and of them, too, he was thinking, and of the warning with which he might serve them.

Thus coming events at times cast their shadows before. For as Boyd presently turned to depart, he suddenly observed his office boy, Terence Gowan, bolting across the street toward him.

"Gosh! I'm just in the nick of time," gasped Terry, flushed and well-nigh breathless. "You're wanted at once, Mr. Boyd."

Boyd's clean-cut, attractive face changed like a flash, instantly taking on that flinty, determined look which invariably characterized him when engaged by any professional emergency.

"By whom?" he curtly demanded, with eyes dilating.

"Dabney & Co., sir, Maiden Lane," cried Terry, with amazing volubility. "They sent a messenger to your office, and I rushed here to——"

"Stop a bit! Do you know what has happened at Dabney's?"

"Not sure, sir. A big swipec of diamonds, I think the messenger said. He waited only a moment——"

"Which is longer than I should wait!" interrupted Boyd, with startling vehemence, when the diamonds were mentioned. "Here, you, cabbie, this way! I may want you, Terry, so in with you. Don't spare your horseflesh, cabbie. A dollar a minute—that's your fee! To Dabney & Co., jewelers, Maiden Lane, at the top of your speed!"

Then a bang of the closed door—and a vehicle tearing through the crowded street.

Passing people stared and wondered.

## II.

A dollar a minute was not an extravagant fee for Felix Boyd to have offered his cabman, for scarce three minutes had passed when the carriage drew down at the curbing fronting the great retail jewelry store of Messrs. Dabney & Co., in those days one of the noteworthy attractions of Maiden Lane.

"Wait here, cabbie," commanded Boyd, as he sprang out upon the sidewalk. "You, Terry, follow me in, as I may want you. Display no interest in my doings, however."

"Not I, sir!" rejoined the lad. "Trust me for that."

Boyd entered like an ordinary customer, yet strode quite briskly down one of the broad aisles between the splendid counters, with only cursory glances at the magnificent display of merchandise on every side.

Yet before Boyd had passed half through the long aisle, he was hurriedly approached by an elderly, distinguished-looking man, obviously much agitated, who whispered rapidly as he grasped Boyd's arm:

"This way, quick! Thank Heaven you're here! I dispatched a messenger for you at once. We have been swindled——"

"Hush! Be prudent!" growled Boyd, with a reprehensive glance at the man. "Whatever the occasion of your agitation, Mr. Dabney, it cannot warrant the slightest betrayal of our secret business relations. Compose yourself at once."

In order to dispel the misgivings of any observer, for the popular store was well filled with customers at that hour, Boyd fell to laughing softly before the last was said; and the man addressed, who was the head and front of the famous firm, at once took the cue so quietly given him.

"Ah, true!" he softly exclaimed, with an attempt to force a smile to his pale face. "I will be more discreet, Mr. Boyd."

"What is the trouble? Quietly."

"I have just been robbed of a dozen valuable diamond rings—swindled in a most absurd manner."

"How, and by whom?"

"By a woman who pretended she wished to make a purchase. She was shown a tray of very valuable rings, many of which she briefly examined. While doing so she managed to steal twelve of the rings, and substitute in their places twelve almost perfect duplicates as regards settings. The stones the substitutes contain, however, while

of nearly the same size as those stolen, are imitations only, of a most remarkable character."

"Ha! So I'm too late!" Boyd ejaculated. "I came here to warn you of these imitations. I have done so once before, Mr. Dabney, as you may remember."

"True—that is true. I should have been more guarded. Yet my clerks are experienced, and are thoroughly trustworthy. I could not have believed such a theft possible."

"There are some very clever knaves at work about here nowadays, Mr. Dabney," said Boyd, pointedly. "These remarkable imitations——"

"Oh, they completely deceived Mr. Gibson, my clerk, and the woman's dexterity in substituting the bogus rings must have been extraordinary," groaned Dabney, under his breath. "I went to question Gibson soon after the woman departed, wondering if she had made a purchase, and I then discovered the fraud."

"How long ago?"

"Barely half an hour."

"What is the value of the stolen goods?"

"More than three thousand dollars."

"I will talk with Gibson and see what may be done," said Boyd. "Wait one moment, Mr. Dabney."

"Well?"

"Allow me to do all of the talking with Gibson, and present me to him, and remark upon the facts, entirely as if your disclosures of the loss were merely incidental. I do not wish Gibson to infer that I am in your service. Leave me to get at the facts, in so far as he can impart them. I can do so better than you."

Dabney slightly inclined his gray head, and yielded to Boyd's restraining hand as the two approached a counter somewhat removed. A middle-aged man of frank countenance stood behind it, who anxiously regarded his employer as the two men drew near. Half an eye convinced Felix Boyd, who was a keen physiognomist, that the clerk was honest.

"Let me see that tray of rings again,

Gibson," said Mr. Dabney, halting with Boyd at the counter. "This gentleman is an expert, and I wish to submit them to him. I have told him of the swindle by which I fear we have been victimized."

Gibson hastened to bring the desired tray from a vault in the wall, and with agitated hands placed it upon the broad glass showcase.

"Alas! I can never forgive myself," he groaned, with a hopeless look at Boyd's firm, inscrutable face.

From their dark background of plush, each ring occupying a tiny slot in the tray, which was invariably kept filled to prevent any undetected theft by an examiner of them, half a hundred costly solitaires gleamed and blazed with dazzling radiance, as if with a light and life all their own.

Boyd bowed above the tray, and for several moments silently studied its contents. Then, with the tip of his pencil, one after the other he raised twelve of the rings from the slots, and dropped them upon a square piece of velvet on the showcase.

"Victimized—yes, Mr. Dabney, there is no doubt of it," said he, glancing up. "Just a dozen, sir, you said. I do not much wonder that your clerk did not detect the substituted imitations; they are extraordinarily good. By the way, Mr. Gibson, are there any previous circumstances bearing upon the prospective sale which led you to show this tray of rings to the woman who, I understand, has stolen some of them?"

"You may state any facts to this gentleman, Gibson," remarked Mr. Dabney.

The clerk hastened to reply.

"I never saw the woman before to-day," said he. "About a week ago, however, a young man called and examined these rings, saying that he intended to buy one. He did not make a selection that day, but said he would call again in the course of a week and do so."

"Well?"

"He called this morning, sir, about twelve o'clock, and I again showed him the rings. Finally he selected one, asking me to remember it, and said that he

wished his wife to call and see it before he made the purchase. He said that she would call about two o'clock to-day, and I gave him one of my cards."

"Go on, Mr. Gibson."

"Just before two o'clock a young lady approached the counter here and presented the same card, requesting me to show her the rings at which her husband had been looking. Naturally, sir, I had no suspicion, and readily complied. She examined the tray of rings, and we discussed them together, possibly occupying a quarter-hour; yet not for a moment did I lose sight of the tray, or of her. She finally decided that her husband had made a desirable selection, and said she would at once send him a note, advising him to call and get the ring on his way home to-day, lest it should be sold to another. I provided her with paper and pencil, and she wrote the note, and immediately departed. Alas! sir, we since have discovered——"

"One moment, Mr. Gibson," Boyd interposed, now that he had got most of the man's story. "The method adopted by the swindlers is very obvious. The young man first called to study the tray of rings, that counterfeits might be made with which to deceive you. His visit this morning was calculated only to pave the way for his wife, thus tending in a measure to relax your vigilance. She evidently is a woman of superior nerve and exceeding dexterity. Under your very eyes she must have palmed the genuine rings, and disposed of them on her person, substituting only the counterfeits."

"It appears so," groaned Gibson, wringing his hands. "I could not have believed it possible, however."

"Kindly answer a few questions for me, Mr. Gibson. First describe the young man."

"He appeared to be about twenty-five, of medium height and build. He was rather boyish-looking, as I recall him, wearing neither beard nor mustache. I should say that his complexion was light, his eyes blue, and his voice somewhat effeminate."

"How about the woman, Mr. Gibson?"

"She, too, was young, sir, and very pretty. She was fashionably dressed, and I naturally supposed her to be a young lady of wealth. She was rather about medium size, I should say, with fascinating eyes and a most alluring smile. I think of no special features by which she could be identified, nor any——"

"One moment, please. . . How long since she departed?"

"Possibly half an hour."

"Were there any names mentioned?"

"None, sir."

"Perhaps you supposed the two parties to be a recently married couple?"

"That was precisely my impression, sir."

"Quite in order, I'm sure," nodded Boyd. "Really, Mr. Dabney, the case seems to present no very encouraging features."

"None at all that I can see," was the dubious rejoinder. "The scoundrels certainly have gotten well away with the goods."

"If you had but a single clew to offer the——"

"Oh, stay! that glove!" cried Mr. Dabney, abruptly. "Possibly that will suggest something to Mr. Boyd."

"Ah, what is this?" cried Boyd, with a second warning glance at the impulsive speaker.

Gibson had produced from behind the counter a fashionable tan glove, lady's size, slightly worn and soiled. As he laid it upon the showcase in front of Boyd, he quickly rejoined:

"It was dropped by the woman, sir, while she was writing the note mentioned. I did not discover it until she had gone, then saw it lying near the lacquer table yonder."

"You are sure that it was hers?" inquired Boyd.

"Absolutely! She had both gloves in her hand while examining the tray of rings."

"Ah, very likely!" growled Boyd, pointedly. "Possibly some of the purloined rings found their way into the other glove. A pity, too, it had not been this one. It bears no mark by which to track her. Medium size, however, and

of French make. You say she sat at yonder table while writing the note?"

And Boyd glanced again at a small, highly polished table which stood in the aisle, with one of the counter chairs still beside it.

"Yes, sir," replied Gibson. "She occupied that chair. I provided her with a single sheet of paper which I happened to have here, and loaned her my pencil. She said she did not require any envelope, as she would send the note to her husband's office by her footman."

Boyd did not appear to have heard the last. Several of the store clerks had gathered in a group near by, and those standing nearest to him saw, or thought they saw, one swift, intensified gleam, as sharp as an electric flash, leap up from the depths of his frowning gray eyes.

It was gone in an instant, however, and Boyd then dropped into the chair the thief had occupied, and proceeded to make a closer inspection of her tan glove—the one and only tangible clew to the mysterious pair of swindlers.

"Footman, eh?" he presently growled, plainly indicating that he had heard, despite appearances. "She came in a carriage, then?"

"So I inferred," replied Gibson.

"You did not see the vehicle?"

"I did not, sir. Wishing to replace the tray of rings in the vault as soon as possible, I did not accompany her to the door."

There was a brief period of silence, the more strained because of the obvious mental absorption of the man in the chair. Felix Boyd sat tipping the small, polished table to and fro, with his brows knit, his lips drawn and his gaze vacantly fixed upon the dainty bit of furniture. Through one of the broad plate glass windows near by the glare of light fell full upon its polished surface, and accentuated with its reflection Boyd's strangely set and forceful face.

Presently he started abruptly and glanced at his watch, finding it to be nearly half-past two.

"Suppose you bring those twelve bogus rings into your private office, Mr. Dabney," said he, carelessly, as he arose.



"An examination under a lense may reveal something."

"Possibly," admitted Dabney; yet for his life he could not have told what advantage was thus to be derived. "You may put them in a small box for me, Mr. Gibson."

"I will take along this tan glove, also," remarked Boyd, sauntering away in advance.

As he approached the end of one of the counters, however, at which Terry Gowan was staring idly into a showcase, Boyd's indifference suddenly took wings. His hand closed upon the lad's arm with a grip that betrayed his suppressed energy, and he bowed to whisper rapidly:

"Find the store telephone, Terry! Get Coleman at the Central Office! Have him meet me at the Hotel Tripoli at three o'clock sharp! Three sharp, mind you! Hotel Tripoli!"

"I'm wise, sir!" the lad quickly nodded, and immediately glided away.

As Boyd stepped aside for Dabney to precede him into the latter's private office, which was at the rear of the store, he took from the jeweler's hand the small pasteboard box containing the dozen bogus rings.

"I'll keep these for a spell, Mr. Dabney," said he, with curious indifference. "By the way, while I think of it, what is the price of the lacquer table out yonder, the one at which I was seated?"

"Forty dollars," cried Dabney, perplexed and irritated. "That's a strange question to ask at such a time as this. Is your interest in that infernal little table more pronounced than in the service you are employed to render me? If it is, Mr. Felix Boyd——"

"Oh, stow all that!" Boyd curtly interrupted. "I'll take the table at the price quoted. Set it aside for me without fail. I shall call here again before six, Mr. Dabney, and then will report on this case."

"But——"

"There are no buts, sir, when I declare myself," growled Boyd, thrusting the glove and box of rings into his pocket. "It now is half-past two. At three I have an important engagement. Ex-

pect me again within the interval mentioned. Meantime—not a word!"

"Why—certainly—not a word!" gasped Dabney, with an amazed stare.

For Mr. Felix Boyd already had departed.

### III.

Upon emerging from the jewelry store, Boyd hastened to his waiting carriage.

"To the Hotel Tripoli, cabbie," he sharply commanded. "Lose not a moment, mind you. The same fee goes."

"It's up to me, sir," nodded the hackman, quick to see that some serious emergency existed, and that each second was of value.

He drove through the noisy streets at a rate of speed that threatened not only his own vehicle, but many another as well, and caused more than one blue-coated patrolman to start involuntarily, and also tardily, as if to stop him.

Reclining upon the cushions within, Mr. Felix Boyd was complacently smoking a cigar.

He threw it away when the carriage began to slow down, and again consulted his watch. It wanted eight minutes of three, as he sprang out upon the sidewalk in front of the hotel mentioned.

"Wait, cabbie," said he, glancing sharply up and down the street.

"Right, sir."

In no direction was there any sign of Jimmie Coleman, yet Boyd did not defer operations pending his arrival. With the cabbie gazing curiously after him, he quickly mounted the steps of the hotel, which was a tolerable brick edifice of six stories, and entered the open vestibule. There were numerous guests lounging about the inner office, and his entrance was not specially noticed.

Approaching the register, Boyd glanced rapidly at the names inscribed on the latest pages. Presently he lighted upon one in a curious, angular hand, which again brought that cold and relentless gleam to his searching eyes. The line across the page read:

"Mr. and Mrs. Philip Kelsey. City. 231."

The number was that of the suite occupied by the Kelseys.

Boyd did not summon a bell boy. He entered the elevator, located the suite mentioned, and presently approached the door.

That the rooms were occupied at that moment was immediately obvious—the key had been left in the door, on the hall side.

Once more Boyd glanced at his watch. It wanted three minutes of three. Then he knocked gently upon the closed door of Suite 231.

A voice from within called, promptly: "Come!"

Boyd drew himself up, smiled oddly for an instant, then gravely entered the room, closing the door behind him.

"I beg pardon, sir," said he, with a graceful bow. "I hope I do not intrude."

The remarks were addressed to a youthful, curly-haired chap, clad in a neat plaid suit, who had been surveying himself before a mantel mirror. He had turned when Boyd entered, however, and upon seeing him he gave vent to an involuntary ejaculation of surprise, more than half suppressed.

"I thought it was my wife who rapped," he said, quickly. "Haven't you made a mistake, sir?"

"I think not, providing the hotel register is reliable," Boyd unctuously rejoined, bowing and smiling. "I am looking for Mrs. Philip Kelsey. I presume that you, sir, are Mr. Kelsey."

"Yes, that is my name," bowed the young man. "My wife is absent just now, however."

Kelsey appeared pale, strangely pale, and his fair features were tensely drawn; yet he steadily met Boyd's gaze with his dilated blue eyes, and his rather effeminate voice never faltered.

"When will your wife return, Mr. Kelsey?" inquired Boyd, quite affably.

"I cannot say, sir."

"No?"

"I have just come in myself. What is your business with her, please?"

"I would prefer to inform her, providing she returns in time for——"

"Surely, sir, it cannot consist of any-

thing of which I should be kept in ignorance," interrupted Kelsey, with a dark frown sweeping to his fair, attractive face.

Boyd laughed softly, and shook his head.

"Why, no, of course not," said he. "It consists of nothing very important. I am a messenger from Messrs. Dabney & Co., the jewelers of Maiden Lane. Your wife called there this afternoon to look at the ring you contemplate buying. Unfortunately, Mrs. Kelsey dropped one of her gloves, which was found after she departed, and I have been sent here to return it to her."

And Mr. Felix Boyd drew the tan glove from his pocket, and advanced to place it upon the table.

Kelsey had grown as white as the linen at his throat, yet his nerve did not appear to forsake him. He drew himself up, forcing a sickly smile to his drawn lips, and directed one furtive glance toward the closed door, between which and him Mr. Felix Boyd remained standing.

"This is very kind of you, yet you have been to needless trouble," said he, with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "The glove is worth but little. You may leave it, sir, and I will hand it to my wife."

"Ah, yes, thank you," drawled Felix Boyd.

Yet he did not depart.

Kelsey regarded him for a moment, as a cat watches a mouse.

"Is there anything more?" he abruptly demanded. "Why do you remain?"

"To see that your wife gets her glove," smiled Boyd.

"I tell you that I will hand it to her when she returns," cried Kelsey, impatiently.

"I would prefer to wait until she returns, if it's all the same to you."

"Absurd! She may be absent for some time."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Kelsey, I will wait," persisted Boyd. "My patience will not be severely tried, and I wish to see her."

"For what?"

"You shall know when she arrives."

Kelsey no longer could command himself, a fact of which he was painfully obvious. He stood trembling visibly, with hands clinched as if to govern his perturbation, while his glittering eyes had taken on the hunted look of an animal at bay.

Suddenly he stepped forward, as if hit with an idea.

"If you are thus determined," he cried, resentfully, "I'll see if I can find her. She may be in the room of a friend across the hall. I'll see if she is there, and will bring——"

But Felix Boyd fell back a step, and checked him with a gesture.

"Stop a bit," he curtly commanded. "You need not bring her, Mr. Kelsey."

"But——"

"I prefer that you should wait with me until she arrives."

"For what reason?" the young man now cried, angrily. "This is absurd! For what reason, I say?"

"Once more—you shall know when she arrives."

"But I can bring her——"

"I do not wish it."

"This is absurd—I'll not submit to it!" cried Kelsey, with his voice grown shrill, and his lithe, slender figure shaken with passion. "Let me pass! Let me pass, I say! I'll see if I can find her."

Boyd threw out his arm, and now cried, sternly:

"You will remain here, Mr. Kelsey."

The young man fell back a step, with hands fiercely clinched and lips mutely twitching. For a moment he seemed at a loss what to do. Then his restless glance, which had been darting from window to door and from door to window, suddenly saw that the key of the door was missing—he knew it was where he had left it—in the hall outside.

He seized upon the one bare chance the situation presented, yet was crafty even in his swelling desperation. He turned on his heel and strode to one side, nearer the window, crying, shrilly:

"You are mad—stark mad, sir! Unless you let me go, I will ring for help!

You shall be ejected from my rooms! You shall be——"

At that point he turned, however, with face convulsed with desperate resolution. With a bound as light as that of a panther, he leaped toward the door, his design being to gain the hall and quickly lock Boyd in the room.

Boyd had suspected his intentions, however, and met him halfway. With a leap to one side he caught the frenzied man in his arms, crushing him for an instant to his breast.

Then came the culmination—the very last discovery Boyd, with all his discernment, anticipated.

For a mingled scream and moan of anguish and dismay broke from Kelsey's lips, and Boyd suddenly realized that the yielding form he held was—not that of a man!

"Good God!" he cried, with an irrepressible gasp. "A woman!"

Involuntarily he had released her, and fell back toward the door. He now saw it all, this game from beginning to end, and that the clever and crafty party confronting him was but little more than a girl, surely not above twenty-five. That her cunning did not end with this unexpected disclosure of her sex, however, he very speedily learned.

A flood of crimson had risen over the face of the shrinking girl, whose passionate frenzy appeared instantly dispelled. Mute and abashed, she stared for a moment at Boyd's startled countenance, then suddenly buried her face in her hands and burst into a flood of tears.

Boyd had no time for expressing sympathy, however, even if so inclined. He at once produced the box of bogus rings, saying, curtly:

"I also have brought these home to you, young woman, along with the crime that goes with them. A very shrewd game you've been playing, for a fact. Luckily I——"

"Oh, I'll confess, sir! I'll confess all!" interrupted the girl, with her voice choked with welling sobs. "I am guilty. My name is Celeste——"

"Yes; I'm well aware of it."

"You know that, too?"

"Where are the stolen rings? Come,

come, tears will not avail you anything. I want the rings at once, and——"

"They are here, they are here, sir," sobbed and moaned the girl, tottering to a desk in one corner of the room. "Oh, oh, if I return them, sir, can I not avoid prosecution? This is my first offense, and I——"

"Enough of that," said Boyd, sternly, as he joined her at the desk. "In this bag, eh? Yes, so they are, the entire lot. A very clever job, my girl, I'm sure. You now will have to go with me."

Sobbing as if her heart were breaking, Celeste, which was really her name, had produced a small plush bag from the desk, in which Boyd quickly discovered the missing rings. With his last remarks he thrust the bag into his pocket, and laid his hand on the arm of the weeping girl.

"But I—I can't go thus!" she moaned, piteously. "I—I first must make a change. At least let me—let me put on suitable clothing."

"This suit served you well enough in your knavery," growled Boyd, glancing about.

"But I—I——"

"Where are your other garments?" interrupted Boyd, with implacable austerity.

"In the next room—see for yourself," wept Celeste. "It will take but little time for me to change——"

"I propose to see for myself," growled Boyd, striding toward the room indicated. "No back stairway escape for you, my clever miss, take my word for that."

"Indeed, sir, I'll not attempt it."

"See that you don't. I'll let you make the change, since I shall wait here for your confederate, who should presently——"

He was interrupted. A clock on a church near by struck three. The last clang of the bell had not sounded, however, when a heavy hand was laid on the knob of the door.

The face, voice and bearing of Celeste changed like a flash. She darted to one side, with her eyes fairly blazing, and uttered a single piercing shriek.

"Don't enter! Beware!" she screamed, wildly.

Felix Boyd wheeled toward the door as if electrified.

The girl's warning had come just a second too late. The intruder had the door partly open when Boyd turned, and the latter beheld his face.

"God! The Big Finger!" he roared, involuntarily.

So, indeed, it was; and the man's hard, vicious countenance, when he beheld Felix Boyd in the room, took on a change that pen could not describe. A criminal and a cur always, less loyal to the girl than she had been to him, the Big Finger looked after himself alone. As Boyd sprang toward him he closed the door with a thundering bang—and turned the key.

Boyd instantly whipped out his revolver, and fired three shots through the door.

A yell of derision answered them.

Then the closing of a second door fell upon his ear. He swung round with an oath. He alone stood in the curling smoke that now filled the chamber. Celeste had darted into the inner room, and closed and locked the door.

"Good-by! Good-by, Mr. Officer!" she screamed through the panel, as Boyd wrenched vainly at the knob. "You may see me later—unless I see you first!"

It was a situation and turn of affairs to have enraged any man, yet it served only to bring into play all that was most daring and desperate in Felix Boyd's nature. With a snarl of suppressed fury he darted to one of the front windows, and threw it open to look down. The Central Office man was at that moment entering the hotel.

"Jimmie! Jimmie!" shrieked Boyd, discharging his revolver into the air. "Jimmie, I say!"

Coleman halted and looked up.

"The Big Finger—inside!" yelled Boyd, like a man in a frenzy. "The Big Finger! Nail him as he comes down!"

Coleman waved his hand, and dashed into the house.

Boyd then turned and darted through

an adjoining room of the suite, and reached one of the rear windows. On a heavy iron hook in the casing hung a long coil of rope, a fire escape, knotted at intervals. Without an instant's hesitation Boyd threw open the window, and cast out the line.

Then he went over the sill, and, suspended sixty feet above the pavements, he lowered himself to the window below that from which he had emerged, which, fortunately, was open.

He swung himself into the room. The suite corresponded to the one above. Darting into the room below that in which Celeste had eluded him, Boyd discovered a door leading to a back stairway.

He never could have told just how he went down the three flights of stairs, or why his brains were not knocked out in the headlong descent. As he came down the last flight, however, he found himself in a side corridor of the hotel, not far from the office. For an instant he scarce knew which way to turn in search of his quarry, for there was not a person in sight.

Then, darting out of a coat room near by, into which she had entered in the hope of securing a hat or cap, came—Celeste!

She recoiled as if struck with a whip—and then Felix Boyd again had her in his arms.

"So, so, my pretty maid!" he cried, triumphantly. "Despite that you're a woman—I'll hold you this time!"

"Hold and be d—d!" hissed Celeste, with resentful eyes upturned to his.

Just before five o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Felix Boyd, accompanied by the Central Office man, entered the private office of Dabney & Co., in which the head of the firm then was seated. Placing a small pasteboard box and a plush bag on the merchant's desk, Boyd said, quietly:

"Here are your stolen rings, Mr. Dabney, in this bag. The box of bogus ones—ah! well, you may keep them as a gift from your humble servant."

Dabney, with shaking hands, tore open the dainty bag and viewed its glittering contents.

"All here! Every one!" he cried, leaping up. "Good heavens, Mr. Boyd, how did you accomplish it?"

Boyd laughed softly, and dropped into the nearest chair.

"Very easily," said he, dryly. "If you carefully examine the lacquer table which I—ahem!—recently purchased, you will find that, in writing her note on a single sheet of paper, the pencil used by the thief was applied so forcibly, probably under secret excitement, that the polished surface of the table carries a faint indentation of each word that she inscribed."

"Ye gods!"

"If you tip the table so that the light strikes it properly, you may read with but little difficulty: 'Exchange made! Hotel Tripoli, three sharp! Celeste.'"

"Good heavens! Is that so?"

"Decidedly so," smiled Boyd. "That appointment thus discovered, Mr. Dabney, the rest was comparatively easy."

Dabney threw both hands into the air.

"If you ever ask me for a bill of that table, Mr. Felix Boyd," he cried, with a ringing laugh, "you will offend me beyond telling."

"Good enough, sir," smiled Boyd, rising to go. "I will keep the table as a reminder of a deucedly clever and dangerous woman."

"You certainly measured her correctly, Felix," said Coleman, reverting to Boyd's last remark as the two men sauntered toward Pine Street.

"Yes, so I think, Jimmie," nodded Boyd. "It's well we have her behind the bars."

"Yet what an infernal shame that her confederate escaped," growled Coleman. "Do my very best, Felix, I could not locate him."

"Humph!" laughed Boyd. "It's not the first time we have found the Big Finger too slippery for us. But we'll land him yet—sooner or later we'll land him. Take my word for that, Jimmie, dear boy. Here, have a Henry Clay."

# THE WHISTLE OF FATE

BY RICHARD MARSH

*Author of "The House of Mystery," "In Full Cry," Etc.*

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## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

George Edney, a dying convict, tells a fellow prisoner, Andrew Bruce, where a tin box containing treasure is buried, and makes him his heir. When Bruce is released he recovers the box, which contains papers showing that Francis Smithers (Edney's former name) had two bank accounts and a safe with a deposit company. The key of the safe and its owner's signature are also in the box, and Bruce resolves to assume the name of Francis Smithers. He finds that the safe contains stock certificates, jewels, and a large number of counterfeit bank-notes, together with the plates from which they were printed, and a list of eight names. Bruce, now Smithers, takes lodging with Mrs. Ludlow, and falls in love with her pretty daughter, Netta, who returns his affection and promises to marry him. But the property bequeathed by the dying convict had not belonged to him, but to a band of eight desperate criminals. The gang, it seems, has been trying to attract Smithers' attention for some time by means of a mysterious whistle, but as he was unaware of its significance, it had merely excited his curiosity. The leader of the Eight, Augustus Chafinch, finally accosts Smithers and threatens him with death if he does not yield up the gang's plunder. As Smithers shows no inclination to obey their mandates, they send him several written reminders, and on one occasion attack him. When Smithers and Netta are married, he is recognized at the church door by a man who has been in prison with him, and this ex-convict tells his story to Netta's brother, who has already tried to blackmail Smithers, and to the latter's partner, Rodney. Three months later, when Smithers and his wife are in Rome, he is attacked by Gustav Kronberg, one of the Eight, and in the scuffle Kronberg's own pistol goes off and kills him. Smithers places the body on a couch in his room and has just covered it up when Netta enters.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

NETTA CRIES.

SHE was ready for their shopping expedition, looking charming in her long fur coat and small hat, which was perched, coquettishly, a little on one side of her dainty head. She regarded her husband with a smile; which he returned—he was just moving away from the couch on which was the bearskin rug.

"What was that noise?"

"Noise? Like a pistol shot? Wasn't that overhead?"

"It sounded"—she glanced about her—"it sounded as if it were in here. I wondered if that agreeable visitor and

you were beginning to shoot each other." She sniffed. "And what's the smell? It smells like fireworks."

"You've the great gift of imagination, which extends even to your nose."

"There is a smell"—sniff—"of something unusual. You're not to laugh at me. I'm sure my nose has no more imagination than yours has. Well, have you got rid of your visitor?"

"Yes; I've got rid of him."

"Who was he, and what did he want?"

"I'm afraid I can't give you a satisfactory answer to either question. I didn't wait for him to come to an end of his explanations. Are you ready?"

"Of course I am. Don't ever accuse

me of keeping you waiting. I've been kept waiting—nearly!—thirty seconds.”

“I want you to do me a favor; a great one. Get me a hat. You'll find a row of them hanging on the pegs in my dressing room.”

“Do you want any gloves?—and a stick?”

“I shall be exceedingly obliged by your providing me with both, if I may impose on you so serious a task.”

When she had gone to do his errand he continued to stare at the bearskin rug.

“It looks odd, as if there were—something underneath. I must arrange it better than that. I don't wish to convey the impression to any uninvited person who may chance to stray into the room that we are using that rug for an improper purpose; as, for instance, to conceal something which ought not to be hidden. In all delicate matters one should avoid attracting the attention of the inquisitive.”

He went to the couch and drew one end of the bearskin over the head, so that, descending in an even slope to the foot, it presented no marked inequality of surface. He contemplated this result with seeming satisfaction.

“I don't fancy that that looks as if there were anything remarkable underneath. If only some one doesn't sit down on it. If they do they may be startled. The risk of leaving it here is not inconsiderable—in a hotel one never knows who may take it into his head to come prying into one's sitting room while one is out of it—but the risk of attempting to place it somewhere else before Netta brings that hat of mine would be still greater. It is when we return from our tour round the shops that complications will commence. Netta likes to recline upon this couch. While we are out I shall have to think of something.”

The lady, reappearing, found the gentleman transferring some cigars from a box upon a sideboard to his cigar case. He was humming to himself an air which had caught his fancy in a new opera which they had seen at the Argentina a night or two before.

They had a delightful walk. The afternoon was fine. All Rome was out of doors. They wandered hither and thither, in the haphazard fashion which commended itself to Netta.

They bought things, of various kinds, in various places. As a purchaser, Netta was omnivorous. Whatever caught her eye that she thought she would like to buy, she mostly bought. If it was not likely to be of use to her, then it would be just the thing for some one else. And people liked to receive presents from their friends who happened to be traveling; it showed that they were not forgotten. Her husband laughed at her.

Finally they found themselves again in the Corso, with the lady a little tired, and disposed, since the weather was still warm, to take her ease outside a café. She loved, as she put it, to see the crowd go by. As they were about to take their seats at one of the little tables, she exclaimed:

“Why, Frank, there's your friend of the mustaches and the yellow suit.”

Although the words could scarcely have failed to startle him—for he had had the problem of how to dispose of what was underneath the bearskin present in his mind throughout the afternoon—he showed no sign of any feeling of the kind, but looked round leisurely in the direction in which she was glancing.

“Do you mean the man in the mustard-colored suit?”

“Yes—there he is, crossing the road—behind that team—now—he's vanished.”

“I certainly do not see him.”

“You weren't quick enough—he was going at a tremendous rate. It certainly was he. As he passed I noticed how he stared.”

“Do you mean that he passed close to us?”

“Right behind us—as if he were coming from the Via Nazionale—perhaps from our hotel. When he saw you he quickened his pace; as if, remembering the result of his first interview, he was not anxious to risk another.”

By now they were seated. Mr. Smith-

ers, having given his order, was lighting a cigar.

"There is probably more than one man in Rome who wears a mustard-colored suit."

"But let's hope, not such another one as he. I'm sure it was your friend. I saw him too recently to be able to mistake his face for some one else's—with his ridiculous mustaches and insolent stare."

Her husband was silent. When he spoke again it was to call her attention to the fact that the evening was drawing in, and that it was growing colder.

On their return to the hotel he cast a curious glance at the porter who swung open the door. In the hall he paused for a moment, looking about him as if in search of some one, or in expectation of something happening. Declining to patronize the lift, they walked up the stairs to their rooms, which were on the first floor. Netta's maid met her on the threshold of her bedroom. She was a pleasant-faced woman, perhaps nearly forty years of age, whose services the young wife was beginning to consider indispensable, and to whom she had already grown attached. She greeted her mistress.

"I have a good fire for you, madam. It is growing cold."

"It certainly is chillier. Directly the sun goes in, the temperature goes down with a rush." She spoke to her husband. "Are you going into the sitting room?" He nodded. "I'll be with you in half a minute."

With her maid she retreated into the bedroom.

Outside the sitting room Mr. Smithers for a moment stayed, as if listening. Then, opening the door, he took a step into the room and paused again; seeming—as he had done in the hall—to search the apartment for something unusual. Nothing unwonted was to be seen. He glanced at the couch. The bearskin descended—as he had left it—in an even slope from the head to the foot. He placed his hat, stick and gloves upon a table; then moved to the couch.

"Could it have been him she saw?

As she said, she was hardly likely to be mistaken. And yet——" He drew the bearskin aside. There was nothing underneath. For the space of several minutes he remained, a corner of the rug in his hand, staring at the empty couch—considering. He was still there when his wife came out of the bedroom. Something in his attitude seemed to strike her.

"Frank, whatever are you standing there like that for? What are you looking at?"

He dropped the rug and turned.

"I fancy I was dreaming."

She went toward him, then stopped as if to listen. Indeed, she did listen. They both did—to the sound of some one whistling—whistling clearly and truly—the air they knew by heart. If they could trust the evidence of their ears, the performer was in the room; if the evidence of their eyes, except themselves the room was empty. Netta's lips parted, her eyes opened wider, her cheeks went a little pale.

"Frank!—it's the whistler!—the same tune—where can he be? What does it mean?"

He regarded her with his smiling eyes.

"It's odd—it is the tune."

Going to her, putting his arm about her, he led her to the fireplace. The sound stopped—the air was finished. As it ceased, she burst into sudden tears. It was an unprecedented thing for her to do; he had never known her to cry before. Sitting on an armchair which was at the side of the hearth, he lifted her onto his knee, soothing her as if she were a little child.

"I know it's silly of me, but—Frank!—what does it mean?"

As he laughed, and folding his arms about her drew her closer to him, the sound of the whistling began again.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A WOMAN ELOQUENT.

The room which Miss Foster called her "den," and in which she, presumably, spent a considerable portion of her life,



was an apartment about ten feet square, which was so encumbered with furniture of a peculiar kind that there was no room in it for anything else.

"If you'd only let me drop three-quarters of this rubbish out of the window," her brother would observe, "one might be able to move about."

"My dear Sidney," his sister would retort, "in a room one is not supposed to move about."

This reading of the law, on the subject of deportment in certain places, did not seem to commend itself to Mr. Rodway. He had called to see her, at the lady's special invitation, and to judge by the manner in which he bore himself, must have been continually inspired by the wish that he had shown more wisdom. The subject of conversation interested him deeply, and when that was the case it was impossible for him to keep still. Let the rules as to the deportment which was proper in a room be what they may, he had to move about. In the present instance the consequences were that he had already knocked over a fair proportion of the articles which the room contained, and nearly knocked over all the rest—having just succeeded in upsetting a flimsy cane construction which was supposed to represent a table, and which was crowded with photographs, some of them in glass-fronted frames.

"I'm afraid," he explained, as he stooped to pick up what was left, "that some of the glasses are cracked."

"Shivered to splinters, you mean. I heard them smash. But it doesn't matter. They're only friends of mine. You were saying?"

Mr. Rodway picked some of the pieces of glass out of his fingers. He found that these interruptions diverted the even current of his thoughts.

"I—I was saying that it is wholly inconsistent with my ideas of duty to allow Netta to live with a man of whose real character she is so frightfully ignorant."

"But she has lived with him. You should have thought of that before, you know."

"It isn't fair of you to say that. She would never have gone away with him

upon her honeymoon in ignorance if it hadn't been for you."

"How intensely grateful she would be to me if she were acquainted with that fact. For she appears to have had a perfectly delightful time."

"But the awakening must come, and then it will be all the more bitter for what has gone before."

"But why must what you call 'the awakening' come? That's what I don't understand."

"Do you suppose that I could allow her to continue in ignorance—even if there were not others who will take advantage of the first opportunity to open her eyes?"

"To what?"

"To his record! To the type of man he is!"

"What type of man is he?"

"You ask me that?"

"I can only say that, so far as I know, he's the type of man I should like to marry."

"Miss Foster!"

"Mr. Rodway! I wish you weren't quite so excitable. Heat doesn't impress me in the least. You say he's been in prison."

"I say!—Swire says. He ought to know, since he was there with him."

"That must have been a disadvantage to have had Mr. Swire as a companion. Nothing is more sure than that many reputable persons do go to prison. You don't know what he was there for."

"I can soon find out. I should have done it before if it hadn't been for you."

"Always me! How fortunate that you are acquainted with one person who's possessed of common sense. I'm prepared to bet—and pay if I lose—that he was there for nothing discreditable."

"Your code of ethics is your own. A jail bird is a jail bird. What do you suppose your brother would say if he were acquainted with the facts, which you have forbidden me to communicate to him?"

"I have, for the present."

"Do you think he'd associate with him?"

"My brother is not a cur, or he wouldn't be my brother."

"I'm not suggesting he is a cur. On the contrary, he is one of the finest all-round fellows I ever met."

"And therefore the less likely to forget that, for all he has, and hopes to be, he is indebted—to the same person as you are."

"Don't you understand that that's the most hideous feature of the whole position?"

"What's the most hideous feature?"

"That, involuntarily, unconsciously, I should have played receiver to a thief! That the prosperity of the Rodway Power should have been built upon dishonesty."

"There is that way of looking at it."

"There's only that way! You don't understand what all this means to me; how it threatens to make of my whole life a grotesque wreck."

"Oh, yes. I do understand. I understand that we are getting there."

"Getting where?"

"To the point; that your grievance is a personal one; which makes you so—robustious."

"Miss Foster, I am perhaps old-fashioned. I was brought up on simple lines; being taught that there was a fundamental difference between right and wrong, and that the two could not be blended. If, then, this man——"

"I decline to allow you, in my presence, to speak of him as a man; unless, that is, you mean that he is as much a man as you are, and probably more."

"If, then, my partner is a thief, and used a thief's money to place me where I am, then all I have has sprung from roguery; and if I wish to free myself from the taint of roguery, I must put it all from me and begin again."

"Don't you believe he's honest?"

"I did!"

"Don't you know even now, deep down in your heart, that you'd trust him before any other man you ever met?"

"In the face of what Swire says!"

"In the face of what Mr. Swire says. Mr. Swire! You compare him to Mr. Swire?"

"I don't. I feel that he ought to be confronted with Swire, and heard in his own defense."

"Shall I tell you what I feel? Listen to me, Mr. Rodway. You say that the name of the man who died in prison was Edney—George Edney."

"Swire says it was."

"George Edney ruined my father; robbed us of our home; of all that, in those days, made life worth living; and drove Sidney and me out into the world to earn our daily bread."

"Miss Foster! You don't mean it!"

"I will tell you the story." She told him the tale—so far as it was known to her—of Glasspoole's folly and Edney's knavery; he listening, open-eyed and open-mouthed. "Since the probability is that the money which Edney left to Netta's husband is part of that of which he robbed us, I think you will admit that I have almost as much right to judge him as you have."

"I'd no idea! This is awful!"

"Of course you'd no idea. And in what sense do you use the word 'awful'? I suppose you must have something in you, or you wouldn't have invented the Rodway Power, but of your judgment in ordinary matters I have no opinion whatever. If accident hadn't brought you into contact with a profoundly honest, clear-headed man, you'd have been the best-plundered inventor that ever lived—such is my solemn conviction."

Mr. Rodway only gasped. She went on, with an eloquent fluency which visibly impressed him:

"Let me state the case as it appears to me. Mr. Smithers—or Mr. Bruce, as you say he is—though I shall continue to call him Mr. Smithers till he tells me not to—sinned—that's the presumption. I don't know how or why. But I'm sure he did nothing dishonest; nothing mean; nothing unworthy; nothing which was in disaccord with an ideal code of honor. Yet he must have offended in a legal sense, or he would scarcely have found himself in Canterbury Jail. There he met George Edney. He listened to him, as he lay upon his deathbed—probably not believing one per cent. of what he said. When he found himself again outside the prison gates, with everything—apparently—lost; with nothing to hope for; with the

consciousness strong upon him of what men of your stamp say—and think—about jail birds, he perhaps thought that he would at least see what amount of truth there was in Edney's statements. He learned that there was more than he expected—than anyone would have expected. He found himself in possession of a considerable sum of money. You may be sure that the problem which presented itself to him was the same problem which would have presented itself to you—what should he do with it? And I think he found a saner solution than you might have done. I believe that the decision at which he arrived was this—that he would use it to repair the mischief which George Edney had wrought. That he would leave no stone unturned to discover whom Edney had wronged, and how; and that then he would make it his especial care that the atonement should be greater than the injury."

"You believe that really?"

"With all the strength of belief that is in me. Doesn't everything point to it? His encounter with you was a stroke of fortune in this sense. Probably the fund on which he had chanced was insufficient for the purpose for which it would have to be employed. He recognized instantly the value of your invention; perceived that—for your own safety's sake—you stood in urgent need of a competent, honest associate; and straightway resolved to do a triple service—to you; to the world; to Edney's victims. He immediately saw that here was an opportunity to provide himself with ample funds to alleviate—so far as money could—the suffering which had been caused. So he became your partner; picking you out of the ditch—according to your own confession—and setting you on the highroad to wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. What was the first thing he did when success was assured? He went down and bought my old home—which had been the special object of Edney's wickedness; discovered Sidney—who was all that was left of the Fosters; put him there and then in the way to fortune; assuring him that when he was possessed of sufficient means—which he himself was

placing in his hands—he should reign again in the home of his fathers. He is not the type of man to make open overtures of pecuniary assistance to a high-minded, high-thinking and tolerably respectable young woman; but I'm persuaded that he is putting into Netta's hand—without her knowing it—schemes for making a millionairess of me, even against my will. I'm beginning to perceive the cloven hoof peeping out of her letters. You wait and see. He's routed out Mr. Glasspoole——"

"Glasspoole! Is that the steward at Dene Park?"

"It is—also George Edney's employer, and dupe. I have it from Mr. and Mrs. Glasspoole's own lips that they were in the direst straits—discredited, despairing, at misery's last fence—when he hunted them out—and now see where they are. Some time back I heard from an acquaintance that her husband had received a letter from a firm of solicitors advising him that they were instructed by some person or persons unnamed to hand him the amount inclosed as compensation for the loss he had suffered by Edney's criminality. The amount in question represented the original sum, at something more than compound interest. Since then I have heard of other similar cases. Your partner instructed Mr. Glasspoole to draw up a list of his clients whom Edney caused to suffer wrong, and those one-time victims are now finding themselves in clover.

"And this is the man whom you, from the impregnable heights of your superiority in virtue and sapience, propose to brand as—I don't quite know what, but as something unspeakable. Why, Mr. Rodway, if you were to do as you suggest, and were to attempt to disillusionize Netta, you would yourself be guilty of a shameful, unforgivable crime."

The lady, becoming enamored of her theme, had risen from her seat, and stood confronting him, with outstretched hands, as an eloquent counsel might have stood before a jury. He seemed to be at least as much impressed by her earnestness as would have been the average jurymen. Having deserted his

position on the chair against the wall, he fidgeted about from place to place, as if in search of words with which to express his meaning.

"You—you present a view of the case which is entirely novel to me; and—and no doubt there's a great deal to be said for it."

"A great deal to be said for it! There's everything to be said for it!—everything!"

"Even granting that, you must bear in mind that it is not from me only—or even principally—that danger is to be feared. There are Theodore Ludlow and the man Swire. They have both of them objects to gain; to obtain them they'll stick at nothing."

"You and I will be a match for them."

"You and I? Really—I'm afraid I don't quite see how. I don't see, for instance, how you are going to prevent Ludlow from telling his sister what he knows, and Swire from making himself disagreeable."

"You are excessively dense. I'll show you how it can be done. Will you sign a treaty of alliance?"

She held out her hand—of which he promptly took advantage.

"I shall be charmed."

"You promise to do everything I tell you?"

An expression of dubiety came over his features, as if he regretted the haste with which he had placed his palm in hers.

"I will certainly undertake to give any suggestion you may make my most serious consideration."

"That won't do at all—not in the least. In dealing with such creatures as the two you've named, I've methods of my own. To insure success for those methods, it is necessary that I should have an ally on whom I can implicitly depend. The question, therefore, is—can I, or can I not, depend on you—are you with me, or against me?"

"If you put it that way, I am with you—certainly—all the way."

"Then mind you are." They solemnly shook hands. "Don't sit there; that's your chair against the wall."

He looked at it and sighed.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

It was not an announcement which was likely to appeal to the sympathies of Mr. Swire, as the expression which was on that gentleman's countenance plainly showed.

In Connection with the  
JUVENILE BRANCH OF THE SONS OF WATER,

MR. THEODORE LUDLOW

Has Kindly Consented to Give an Address,  
Entitled

*TEMPERANCE: Whence It Comes, What It Is,  
Where It Goes.*

Mr. Swire glared at the placard on which the words were printed as if it were a personal enemy. Then, withdrawing a step or two, he surveyed the building with which it was associated.

"So this is Ebenezer Chapel, is it? And this is where he comes and gives his addresses? Very good; when he comes I'll take the liberty of addressing him."

Mr. Ludlow was probably not gratified when he discovered who was awaiting his arrival outside the edifice within whose walls he was to deliver his acute and well-chosen observations. A more disreputable figure than Mr. Swire presented would have been hard to find, or one more suited to illustrate at least a certain side of the forthcoming remarks. At the very gates of the chapel, in full view of the already assembling audience, this disgraceful-looking person addressed him with a degree of freedom which could not have been agreeable.

"So there you are, are you? Found you, have I? Perhaps you don't know I've been looking for you this month and more; dare say you've never guessed that I've found out how you've been kidding me."

Mr. Ludlow endeavored to pass off the obvious fact of Mr. Swire's existence with an air of carelessness which scarcely suited him.

"Ah, Swire—still in the flesh? And what has brought you here?"

"When you've given that address of yours on temperance, you'll find me

waiting for you here; so don't you flatter yourself you won't."

Possibly this was an occasion on which Mr. Ludlow would have been willing that the other should stray from the strict paths of truth, but Mr. Swire evinced a fondness for veracity to which he was perhaps occasionally a stranger. When, at last, the lecturer appeared, there, on the pavement, was his friend.

Mr. Ludlow professed surprise at seeing the man at his elbow.

"So you've not gone? Now, what have you to say to me?"

"I've a good deal to say to you. Do you want me to say it here?"

Mr. Ludlow considered—or pretended to.

"I'm afraid I'm rather pressed for time just now. I think I would rather make an appointment with you for tomorrow, and then we can go into everything together thoroughly and at our leisure."

"You made an appointment with me once before, and didn't keep it. What kind of a fool do you think I am? Before I lose sight of you, you and me's going to have an understanding."

"But I can't talk to you here."

"You live somewhere, I suppose. You take me home; I'll talk to you there."

The suggestion did not commend itself to Mr. Ludlow.

"Isn't there some place near here where we can be private?"

"There's a little crib I know of."

"Is it respectable?"

"For respectability it's equal to Buckingham Palace any day."

"Is it far?"

"Just round the corner."

Mr. Ludlow concluded that probably the lesser evil would be to let Mr. Swire have his own way, so he went. At last, in a very narrow alley, Mr. Swire paused before what was apparently a bird shop, on a very small scale.

The pair entered, not the shop, but a sort of covered entry which ran beside it, ending in what was rather a flight of steps than stairs.

Mr. Swire went up first. Mr. Ludlow followed, not with the best grace; there was a remoteness about the place

which, in his present company, he did not appreciate. The apartment to which he was introduced seemed to be rather a loft than a room. There was no ceiling. The open raftered roof was white-washed like the walls. Gas flamed from a solitary bracket. As Mr. Ludlow entered, not too willingly, Swire, pulling the door to behind him, turned the key, an action which his companion instantly resented.

"What do you mean by that? I insist upon your unlocking that door at once."

"You insist! How are you going to insist? That's what I want to know."

The eyes of the two men met—for half a dozen seconds only. But it was long enough for Mr. Ludlow to learn that in courage, of a kind, he had met more than his match. He himself was possessed of the sort of hardihood which, while it sticks at nothing, shuns physical violence even in the uttermost extremity.

"I don't understand you, Swire. What quarrel have you with me?"

"We'll come to that presently. To begin with, I want you to answer one or two questions. The first is: What's the address of the bloke your sister married? Where am I going to find him?"

"He's abroad."

"But what I want to know is, where shall I find him when he isn't abroad? And, for the matter of that, where do you find him when he is?"

"I'll be frank with you."

"Perhaps you'd better."

"You gave me certain information as to the person with whom my sister has been ill-advised enough to associate herself in marriage. I have inquired into that information, and regret to say that, in the main, I have found it to be accurate."

"You have, have you?"

"I have not only ascertained that he is a convicted felon, but I have also learned of what crime he was guilty."

"What was it?"

"Murder."

"Murder? Why, he only got two years."

"Owing to a technical flaw, the jury returned it as manslaughter. But it was murder none the less—hideous murder. The story is a dreadful one; the man's whole record frightful. He is one of those creatures whose existence is a reproach to civilization."

"You wouldn't have known nothing about him if it hadn't been for me."

"That is scarcely correct. I had some knowledge of his character before I was aware of your existence."

"Are you denying that I put you on his track?"

Mr. Swire spoke with a degree of warmth which induced Mr. Ludlow to draw a little back.

"I am denying nothing. I am conscious of my obligations to you in that matter."

"What I want to know is, what I'm going to get out of it. Up to now I ain't got much."

"You must understand that I've many things to consider."

"I've only got two: one is to be even with him for what he done to me; the other is, to get as much out of him as ever I can."

Mr. Swire presented with such admirable candor, and, it may be added, completeness, the only two motives which were really actuating Mr. Ludlow, that for a moment that gentleman was silent. Mr. Swire went on.

"We've got him between our finger and thumb, that's where we've got him. It seems that he's passing himself off as some one else. Well, we've only got to say the word, and he'll be a good deal less than no one."

"He's no common villain, I assure you; nor is he so easy to deal with as you appear to imagine."

"Do you think I don't know him? Do you think that I don't know he'd make nothing of putting away either you or me? Ain't I had his hand upon me? Is he fond of your sister?"

"So I've been given to understand—in his way."

"Then we've got him."

"How do you mean?"

"Through her. Putting the screw on her'll be putting the screw on him. If

he's fond of her, he won't want her to know about him. It might break her heart. Some women's hearts break easy."

"I believe it would break hers."

"Then we'll start breaking it right away, which'll do the trick at once. That is, if he's fond of her. What I want you to do is, to tell me all about him that I don't know—who he is, what he is, and where he is. You let me know exactly how the land lies, and let's understand each other; then we'll set about that sister of yours together, and after we've said a few words to her, you'll find that husband of hers will turn out to be the most generous man alive. We needn't be afraid of her laying a finger upon us; and when we've had our say, she won't let him do it either."

"There's something in your notion."

"There's about as much money in it as he's got himself. I've played this game before, though I've never had so big a chance as I hope this is going to be. If you want to get at a man's pockets—a man what you've got between your finger and your thumb—find out the girl he's fond of—really fond of, mind!—and if she's got a soft heart, so soon as you start breaking it, he'll open his pockets as wide as ever you want."

Mr. Swire winked. Mr. Ludlow sighed.

"I am bound to admit that in certain respects my sister has not treated me well."

"I shouldn't be surprised! And in certain respects we won't treat her well, neither. In dealing with a woman, you'll find that I'm the equal of any man alive."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE VULTURES GATHER.

Christmas drew near. The preparations which were being made at Dene Park for the return of the bride and bridegroom had been the talk of all the countryside. The old house had been glorified.

Mr. Glasspoole, looking on, was a lit-

tle mystified by some of the things which were being done.

"There isn't a bit of new furniture being put in the dining room. I'm told that it's all of it two hundred years old at least, some of it more. And yet I'll be bound that it's costing as much as if it had been made on purpose."

This remark was addressed to an individual who had become quite a close acquaintance—no less a person than Mr. Augustus Chaffinch. He favored the steward with a quick glance out of his small, bright eyes, as if suspecting him of a joke. But Mr. Glasspoole's face was gravity itself.

"I shouldn't be surprised if you were right about its costing nearly as much as if it had been made on purpose. I happen to know that four thousand pounds was paid for the sideboard alone."

"Four thousand pounds for the sideboard! Why, it's only old oak."

"That's all; but some old oak costs money."

Mr. Chaffinch's tone was dry; a fact of which the steward seemed unconscious.

Exactly how it had come about, Mr. Glasspoole himself was not quite clear; but it had been made plain to him that he could count on at least one friend at the scene of his former misadventures. Whatever might be the attitude of Birchester in general, there could be no doubt about the attitude of one of its inhabitants in particular. Mr. Augustus Chaffinch was pleasantness itself. A more agreeable neighbor—though, after all, he could be hardly called a neighbor—it would have been difficult to find. He placed himself and all that he had entirely at the disposition of the Glasspooles, showering attentions on the ladies of the family in a fashion which was the more delightful, since they were entirely unaccustomed to anything of the kind. And, in return, he required so little. Indeed, nothing at all. He merely showed a friendly interest in everything that concerned them—in their history, and their employer's history, and so on.

Possibly because, with natural del-

icacy, he perceived that there were points in their own story on which they were a little loath to dwell, he confined his inquiries—and they came from him continually, in an accidental sort of way—principally to their employer. Concerning him, he displayed an interest which was boundless—as, perhaps, was not surprising—as he himself put it, with his air of beaming good nature, his fat face all wrinkled with smiles.

On more than one occasion he had found that Mr. Glasspoole had a sticking point, from which, although he might wriggle and writhe and display abject humility, it was difficult to dislodge him. When, for example, he asked some haphazard questions on a matter which was becoming the subject of common talk, for all practical intents and purposes the steward's mouth shut up like a rat trap.

"Have you got a private fortune of your own, Mr. Glasspoole, or are you making a fortune out of Mr. Smithers?"

The question was asked with that appearance of genial unconcern which marked so many of Mr. Chaffinch's inquiries. The other looked at him askance.

"I don't understand."

"You're behaving uncommonly well, whichever way it is. I know you don't like allusions to old times, my dear Glasspoole, but when a man atones for his little mistakes of the past in the handsome way you are doing, I say that he's a credit to all of us. I hear that old Markwell, of Forest Lodge, received the other day a check for nine thousand pounds, as compensation for what he lost through your misfortune. That's handsome, Glasspoole, really handsome—especially as I understand that the original sum was under five. No wonder the old gentleman's half off his head with joy."

"The money didn't come from me."

"No? Then from whom did it come? You know that this isn't the first payment of the kind which has been made." The steward was silent. "Does it come from Mr. Smithers?"

"I am afraid I can give you no information, Mr. Chaffinch."

"Everybody is saying it comes from him, but what I say is, why should it? He had nothing to do with what happened to you all those years ago—since he's a perfect stranger, how could he have?"

"Mr. Smithers is the most generous man that ever lived."

"Yes—I shouldn't be surprised. His generosity takes such peculiar forms that one wonders. Don't you?"

"I used to. I'm beginning to do so no longer."

"No? Because you know—or have guessed—what's spurring him on?"

"I tell you again that Mr. Smithers is the most generous man that ever lived. Look at his conduct to me."

"Just so. Look at his conduct to you, that's the point. It's odd that he, a perfect stranger, should take such an interest in you, and in what you did, and in Dene Park, and the Fosters, and all the rest of it—localizing his generosity, as it were."

Mr. Chaffinch might drop hints, suggest suspicions, indulge in dark allusions—on this particular subject he made no outward impression on Mr. Glasspoole. As to the extent of the steward's knowledge, he was as much at a loss as ever. If the little man had only known it, more than once he moved his friend almost to anger.

But on other points the steward was much more complaisant. He allowed his friend not only the free run of the grounds, but also, practically, of his employer's house. This, possibly, was owing to the fact that Mr. Chaffinch showed so frank an interest in questions of decoration, and furniture, and old houses. He followed the process of re-incarnation which Dene Park was undergoing with almost as much delight as if the place had been his own. He was in and out of it continually, on good terms with the representatives of the firms by which the work was being carried on, hail-fellow-well-met with their workmen. And yet, either by accident or design, it happened that he was never on the premises when either Miss Margaret Foster or Mr. Rodway was about—until one day. So it chanced that that

was the first hint they received of the intimacy which existed between the Dene Park steward and the rotund proprietor of Chaffinch's Counters.

It was on the twenty-fourth of December—on Christmas Eve—the bride and bridegroom were expected home. Everything was in readiness for their arrival. Mr. Chaffinch came over from Birchester in his buggy for the express purpose, as it seemed, of congratulating the steward on the fact.

"It does you credit, Glasspoole—the highest credit—the way things have been done. Though I hope to number Mr. and Mrs. Smithers among my most intimate friends"—Mr. Chaffinch said this with a positive chuckle—"it's hardly likely that I shall be able to go in and out of their beautiful home exactly as I please, so before they do come home I should like to go over it once more—with you, if you don't mind."

Mr. Glasspoole seemed a little loath, almost as if he thought that on the eve of the owner's return such a suggestion smacked of the indelicate. But he yielded.

"I am intending to go over the house myself, to see that everything is as it ought to be—you can come with me if you like."

Mr. Chaffinch did like. He was loud in his praises of everything—and, indeed, there was much to praise. With singular expedition the place had been transformed from a tumbledown, rat-haunted building, into one of those ideally beautiful houses which are among the glories of rural England.

Mr. Chaffinch evinced a disposition to linger here and there, which seemed to cause his companion some annoyance. Mr. Glasspoole seemed nervous almost to the point of irritability. His friend commented on the fact.

"You're anxious?"

"In my position how can I help it? Think of how much depends—to me—upon whether everything is exactly as he would wish it to be. Until he expresses himself as satisfied I shall be—I shall be on hot irons."

The little man was trembling. His friend patted him on the shoulder.



"Don't worry, Glasspoole—don't you worry. There's a time coming of which you've no notion."

The steward did not find the words so reassuring as they were perhaps meant to be—and that in spite of the amused laugh by which they were accompanied. Mr. Glasspoole stayed for a moment to speak a last word to the housekeeper and the butler. When Mr. Chaffinch entered the hall he found that a man was standing at the open door, who, without ceremony, addressed himself to him.

"Is Mr. Smithers in?"

Mr. Chaffinch beamed.

"I believe that Mr. Smithers is expected to return to-morrow."

"Are you the—the——"

The stranger hesitated, as if in doubt how to conclude his sentence. No whit disconcerted, Mr. Chaffinch turned to his friend, who was now at his heels.

"This is Mr. Glasspoole—the steward."

"Oh, you are the man Glasspoole."

Not only were the words peculiar, but they were rendered more so by the manner in which they were uttered. They seemed to strike the steward as if they had been a blow. He drew back with a show of timidity which was not agreeable to witness.

The speaker, apparently perceiving the effect he had produced, was not slow in endeavoring to add to it. Nothing could have been more gratuitously offensive than his manner.

"I know your history, Glasspoole, and all about you, so don't attempt to put on any airs of stewardship with me. It won't do. I am the brother of Mrs. Smithers. My name is Ludlow—Theodore Ludlow." Mr. Chaffinch seemed to prick up his ears on hearing this. The birdlike scrutiny with which he had been regarding the stranger became intensified. "You will see that accommodation is provided for me here until my sister returns; for me and for—for this person."

Again he seemed to be in doubt as to the exact words to select. The person alluded to, who had hitherto remained, modestly, halfway down the noble flight

of steps which led to the entrance, in obedience to a gesture from the speaker, now advanced. He presented a curious appearance; seeming ill at ease in a brand-new suit of clothes, and generally spick-and-span attire, which accorded badly with his slouching air and ruffian countenance. Nor did he seem to grow more comfortable when he became conscious of the interest with which Mr. Chaffinch was regarding him. The steward, on the other hand, surveyed him with undisguised concern. He stammered a reply.

"I—I'm afraid I have no instructions—Mr. Ludlow."

"You have my instructions, they are sufficient." He came into the hall. "There are some of the servants—I will instruct them. In my sister's house, where I am concerned, instructions from you are not required."

While, suddenly unnerved, the little man seemed lost in a maze of indecision, some one else came into the hall—no other than Miss Foster. Her appearance the steward hailed with open relief; while she, on her side, looked about her with curious eyes.

"Good-day, Mr. Glasspoole. Who are these—gentlemen?"

"This gentleman says that he is Mr. Ludlow, the brother of Mrs. Smithers."

"So you are Mr. Ludlow! Pray, Mr. Ludlow, what are you doing here?"

The gentleman met the young lady's somewhat haughty gaze of inquiry with a truculent stare.

"To whom do I speak?"

"I am Margaret Foster."

"Oh, I understand. May I ask, Miss Foster, why you should express curiosity as to the cause of my presence in my sister's house?"

"You know very well, Mr. Ludlow, why I should be surprised at finding you in the house of your sister's husband. Hadn't you better go?"

"At your command?"

"At my suggestion."

"I regret that, in such a matter, I am unable to regard the suggestion of a complete stranger with the attention to which—for some reason which I am at

a loss to understand—you appear to think it entitled.”

“You refuse to go?”

“Most emphatically. It is for me to order you, rather than for you to order me.”

“Then here comes some one whose orders I think you will find it advisable to obey.”

Up the steps came Mr. Rodway—to the evident discomfiture of both Mr. Ludlow and his companion. He was accompanied by Sidney Foster. Mr. Rodway spoke first to Mr. Ludlow’s companion, with a degree of robust vigor which left no doubt whatever as to his meaning.

“Swire! You scoundrel! You have the impudence to show yourself here!” Some workmen had come with him. They remained at the foot of the steps. He called to them. “Take this fellow and march him through the lodge gates. If he offers the least resistance, hand him over to a policeman. Say that I give him into custody as being a notorious bad character—I’ll show ample cause when he’s brought before the magistrates in the morning.”

Though visibly perturbed, Sam Swire tried to bluster.

“I ain’t done nothing! Don’t let anyone lay a hand on me——”

“Lay a hand on you!”

The impetuous Mr. Rodway laid two hands on him without an instant’s hesitation, running him halfway down the steps, and flinging him down the remainder of the distance in a style which must have been hurtful alike to his clothes, his dignity and his person. As he showed an unwillingness to alter the horizontal posture to which he had been reduced, the workmen assisted him to regain his feet.

“Now, march him through the lodge gates,” cried Mr. Rodway.

They marched him; showing a willingness to observe Mr. Rodway’s directions, both in the letter and the spirit, against which Mr. Swire evidently deemed it useless to protest. It is to be feared that he had been handled in a similar fashion more than once before. Rodway, returning to the hall, displayed

a readiness to treat Mr. Ludlow with equal lack of ceremony.

“Now, what are you doing here? Off you go, after your friend.”

“Don’t you try to bully me, Ben Rodway, nor allow yourself to imagine that I intend to let you drive me out of my sister’s house.”

“This is not your sister’s house. It’s my friend’s. And I’m authorized by him to treat it as if it were my own till he returns—as you are perfectly well aware. Foster, this is the Theodore Ludlow of whose bad behavior to his sister and mother you have already heard too much. You must forgive me if I treat him as he deserves.”

“I’ll take him in hand myself if you like.”

Ludlow turned on the speaker, in the possible hope of succeeding better with him than with Mr. Rodway.

“You’ll take me in hand! I believe your name is Foster. Do you know the character of the man with whom you are associated—who calls this house his?”

“Very well, indeed. I should advise you to be careful not to say anything against Mr. Smithers in my hearing.”

“Smithers! His name’s no more Smithers than mine is. He’s a criminal——”

Mr. Ludlow found himself standing at the foot of the steps almost before he knew it, having been assisted there by Sidney Foster, who, still with his hand upon his collar, was regarding him with sinister looks.

“Say another word against Mr. Smithers and I’ll knock you down.”

Mr. Ludlow looked at the speaker, and saw that he meant what he said.

“Very good. Before many hours are past it will be my turn.”

Mr. Ludlow went after Mr. Swire, holding himself with what, under the circumstances, was tolerable erectness. There remained Mr. Chaffinch, to whom Mr. Rodway addressed a question.

“Now, sir, may I ask who you are?”

Mr. Chaffinch smiled, genially.

“Mr. Foster knows me very well.”

“I know you by sight.”

“Rather more than by sight, I think,

Mr. Foster. And I fancy I may also call myself a friend of Mr. Smithers."

"Scarcely a friend, Mr. Chaffinch. I believe you spoke to him once in a train."

"Well, an acquaintance, then, which I trust will soon ripen into friendship."

"I don't think it's very likely; and in any case, at present Mr. Smithers isn't at home."

"I'll take the hint, Mr. Foster—I'll take the hint."

He took it, smiling all the time.

When he was gone Miss Foster said to Mr. Rodway:

"First blood's ours!"

"Yes," he replied. His tone was not so sprightly as hers had been. "But when it comes to business, it's last blood which counts. I shouldn't be surprised if that was theirs."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### HOME.

"It's good to be in England again," Netta said to her husband, as they came off the boat on to the Admiralty Pier at Dover. Then she glanced up at him and laughed. "I suppose, at this moment, it would be unpatriotic to say anything about the weather."

They had had a cold crossing. The wind was a piercing northeaster. Yet, in spite of it, there had been more than the suspicion of a fog in the Channel. Now, as they landed amid the coldness and darkness of the late winter afternoon, it seemed as if they could scarcely have a more cheerless reception. Netta was glad to find herself in the compartment which had been reserved for them—in possession of a cup of tea.

"This is better—especially the tea. I am glad to be back again; but"—she looked at him with whimsical eyes—"I don't call Dover England. Do you? I shan't feel that I am back till I'm out of Dover."

When they were, and the train was speeding Londonward, she sat very still, seeming to hug herself, as it were, in her corner. He observed her over the top of his evening paper.

"You're in a solemn mood."

"I am—tremendously solemn!" She was again silent for a second or two, then added: "This is a sort of between."

"Is it? How?"

"One dream is ended; another's just going to begin."

They dined in town; then a special train took them home. It was midnight when they arrived at Birchester. The weather had cleared. It was a cloudless, starlit night. Netta had the carriage windows down as they rolled through the lanes over the frosty roads. Suddenly a church clock struck the hour.

"Twelve o'clock—Christmas Day. A Merry Christmas, Frank!—the first your wife has ever wished you."

She snuggled up close to him. He put his arm about her, and they kissed.

So soon as the coachman reined up his horses the vehicle was taken by storm. The door was thrown open; Netta was in her mother's arms; Margaret Foster had one of her hands; Mr. Rodway had the other. Sidney Foster had both her husband's hands in his. The air was alive with their voices and cries of welcome.

This was her mother—who was disposed to tears.

"Well, young woman, so he has brought you back alive. We hardly expected it."

This was Margaret Foster. Mr. Rodway was slightly inarticulate. Sidney was more audible—as he addressed the husband.

"I don't know if it's the light or what it is, but you seem to be as brown as a berry."

"How did you expect I was going to be?"

"Well, when a fellow returns from his honeymoon, one never knows how he's going to look."

Netta turned to him.

"Thank you, Mr. Foster. I'll remember your words when you are starting on yours."

They went up the steps in a crowd, laughing and talking all together.

To Netta, when she was in the building, everything seemed wonderful—

that she should be mistress in such a place, the greatest wonder of them all. Margaret Foster escorted her to her apartment. When they reached it Margaret commented, with characteristic freedom, on the alleged singularity of her appearance.

"How scared you look! Your eyes are notes of exclamation—expressive of nothing but amazement. Don't you like the nest your lord's designed for you?"

"Nest, you call it? Palace, it seems to me—and I'm supposed to be its mistress!"

"It's not a case of supposition—you are. Judging from your looks, marriage seems to suit you."

"Seems to suit me!"

Margaret was searching her friend with eyes which found out everything.

"You convey to me the impression of being fairly happy—considering."

"I'm the happiest woman that ever lived."

"Dear me! Are you, indeed? And pray how do you know how all the other women felt? But, anyhow, your words suggest that you've still some fragments of faith in the man that's got you—and, after all, that's something."

"Faith! I know that the man who—as you put it—has got me, is incomparably greater, nobler, wiser, stronger, tenderer, truer, than I ever supposed he was. Faith has been exchanged for knowledge, my dear."

An odd thing happened while they were at supper—one of those odd things which seemed to dog Mr. Smithers' footsteps. They were jesting, eating, drinking, speaking of a hundred things, for questions flowed, and answers came as readily. To all appearances their minds were entirely occupied with the pleasures of the moment; care was wholly absent from the board. Mr. Smithers was telling a story of how, he declared, Netta had lost herself in Paris; and she was denying his assertions, when, just as he was in the middle of a sentence, he stopped—as if to listen.

"What noise is that?"

The question was asked in a quick, sharp way, which was so foreign to his

general manner, that coming, as it did, so unexpectedly, it was a little startling. They all listened.

It was Margaret who answered.

"I do hear something—it's out in the park—like some one crying."

Netta looked at her in surprise.

"Meg, who can be crying in the park, at this time of night? I hear nothing."

Mr. Smithers raised his hand, as if commanding silence.

"Now can't you hear? It's coming closer."

"It's somebody serenading you."

This was Rodway. Netta half rose from her chair.

"It's not the whistler!"

"The whistler? No; this time it's not the whistler. It sounds to me as if it were some poor chap screeching."

The sound, whatever it was, grew obviously louder, as if it swelled in volume as it seemed to come rushing across the breeze. Suddenly Mr. Smithers sprang to his feet. His words had an ominous significance—as if they burst from him in the shock of what was something more than surprise.

"It's the piper!"

Each second the sound grew greater as it seemed to come rushing across the park. Then, all at once, it went wailing past the window of the room which they were in; and then, at the very moment when it had reached its greatest height, all was still. The effect was peculiar—the approaching noise; the sudden wail; the instant silence. They looked at each other with startled faces.

"What was it?" demanded Netta.

Rodway answered. His glance was fixed upon his partner.

"It did sound like bagpipes; blown by a madman. It almost reminds one of the stories which are told of a great Scotch family, which is haunted by a ghost in the shape of a long dead-and-buried piper."

"Really?"

"Really. Haven't you ever heard of the Gairloch piper, who always warns members of the ancient house of Skye of approaching death? You've heard the story, Smithers, I suppose?"

Mr. Smithers had continued standing an instant after the sound had ceased. Then, without observing on it in any way, resuming his chair, he continued to eat what was on his plate. He answered Rodway's question without glancing up.

"Yes, I've heard of it." Laying down his knife and fork he looked at his watch. "It's tolerably late; Christmas is well in, Netta; you've been traveling—don't you think it's time?"

On the table in his dressing room he found a blank envelope, which was sealed with what looked like a masonic symbol. He summoned the servant.

"Did you put this on my dressing table?"

The man looked askance at the envelope which he held up.

"No, sir."

"Who did?"

"I don't know, sir. I was in here about five minutes ago, and it was not there then."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite, sir. I could not have failed to have noticed it."

Mr. Smithers examined the man's face. He was a young fellow, with brown hair and a frank, open countenance.

"You can go." The man went. "If he didn't put it there, who did? Have I an enemy in my own household?"

He tore the envelope open. It contained a typewritten communication.

You will be required to give a final settlement on January 1st—the first day of the new year.

If you are a wise man, you will be at the Piccadilly corner of Waterloo Place at nine o'clock on the evening of that day. You will be accosted by a person who will have in his necktie, in the form of a scarfpin, the seal of the Eight. He will conduct you to the place of settlement.

If you are not a wise man, you will not be at the rendezvous at the appointed time.

In that case the settlement will take a more disagreeable form—you will have had due warning.

He pressed a spring in his dressing case, and took out of the cavity which was disclosed two other sheets of paper, which he compared with the one which

he had just received. In every respect they were identical.

"One at Florence; the next at Paris; the third one here. It looks as if they at last meant business. The first of January! Six clear days. It's a short time to have in which to put one's affairs in order."

Netta's voice called to him from the adjoining bedroom:

"I'm so sleepy! Shall you be long?"

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### CALM BEFORE THE STORM.

At Dene Park that Christmas Day was one to be remembered. There was dinner for the tenants and the work-people; a huge Christmas tree for the children; there were games and dances for their elders. It was honored in the traditional fashion. The new master and mistress were everywhere, winning golden opinions—she for her youth, and looks, and smiles, and pleasant, kindly ways; he for the indefinable, sympathetic something which won him friends wherever friends were to be won. And then he was so tall, and strong, and handsome—so fine a gentleman—one whom any property would be proud to own as master. His smile was like sunshine; his voice like an instrument of many strings, from which he could produce at will the sweetest and merriest notes; he was so obviously without a care in the world.

None saw an incident which took place in his dressing room. Netta and he, that morning, were late risers. When he reached his dressing room, learning that the papers had already arrived, he ordered them to bring up the *Times*. When it came, he allowed it to remain untouched until the servant had left the room. So soon as the man had gone he opened it, asking of himself a curious question as he did so.

"What did Shon mean?"

He searched the columns of the paper as if for an answer—it seemed that he found one.

"What's that? 'Accident to the Scotch Express. Serious Loss of Life. List of the Killed and Wounded.'"

It appeared that on the previous day a grave disaster had happened to a fast train to the north of Scotland. It had collided with some heavily laden baggage trucks, which, as usual, were where they ought not to have been. The result was a catastrophe. Among the dead were the occupants of a specially reserved saloon which had been in the front of the train. They were four—three women and a child—the Marchioness of Skye; her infant son, Lord Alec Bruce, of Gairloch; his nurse, and her maid.

Mr. Smithers read and reread these words until they must have taken strange shapes before his eyes.

"That's what Shon meant!" It came from his lips like a wail. "That's what he meant!"

The hand which held the paper dropped to his side. He stood in his shirt sleeves, staring into vacancy, as if it contained a ghost, at which he was constrained to stare.

"Now, what shall I do?"

The question seemed to force itself between his lips.

Netta's voice was heard speaking to him from the next room—as it had done the night before.

"I'm going down to breakfast directly; are you nearly ready?"

"I shall be ready in five minutes."

At the breakfast table there was an exchange of Christmas gifts; each had something for everyone else. The air was full of expressions of surprise and pleasure. Thanks and laughter were on all lips. The host's mood was in harmony with the rest. His wife's presents to her friends were the theme of admiration.

"I believe," declared Margaret, "that you'd like to pass your life giving people things, the most lovely things that you could find."

"I should. It wouldn't be bad fun. Do you think it would? You see, in my time I've had so little chance of giving anybody anything that I must make up for lost opportunities."

They spoke of the accident to the

Scotch Express; remarking on how frequently the Christmas season was heralded by some misfortune to ship or train, as if it were a law of nature that tragedy should be associated with comedy, laughter with tears. Mr. Smithers joined in the conversation, pointing out the special dangers of that portion of the line on which the accident occurred, as if he knew the ground well.

When the party had separated, and he and his partner were lighting their pipes, preparatory to sallying out into the open air, Mr. Rodway commented on a point which had not been touched upon at table.

"Odd that the Marchioness of Skye and her son should have been on board!"

"Very," Mr. Smithers replied.

"Especially after what took place last night."

"How do you mean?"

"That wailing noise."

"What about it?"

"I suppose you never heard of the Gairloch piper, or how the death of a member of the reigning house of Skye is announced by the wail of his pipes—no hint of the story ever came your way?"

"You are mistaken. I'm probably as familiar with the legend as you are. But why, on that account, this fluster?"

"Do you mean to tell me that that wasn't the Gairloch piper we heard last night?"

"Heard last night! I say—Ben!" The ladies came downstairs. "Please, Netta, are you ever coming? Both Rodway and I are spoiling for a mouthful of fresh air. Miss Foster, this partner of mine has been overworking himself. If he doesn't look out, I tell him, he'll fall a victim to the fiend dyspepsia."

Mr. Rodway said nothing—not even when Miss Foster murmured in his ear:

"Now, what silly thing have you been saying or doing? It's extraordinary what one has to endure from geese."

She sighed. He gasped and glared. Some moments afterward he observed, apparently apropos of nothing in particular:

"The man's a masterpiece!"

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